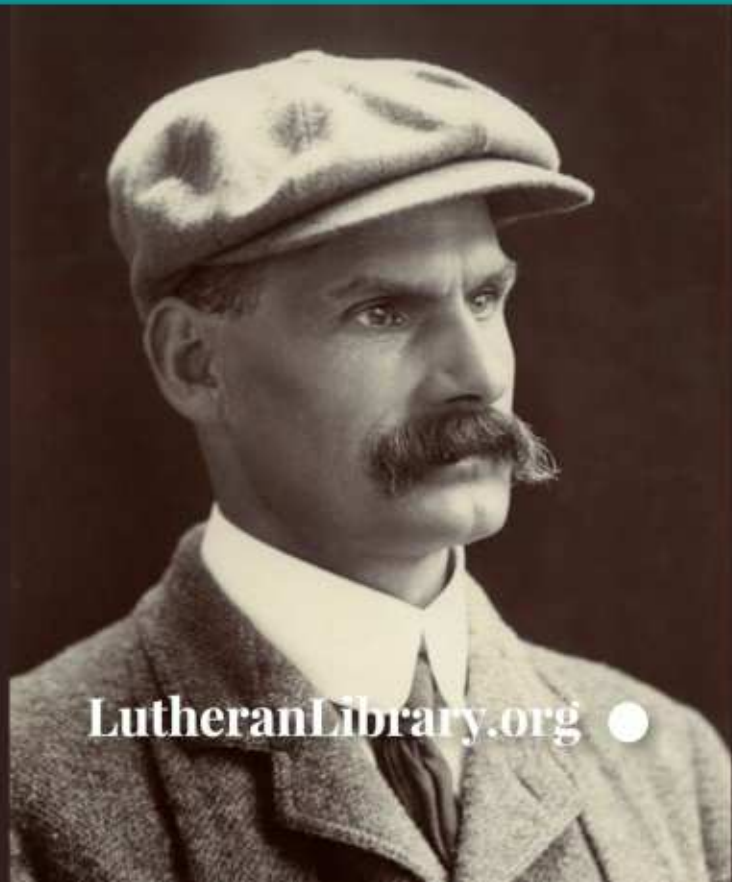


# Joseph Hocking

## And Shall Trelawny Die?



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“ AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE ? ”

AND

THE MIST ON THE MOORS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*Uniform with this Volume.*

THE BIRTHRIGHT:

A ROMANCE.

Illustrated by HAROLD PIFFARD.

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London: JAMES BOWDEN, 10, Henrietta St., W.C.



HUGH'S VISIT TO GRANFER CROWLE'S HUT (p. 84).

# “AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE?”

AND

THE MIST ON THE MOORS.

BEING

ROMANCES OF THE PARISH OF ALTARNUN  
IN THE COUNTY OF CORNWALL.

BY

JOSEPH HOCKING,

AUTHOR OF

“THE BIRTHRIGHT,” “ALL MEN ARE LIARS,” ETC.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LANCELOT SPEED.*

LONDON:

JAMES BOWDEN,

10, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1897.

Gd

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# “AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE ?”

## CHAPTER I.

### HOW HUGH LAUNCESTON CAME TO ALTARNUN MOORS.

NO one knew who he was, or from whence he came. A wild-eyed, shock-headed lad, rather shambling in his gait, and loosely built withal. That, however, might be owing to the fact that he was overgrown. Most lads look ungainly when such is the case, and he was abnormally tall. Evidently, too, he was conscious of his unusual height, for he sought to bring himself down to the stature of other boys of his age by stooping. This was a pity, for it made him look more awkward than ever. The few boys who lived within a radius of two miles from Lanherne Farm called him “Hairpin,” because he was so bent and thin. A Sunday or two after he came to Lanherne, he walked across the moors

to Altarnun Wesleyan Chapel, and there he was hooted. This would not have happened, I think, but for the strange, haunted look in his eyes, and also it had become known that Jacob Polyphant, who farmed Lanherne, had taken him from Launceston Workhouse. For Cornish people are as much imbued with the spirit of caste as are the Hindoos. The feeling from which this springs is not an unmixed evil, it is mainly good. They are a sturdy, independent people, who will live on one meal a day rather than beg, and the respectable portion of the community regards it as the bounden duty of honest people to lay by for a rainy day. Thus it is that those who find a home in the workhouse, or as they call it, "the Union," are regarded as lazy, drunken, or in some other way "evil lived."

Indeed, if the truth must be told, Jacob Polyphant was rather ashamed of having taken a servant lad from the Union, neither would he have done so but for necessity. The fact was, some silver-lead mines had been opened up on the north coast of the county, and attracted by the offer of good wages, a number of men had left Altarnun for Trevoze. Consequently the farmer was short of hands. He saw the hay crop coming on apace and he did not see how it was to be saved; he saw the turnips planted, but did not know

how they were to be hoed. He, his son, and one labourer toiled hard, but they could not keep abreast of the work.

"What shall us do, mawther?" asked the farmer of his wife. "Thews mines have tooked away the men, an' I dunnaw what to do."

"'Ave 'ee tried, Jacob?" asked Jennifer Polyphant, his wife.

"Tried everywhere. I've bin to Lewannick, and North Hill, and oal round, but oal the farmers be the saame. What I want is another reg'lar 'and. A good lerrupin booy wud do better'n nothin', but law! the booy be so conceity as the men. I must have a lookout in to Launceston" (he pronounced it Lanson) "to-day."

This conversation took place one Saturday in June, just as Jacob Polyphant was starting for Launceston market. The farmer had been working hard all the forenoon, and was now struggling to put on a collar and front, which he called "a haalf shirt," and which he wore only at three special times, viz., funerals, market days, and Sundays. He was not in a good temper, because he did not like being called a "working farmer," and he would have to bear this title if he were seen day after day in the fields, and to use his own figure, "slavin' like a hoss."

After having done his business at Launceston,

Jacob Polyphant was wending his way to the inn at which his horse was stabled, when he heard his name.

"Surely you've gone proud, Jacob Polyphant!" said the voice.

"No I bean't," said Jacob; "and es that you, Peter?"

"Yes. Come up an' 'ave a cup of tea with me?"

"To tell 'ee the truth I caan't stay, or I should be fine an' glad; but I want to zee ef I caan't git a sarvant man. They be awful sca'ce wi' we."

"I hear that a lot ov 'em be gone to the new lead mines."

"Iss, they be. I dessay the mine'll scat after a bit, and then they'll be glad 'nough to come back, but jist now, I caan't git my work done. I do want a sarvant chap right bad, and I'm 'fraid the fellas that you've got up to the Union bean't no good to me."

"I don't know that. Come up and have a cup of tea with me, and I'll show you what I *have* got. I've an idea I can help you."

"Do 'ee main et?"

"I do," said Mr. Peter Treloar, who was master of the workhouse. "Come on; my missis will be very glad to see 'ee, and we shall be just in time for tea."

When they got to the workhouse, Mrs. Treloar,

kind and hospitable lady as she was, would not allow Jacob Polyphant to attend to his business until he had done justice to the good things she had provided, and had also answered a number of questions about his wife and family. This done, however, the farmer and the workhouse master adjourned to the garden.

"Now what es et you 'ave to offer me?" asked Jacob.

"There he is," said the workhouse master.

The farmer looked and saw a tall, thin lad digging. He raised his eyes for a second as he saw them approach, and then went on with his work. The two men watched him for a few seconds, and then went to another part of the garden.

"Who es a?" asked the farmer.

"I don't know."

"But you must know somethin' 'bout un. Where ded a come from? Who's his father and mawther?"

"I don't know."

"Well, what do 'ee know?"

"A policeman brought him here just before last Christmas."

"A policeman?"

"Yes, he was out of order, I know, but the man was kind. The policeman was coming from Virginstow, and when he came to the bridge that

crosses the Tamar, he saw this lad looking into the river. He didn't seem to know when the policeman passed him, he kept looking in the water like one dazed."

"He was maazed, p'r'aps," suggested the farmer.

"Well, Jenkins the policeman spoke to him, but he got no answer. He saw, however, that the poor boy looked very ill. His clothes were stained and saturated with rain. Evidently he had not been in bed for days, and he shivered like one having ague. Jenkins, as I said, is a kind-hearted fellow, so he took the lad by the arm, and led him to a roadside cottage, and asked a woman to give him a cup of tea. The tea revived him a bit, but nothing could be got from the poor boy. Well, it was his duty to take him to the police station, but he thought he didn't look a proper inmate for such a place, so he brought him on here. The next day he was in a raging fever, and for weeks we thought he would have died. However, towards March he pulled round, and now you see he looks purty strong."

The workhouse master said all this very fluently, with but little use of the Cornish vernacular. He had prepared what he had said to Jacob Polyphant as a part of his report to the House Committee, and as a consequence was able to put the proper amount of feeling into his words.



"Well, I s'pose you've axed un questions since?" suggested the farmer.

"Yes, we have, but either his mind and memory are a blank with regard to the past, or he has something which he desires to keep a secret; anyhow, he will tell us nothing about his past."

"Not his name?"

"Except that he's called Hugh."

"He got better in March, you say?"

"Yes, he began to get better then, and he's been allowed to work in the garden these last two months. The doctor has taken quite a fancy to him. Dr. Williams is a character, and he fancies that Hugh is something out of the ordinary."

"You say he've bin workin' in the garden fur two months. You must knaw somethin' about un. Es a honest? Will a do as 'ee's told? Can a work?"

"Honest? Well, he's no chance to be dishonest, but he's no sneaky tricks with him. I've never discovered him in a lie; but that's not saying much, for I can't get him to talk. As for working, he seems eager for it, and I've never had cause to complain of him in any way. We've made all sorts of inquiries, but without avail, and we've decided to give it up. We might have got a place for him a month

ago, but the doctor wouldn't give his consent. It was only yesterday that he said he was fit to go out and get his own livin'!"

"I suppose 'ee 'ed'n a fool, es a?"

"Bless you, no, and I fancy he's been to school a good bit. When he does talk, he uses capital grammar, and the doctor says he thinks he's bin well brought up; but I've my doubts about that."

"Well, s'poase I spaik to un?" suggested the farmer.

"The very thing."

They went up to the lad, who had kept steadily at work, and when the workhouse master addressed him he looked up curiously.

"This gentleman is a farmer, Hugh," said Peter Treloar; "he wants some one to go on his farm and work. He thinks of taking you. He's called Mr. Jacob Polyphant."

Hugh looked steadily into the farmer's face as though he wanted to try and find out the kind of man he was, but he did not spéak.

"How old be 'ee, Hugh?" asked the farmer.

The lad seemed to be trying to remember something, then he said,—

"Fourteen last Christmas Day."

"Do you think you'd like to work on a farm?" asked Jacob kindly.

"What should I have to do?" he asked.

"Drive hosses, haw turmuts, plough an' harvey,

work in the hayfields and the cornfields, an' sich like," replied the farmer.

"Where should I live?"

"At Lanherne Farm, in the parish of Altarnun. A grand parish 'tes; the biggest in the county. Ther's grand moors near, an' you can zee Router and Brown Willy from our 'ouse."

"Altarnun," repeated the boy, as though he were trying to remember. "Should I live in the house with you?" he queried.

"Iss. I've got one son, he's eighteen, but he ed'n so tall as you, but a lot stouter. Then ther's three maidens: they be younger. My missus would be very kind to 'ee—that es, ef she took to 'ee."

"It'll be a good home for 'ee, Hugh," said the workhouse master; "and you'll have to go somewhere in a week or two. I don't think you can do better."

The boy looked on the ground for a few seconds; then he gazed steadily into the farmer's face again.

"I'll go—for a time, anyhow," he said; "when do you wish me to start?"

"You'd better ride back to-night," replied the farmer; "I've got the trap 'ere. You'll want to 'ave a vew cloas, I reckon; but I can fix that up with Mr. Treloar 'ere. But before we settle I should like to ax 'ee a vew things. Ya zee, I'm

takin' 'ee 'pon trust, wewithout a character from any plaace you've bin. Now I should like to know where you was brot up, who yer father and mawther be, an' things like that?"

Hugh shook his head. "I can't tell anything," he said; "but I'll work for you faithfully."

"But what ded 'ee do afore you comed 'ere? Ther' ca'ant be no 'arm in tellin' that."

"I can't tell anything," repeated Hugh; "if I go with you, I'll try and learn how to do the work on the farm."

Jacob Polyphant looked puzzled. "I'm 'fraid mawther waan't like it," he said doubtfully; "but I'll take un 'ome weth me. What wages must I give un?"

"Well, you'll see what he's worth. When he leaves us the Guardians won't be responsible, I expect."

"Well, that shall be settled then," said the farmer; "I expect you can furridge up a vew cloas for un. You'd better git ready, Hugh; I shall laive the town as soon as I can now."

"Stop a minute," said Hugh; "I'm willing to go with you. I should have left here before now if the doctor would have allowed me, but I want to know something. I've been here six months, and most of the time I've been ill. Well, I want to pay back what I've cost. I've worked in the garden this last two months, and I've done enough

to earn my food and things for that time ; but I want to pay all the rest, so I should like to know what wages I'm to get."

This was a long speech for Hugh, the longest he had made since he had come to the workhouse.

"I'll give 'ee wot you'm wuth, square and fair," said the farmer ; "I caan't say more'n that now, but I should think ef you'm wot you seem to be, I cud give 'ee eight pound an' yer mait and lodge the fust year, and more the next."

"And how much have I cost here ?" asked Hugh, turning to the workhouse master.

"Well, I expect the Guardians would be contented with a year's wage at that rate," replied Mr. Treloar with a laugh. The question had never been asked him before.

"Then," said Hugh eagerly, "I wish all the money I can get to be given to you here till my debt's paid."

"But what'll 'ee do for cloas an' shoes ?" asked the farmer.

The lad looked anxious. "How much a year did I ought to spend in these ?" he asked.

"Fower pound, I shud think."

"Then I'll pay four pounds the first year, and four the second," he cried eagerly.

"I like un for that," remarked the farmer to Mr. Treloar, as they found their way to the master's part of the house.

"He'll turn out all right, he's that sort," replied the master.

"I suppose the Guardians wa'ant grumble at my takin' un away sudden like this?" queried the farmer.

"No; 't'was all left wi' me at the last meeting."

As Hugh rode along the quiet lanes with the farmer that evening, he seemed to be pondering deeply, and Jacob Polyphant being a kind-hearted and thoughtful man did not disturb him.

"I suppose," said the lad when they had crossed the River Inney, and were riding through the little village of Lewannick, where the trees grew thick and the flowers bloomed, "you'll want to call me something besides Hugh?"

"Moast people 'ave two naames," remarked the farmer; "it seems a law ov the land."

"Then you'd better call me Hugh Launceston," said the lad.

"Hugh Launceston," repeated the farmer; "oal right. It do sound stylish, too. But I shall 'ave to tell where I took 'ee from." He said this apologetically.

"If you do," said Hugh, "tell the rest—tell how I am going to pay for what has been done for me. I shall not be a pauper then."

"Tha's true," said the farmer; "I'll tell that too, and I 'ope you'll turn out well."

"I'll try very hard," replied Hugh quietly.

Arrived at Lanherne farmhouse, Mrs. Polyphant looked at Hugh very suspiciously. She ordered some supper to be placed for him in the back kitchen, however, and then went to the front kitchen, where her husband was waiting to tell his story.

"Well, I don't hould with Union sarvents," remarked Mrs. Polyphant when he had finished, "but seein' as 'ow you've got un, I'll try to do my duty by un."

"He's as thin as a kidney-bean stick and as limp as a rag," said Nehemiah Polyphant, their only son, who was usually called "Miah."

"He'll git stouter," responded the farmer; "lev un 'ave plenty of good fat pork broth, an' a stugger ov milk every mornin', an' 'ee'll git sa peart as a fightin' cock. He've got big bones."

"Well, I 'ope 'ee ain't a-done nothin' wrong," responded Mrs. Polyphant. "He do look as ef 'ee's under conviction of sin. His eyes do make me feared."

While the farmer's family were discussing Hugh in the front kitchen, the two servant girls were catechising him during the time he ate his supper. They asked him numerous questions, but the lad answered none of them. He seemed to be pondering seriously over matters which had no connection with the girls' questions.

Presently the servants began to be afraid of him.

They too were impressed with the sad, plaintive look in his eyes, and wondered what it meant.

"'Ave 'ee sould yerself to the devil, or be 'ee ill-wished?" asked one presently.

Hugh shook his head.

"Be 'ee deaf and doomb, then?" asked the other.

"No," said Hugh; "but you see I have no friends."

"Poor booy!" said the elder of the two girls.

"Do you belong to this parish?" asked Hugh presently.

"Iss," replied both.

"Do you know the names of all the farms?"

"No, not all, but a lot. What do 'ee want to know for?"

"I was wondering. Tell me the names of those you know."

"I'll tell 'ee the names of the big wawns. Ther's Trewint, and ther's Polskiddy, and ther's Pencarie and Trelowry."

"Trelowry! who lives there?"

"Oa, Maaster Magor do live there. He's a squire, he es."

"Magor, Magor?" repeated Hugh. "Do you know him?"

"Knew un? Well, I shud know un ef I wos to zee un, but I never spok' to un."

"Have you ever been to Trelowry?"



"Iss ; I do know the dearymaid (dairymaid) up there. I've seed the 'ouse ; 'tes splendid, tha's wot 'tes. Do you know anything 'bout it ?"

Hugh shook his head.

"Then wot made 'ee ax ?"

"I was only wondering," replied Hugh.

He did not talk any more that night, but when he got to the little box which was to serve as his bedroom he looked out of the window towards Router and Brown Willy for a long time, as though he were impressed with the wild beauty of the scene. But he was not. Evidently he was thinking of other matters, for presently, when he was lying on his bed, he kept repeating the name of Mr. Magor's house.

"Trelowry, Trelowry," he said again and again. "Yes, that's it ; I remember. I'll go and look at it as soon as I can, perhaps to-morrow, if not, some other time. But I must say nothing ; no, I must not say a word to any one, until the proper time comes."

## CHAPTER II.

### HUGH QUESTIONS THE VICAR.

FOR some weeks after Hugh Launceston came to Altarnun Moors he seemed to take but little notice of his surroundings. He did the work allotted to him, if not with eagerness, at least with willingness, so much so that Jacob Polyphant declared that "he dedn' want a better booy." But he asked no questions, and with the exception of his one visit to Altarnun, when the village lads hooted him, he did not go beyond the farm boundary.

Question after question had been asked of him, but he answered none of them. Who his father was, or who his mother, no one knew, and if he knew himself he did not tell. He simply worked on the farm, and although, as Jennifer Polyphant declared, he looked like one "under deep conviction of sin," he behaved well.

Indeed, had he desired to go away from the farm, or to make acquaintances in the parish, it would have been difficult for him to have done so. His work on the farm was very hard, and as

harvest came on, he was kept busy from morning until night. When September arrived, however, work became easier; he had a few hours to spare now and then, while between six and nine o'clock of an evening he was allowed to do pretty much as he liked.

It was noticed that he constantly turned to the little bookshelf in Jacob Polyphant's front kitchen, while the book in which he seemed most interested was one entitled "Local Traditions." This, as the long evenings came on, he read and re-read, until, as the servant maidens declared, he must "'ave larned un off by 'art."

"Wot do 'ee care 'bout a book like that?" asked one of the girls. "'Tes sa dry as a lime-burner's shoe."

"What is there else to read?" asked Hugh.

"Why, ther's 'Lives of Piruts and Say Rubbers,'" replied Sally Udy, the girl in question, "an' ther's Bunyan's 'Oly War,' and ther's the Bible; even *that* is better than yore book."

But Hugh did not seem to care for Sally's advice, and kept reading "Local Traditions" with evident interest. Often, too, as he read he was seen to stop, lift his eyes from the book, and look steadily at some seemingly distant object; then, when spoken to, would start like one guilty of some wrong act.

After he had read "Local Traditions" through

several times, he said to Jacob Polyphant, his master,—

"Are there any men with a lot of learning in the parish?"

"Iss," replied Jacob; "our Miah can cipher on to wat they call vulgar fractions. I dun naw what that may main, but I hear it's a long way on in the 'rethmetic book."

"I don't mean that kind of learning," replied Hugh; "I mean is there any one in the parish who knows anything about the history of Altarnun?"

"To be sure. Ther's the passon. I don't think much of passons as a rule, but our passon es a great schullard."

"Thank you," said Hugh; but, although Jacob asked him many questions, he answered none of them.

On the Saturday following, however, Hugh made his way to the village. It was quite dark when he came to Five Lanes, and so he passed through Altarnun unnoticed. When he came to the New Wesleyan Chapel, he looked at the building darkly. It was here he had been hooted, and he associated the insult with the place of worship. When he came to the old chapel, however, his face changed. In front of this building the bust of John Wesley had been placed. It was carved by a poor lad, and his name had been mentioned in

the book he had been reading. He gave a passing glance at the bust, and then crossing the little footbridge which spanned the river, he came to the vicarage gates.

"I wonder if he'll tell me what I want to know?" he said to himself. "I wonder if he can? Was mother mistaken, or am I what she said I am?"

He knocked at the vicarage door, and a servant came.

Was the Rev. John Strong at home?

"Yes."

"Can I see him?" asked Hugh timidly.

"I speck you want a character," remarked the girl. "I'll tell 'im you be 'ere," and she showed him into the library.

The Rev. John Strong was a little wizened man, who boasted a big voice. He evidently desired to convey to the minds of the villagers the idea that his name was indicative of his physical powers, for every morning during the summer months he made his way to the river, the bed of which was covered with large, smooth stones, lifted the heaviest he could above his head, and then dashed them with all his strength into the water. Indeed, he became known as "the stone heaver," and the village lads remarked that "he wadn' sa waik after oal, 'specially considerin' he was a passon."

“Yes, my lad, what can I do for you?” asked the Reverend John.

“I want to know,” asked Hugh, “whether you are acquainted with the history of the parish, and whether you know anything of the old families connected with it?”

Hugh’s question touched Mr. Strong’s most sensitive part, and he immediately became communicative. The truth was, he had for a long time contemplated writing a history of the parish, and it was only apathy on the part of his parishioners concerning the subject, which kept him from doing so. Hugh’s question, however, fanned his desire into a flame.

“Nothing of importance has happened during the last six hundred years of which I am unaware,” he said.

“Then,” said Hugh, “you can perhaps tell me something about the history of the original Trelawneys?”

“The Trelawneys?” echoed the parson. “They’re dead. There is a branch of the family living near Liskeard, but beyond that it has no representatives.”

“But the family had its origin in this parish, I suppose?” suggested Hugh.

“Indeed it did, and that is the ground of my complaint. It is the most important parish in the county. It is the largest, and has the most

historical associations. Yet no correct history is extant, and what is more, I have received no encouragement in my researches."

The Rev. John's enthusiasm had carried him away, and he had forgotten that he was talking to a lad scarcely fifteen years of age.

"It is dark now," he continued, "or I would show you the church. It is a fine church, although in a shameful condition. The tower is the highest in the county with the exception of Probus, and that exceeds it by three barleycorns only. The seat-ends are finely carved, although much worm-eaten. The stones that built the church and tower once formed the walls of the Trelawney Barton House, while the wood was cut from the Trelawney parks. The county song originated in this parish. When Trelawney was imprisoned in the Tower of London it was the men of Altarnun who caused a great uprising, and who marched through the county singing—

"And shall they scorn Tre, Pol and Pen,  
And shall Trelawney die?  
Then twenty thousand Cornishmen  
Shall know the reason why!"

Evidently Hugh knew all this before, but he waited patiently nevertheless; indeed, he seemed keenly interested.

"And you say there is no remnant of the family in the parish to-day?" he asked.

The Rev. John Strong looked at him keenly. Up to now he had thought but little of the identity of his questioner. He had expected a lad who came to ask for a "character," and his question concerning his hobby had caused him to forget everything else. Now, however, he wondered at the lad's question. He was only a farm servant—that fact was revealed by his clothes—yet he asked questions concerning the oldest county family.

"Who are you, and what might be your reason for asking, my lad?" he queried.

"My name is Hugh Launceston," was the reply. "I am a servant of Mr. Jacob Polyphant, who lives at Lanherne."

"Ah, yes, I've heard about you. Who are you, though?"

"I have told you," replied Hugh.

"Yes, but you came from the workhouse," replied the vicar. "Of your history before you went there, no one knows anything. I am the clergyman. I might help you if you were to confide in me concerning yourself."

"Mr. Strong," said Hugh, "is there anything in your life which you desire to keep secret from the world?"

"I expect there is," replied the vicar.

"Then you will understand my position," said Hugh. "I should not have gone into Launceston



Workhouse had I not been taken there ill, and I have already paid back a part of the money it cost to keep me while I was there. In a few months I hope to be free from debt. I am interested in the parish, and I have been reading a book called 'Local Traditions,' which has aroused my curiosity. So I came to you as the one scholar in the parish, thinking you might explain the many things which have puzzled me."

The Rev. John Strong was a gentleman by instinct, and respected Hugh's evident desire to refrain from further explanations. Besides, there was something in the lad's face which interested him. He spoke like a man of experience rather than as a lad who had only by a few months passed his fourteenth birthday. Indeed, overgrown as he was, he looked several years older.

"I shall be very glad to tell you anything I know," he replied, "but I am not sure that I can tell you positively concerning any branch of the Trelawney family which may still exist. The Trelawney estates have for many hundreds of years been split into little bits. At the same time a family by the name of Trelawney lived in the parish less than half a century ago."

"Ah!" cried Hugh, "and what became of it?"

"No one knows," was the vicar's reply.

"But if the family existed, it could not have

died out without the parishioners knowing something about it."

The vicar looked at him keenly as though wondering at the lad's interest; then, forgetting his wonder in the excitement he always felt when speaking about the history of his parish, he replied,—

"As I told you 'tis a wonderful parish, and has been ever since the time of Henry V., who caused to be written over the gates of Launceston Castle—

" 'He that will do aught for mee,  
Let hym love well Sir John Trelawnee.'"

A good deal of the land has been bought back to the family, but the one piece of land on which the ancient Barton House was built is still in the hands of strangers. It is a house and tract of land called Trelowry."

"Trelowry, Trelowry," said the lad as if musing; "yes, I remember."

"Fifty years ago two brothers lived there; two brothers by the name of Trelawney, and they claimed to be descendants of the ancient family."

"Yes!" cried Hugh eagerly.

"They lived together like savages," continued the vicar, "and allowed no women within the walls of the house with the exception of servants. Thus the place was degraded—for it's a very fine old mansion—into a sort of kennel for dogs, and two lawless men."

“Well, what then?”

“Report says that these two men, who refused to have any women, save servants, near them, both fell madly in love with the daughter of a yeoman who lived at Laneast. This yeoman was called Penpont. The two brothers were named John and Jonathan, and the story goes that they fought about Margot Penpont. I suppose the fight was a very terrible affair, for they were wild, lawless savages, and each believed that he had killed the other.”

“And afterwards?” asked Hugh eagerly.

“Neither of them was ever seen in the parish again. All sorts of inquiries were made, but nothing came of them.”

“And the house? the lands?”

“Well, Richard Magor, the father of the present owner, farmed all the land belonging to the estate, and lived in a house close by Trelowry. Up to this time he had paid rent to the brothers, so after the brothers ceased to live there, he remained on the place as though nothing had ever happened. The story goes that on rent day Richard Magor paid the rent from his right hand to his left, and then, in after years, the brothers not coming back, he claimed the land as his own. Anyhow, Henry Magor, the son of Richard, lives there now, and claims the estate. Of course I suppose in these days many more inquiries would be made,

but then no one thought of taking the matter up. No one of importance lived near, and as you can see, the parish is removed a long way from any important town. Moreover, in those days the whole country side was in a very wild and savage condition, and the blackest ignorance prevailed. Anyhow, the rent being unclaimed for twenty years, Mr. Magor declared that Trelowry belonged to him, and no one contested his rights."

"And Margot Penpont, what became of her?" asked Hugh.

"Ah, that is a strange part of the story!" replied the vicar. "A few months after the brothers fought, it is said that she left her home and never returned to it again."

Hugh was silent for some time, while the vicar watched him, wondering who he was, and why he took such an interest in an old family story.

"Could you tell me," asked Hugh at length, "why the estate which was owned by the Trelawneys should be called Trelowry?"

"The reason for this was that the grandfather of the two brothers, he who built the house, married a daughter of Squire Trelowry, and it was her fortune that enabled him to do so. It is said that old Squire Trelowry would let him have the money only on the condition that the house should be called after him. Of course this is mostly ancient history, and no trustworthy records are

obtainable. What I have told you, however, is generally believed by those who know best."

"Thank you," replied Hugh at length; "you have told me a very interesting story."

"One would think you had a personal interest in it?" suggested the vicar inquiringly.

But Hugh did not reply. He left the house and came to the churchyard gates. He could see the grim tower, and the grey old church in the dim light of the autumn night. Yielding to the impulse of the moment he opened the gate and entered the graveyard. He walked along the path until he came to the church porch. It was very dark, he could hear no sounds save that of the little river Penpont, which ran between the graveyard and the village, and the sighing of the night winds as they played among the shrivelled leaves on the tall dark trees.

He looked on the church long and steadfastly.

"It was built with Trelawney stones and Trelawney wood," he mused, "built a long, long while ago. And the Trelawneys were buried here; perhaps their ashes are under my feet. And mother said that I am a Trelawney—I, a farm servant."

He went into the porch, and turning the great rusty ring which hung on the iron studded oak door, entered the church. He wondered that the church door should be unlocked, but it was not a

matter for much wonder. The sexton was an old man, and he knew that villagers were afraid to enter the churchyard after dark, so whether he locked the door or no did not much matter. There was nothing in the church to steal, and even if there were, the superstitions of the people would keep them from committing so great a sin.

But Hugh had no superstitious fears. His mind was filled with strange thoughts, the spirits of the dead Trelawneys seemed to be near him. The moon had risen, and in its light he could see the aisles of the church, very dimly, because clouds often swept across the sky, but he could see them, and presently, as his eyes became used to his surroundings, he saw them more plainly. He sat down on one of the benches and began to think.

At first his thoughts were confused, but presently they began to shape themselves. He was living in the far back past. He saw men clothed with armour, he seemed to hear the clank of steel as in his fancy he beheld them marching to and fro. Ladies were there clad in strange garments. There were joyous revels and great fights. Gay youths made love to beauteous maidens, children were born, and old men died. They were all Trelawneys. In his imagination he saw them nodding to him as if they recognised him. Some smiled, while others glared on him darkly, but

all seemed to regard him as one of themselves. Years, generations seemed to pass away as he sat there, and at length he thought he saw the two brothers fighting, fighting with a great hatred towards each other in their hearts, as the vicar had said, and then, as if rising out of this scene, came a vision of something entirely different. It was the face and form of a young girl. She was not so shadowy as the others, neither did she look as though she belonged to the past. She only remained for a moment, but every feature was indelibly impressed upon his memory. He sat staring at the altar of the church, as though he hoped the form would come back to him again, but instead there came a great darkness.

He rose from the bench, and then hurried out of the building like one afraid.

“Have I been dreaming?” mused the lad. “It was all so unreal, yet so real. It seemed as though all the Trelawneys were there and claimed me as one of their kin. Am I, I wonder?”

As if in answer he heard the lads in the village singing—

“And shall they scorn Tre, Pol and Pen?  
And shall Trelawney die?  
Then twenty thousand Cornishmen  
Shall know the reason why!”

“I’ll go to-morrow,” exclaimed Hugh. “I

knew I was going to be ill, so I hid those papers which mother gave me before she died ; but I'll go and get them. I know where I put them. I remember very well. Yes, to-morrow I'll get them ! ”



## CHAPTER III.

### HUGH CHANGES HIS NAME.

THE next morning was grey and cloudy. From his window Hugh could see the mist sweeping across the moors, while the wind wailed dismally as it swept over marshy fens and bleak hillsides. Router and Brown Willy, as they stood side by side on that bleak November day, seemed to the lad like two huge monsters, telling him that his hopes were foolish, and that his dreams could never be realised. The moor-birds, too, screamed like creatures in pain, while the cattle shivered as he unfastened them from their stalls and drove them to the fields. The dreams of the previous evening were unreal to him now, the thought of his being akin to many generations of Trelawneys was as foolish as the superstitions of the people. His enthusiasm was gone, his hope was gone.

Still he made up his mind that he would go to the tor, beneath the rocks of which he had spent

weary, painful hours, and where he had placed what his mother had given him the night before she died.

He arranged with the farmer's man to fasten up the cattle at night should he not be home in time, and having obtained permission from Jacob Polyphant to be away all day, he started on his journey. It was nine o'clock when he left Lanherne, and twelve by the time he reached Launceston. As he passed by Launceston Castle, or, as some called it, Dunheved Castle, something of the feeling which had possessed him the night before came into his heart. It was here Sir John Trelawney had gathered the warm-hearted Cornishmen together, it was within the walls of that grim building that he had held his revels. And he, Hugh Launceston, a farm servant, was a Trelawney.

The thought was to him like some magic elixir. He hurried along Launceston streets until he saw a cottage, in the window of which was a card telling him he could obtain food.

He entered, and was provided with a basin of pork broth, a slice of fat bacon, some boiled dumplings, and a plateful of potatoes and turnips. For this he paid eightpence. The woman who gave him the dinner looked at him pityingly, and gave him back twopence.

"Thank you," said Hugh. "I would rather

pay the eightpence. I do not care to be charged less than other people."

The woman looked at his tall, gaunt form, clothed with ill-fitting, coarse garments, and felt like giving back the whole of the money; then she noticed his face. There was something proud in the expression of the trembling lips, a light in his large eyes, which she could not understand. Besides, he did not look like a poor working lad, in spite of his corduroy trousers and shabby coat, and while her woman's heart prompted her to press the money upon him, she felt she could not.

When Hugh got to the station he counted the money he had left. The farmer had given him a few shillings beyond the wages he had promised him, because he had worked so hard. He inquired whether there was a train by which he could get to Lidford, but he was informed that there were only two trains a day, one early in the morning and the other late in the evening. There was a train by which he could return, however, and which would enable him to arrive at Launceston about ten at night. He remembered the weary miles he had walked, but determined to tramp to Gray Rock Tor. By the time he got there it was nearly four o'clock, and he discovered that the light was beginning to depart. So he sought eagerly for the cave in which he had crept that

winter night a year before, and at length found it. A great fear came into his heart that some one had been there since he had left it, and had taken away that which he had hidden. He looked around, but no one was near. Around him were the wild, rocky moors, more drear and desolate even than those among which he had been living. There was no habitation near, no eye could see him but God's. He searched eagerly for the place into which he had put the packet for which he had come, and presently gave a cry. He had found it.

The light became dimmer and dimmer, but he took no heed. Hidden in the little hollow among the rocks, sheltered from the driving mists, he placed the packet inside his vest, and then gave himself up to thinking about the circumstances by which he possessed it, and which led him to leave it among the Dartmoor hills.

As his memory swept back, lad as he was, he felt how unusual was the story he had been told, and how strange the mission upon which he had been sent. His life had become desolate almost in a day. On the Wednesday he had been at school in Melbourne, thinking of the holidays which were fast hastening on, and of going home to his father and mother; on the Friday he stood by the bed where the dead body of his father lay. He had always felt that a mystery surrounded his name,

yet why he could hardly tell. He remembered his grandfather, a severe, silent old man, one who never smiled, and who took but little notice of him. He remembered another old man who lived on a neighbouring farm, who was constantly telling of his young days, of his difficulties and victories ; but his grandfather might have had no boyhood, no past, for all he said about it. The old man had died while he was at school, but he was not summoned home for the funeral. Then, when his grandfather had been dead only a few weeks, a message came to him to return home at once as his father was very ill. When he arrived, however, he was told that his father was dead, and that his mother was smitten down with the disease that had carried him away.

The two days which followed seemed to him like a dream, but the memory of his interview with his mother stood out plainly on the pages of his life.

“Hugh,” she said to him, “I am dying ; I shall soon leave you.”

He listened like one stunned, and said no word.

“You will be left all alone, Hugh, all, all alone. Your father has no relation here. I have none.”

“No, mother,” he said.

“Before I go, I want to tell you, Hugh, that your father says your real name is not Launceston.”

“What then?”

"Trelawney."

"Trelawney, Trelawney," repeated the lad like one in a dream. "How? why? Tell me," he continued.

"Before your grandfather died a few weeks ago, he told your father all about his past; he left some writings, too. He told him that his name was Trelawney—perhaps the oldest name in Cornwall, one of the oldest in England. He left Cornwall when he was a young man, the reason for which your father did not tell me; but he said that he would, as soon as possible, take me and you to his father's old home, and get back the lands which were still the Trelawneys'."

Hugh listened carefully, but he did not quite understand.

"It's all in this packet, Hugh, everything. When your father was so ill that the doctor told him he could not get better, he said that I must take you back to England, to Altarnun, in the county of Cornwall, and that I must act by the instructions laid down."

"Yes," Hugh replied.

"Well, when I was taken ill, and he was told that I should not live, he said, 'It's Hugh's only chance. He has no home, no friends here. Let him be told about it, let him go to my father's old home, to Altarnun; let him be true to his name, the oldest in the county. He may be a great man.

Hugh Trelawney—it sounds well. He must be worthy of it.’ ”

Even then the lad felt the strangeness of his task.

“How can I do it, mother? How can I make them believe that I am a Trelawney? And if I do, what good will it do me? Why is Trelawney better than Launceston?”

“Your father said there was a place in Altarnun which should belong to you, called Trelowry. It’s all in the packet here. I am dying, my boy; you will do as your father wished, won’t you?”

Although his mother lay panting for breath on the bed, and although his heart was filled with grief, the novelty of the position appealed to his imagination, it aroused within him a sense of wonder. It fired all the romance in his nature.

“Yes, mother, I’ll go.”

“It was your father’s wish, and almost his last words were about it. Besides, what can you do? We have no friends; you could not keep on the farm; indeed, when your father’s debts are paid, there will be but little left.”

“Then how am I to get to England?”

“I have saved enough for that. Here it is, and here’s the package. Don’t lose the package. It will tell you everything. Your grandfather wrote it before he died.”

His mother continued to talk with him as she

was able ; but in a few days the end came, and, shortly after, Hugh started for England.

One night on board the vessel he read that which had been left to him ; but he could not understand it. It all seemed foolish and far away. Young as he was, the critical faculty in his nature was developed, and he saw many difficulties. Besides, the words of his grandfather seemed like those of a madman. He could not believe the strange story that was told. It had this effect, however, it made him reserved, silent ; it made him feel that he must not talk lightly, that he must keep his own counsel. He felt that he was years older than when, a few weeks before, he had been a schoolboy in Melbourne. So he determined to keep his quest a secret, to ask questions but make no confidences. It was all very strange, so strange that he did not expect anything to come of his journey, and yet he felt proud of the thought that he was a Trelawney. But he must not speak about it yet, for who would believe him ?

The passengers wondered at the silent lad, and asked him questions concerning himself, but Hugh answered none of them.

As he neared Plymouth, he wondered what he should do. Beyond a few shillings he had no money. On board the ship he had studied a map of England. He discovered that Altarnun



was about eight miles from Launceston, while Launceston was about thirty miles from Plymouth. He determined that he would walk to Launceston. It was dark when he landed in Plymouth, and not thinking of the consequences, he went to a hotel with some people who had been friendly to him on the boat. The result was that the bill swallowed up nearly all his scanty store. He was too proud to mention his poverty, however, and started on his journey to Launceston.

The weather was cold, and a driving rain swept across the wild country. When he arrived at Tavistock he was wet to the skin; but the landlady of the inn where he called was a motherly old soul; she gave him a supper, and sent him to bed while she dried his clothes. When he arose in the morning he was unfit to travel; but seizing the little bag that contained all his belongings and feeling that "the packet" was safe, he trudged on. He felt that he was going to be ill, his head was whirling and seemed on fire. A great fear came on him lest he should lose his senses. Night came quickly on. Not far from Lidford he saw a great rocky peak; he made his way towards it, and found shelter in a hollow among the rocks. He became worse, his head burned more fiercely. He must do something with the packet—why, he could scarcely tell, but he felt an uncontrollable desire to hide it. So he placed it in a dry place

among the rocks, and hid it so that no eye could see it. Then he seized his bag and hurried down the hillside. It was nearly dark, but he reached the road after a few minutes' walking. Presently he heard the sound of footsteps, and saw what seemed to him a farm labourer.

"What is yon peak?" he asked.

"Yon paik!" repeated the man, "what dost a' main? 'T'es grannet, that's wot 'tes."

"But what is it called?"

"Oa, tha's Gray Rock Tor, tha's wot 'tes called. Why, you be streamin' laikin' wet, 'tes time for 'ee to git 'ome. Where do 'ee 'long to?"

But Hugh did not reply.

The words "Gray Rock Tor" kept ringing in his ears. He felt that, somehow, safety lay there. He must find it again. It became a feverish desire. "Gray Rock Tor," he shouted, and it seemed to him as though the wailing winds took up the words, and swept them across the barren wastes, until thousands of voices shouted, "Gray Rock Tor!"

After that he remembered nothing save that he walked on through the night—where, he could not tell. Everything became more and more unreal, until one day he awoke in Launceston Workhouse.

This story may seem wild and improbable, but

I have told it as Hugh told it to me one moonlit night as we walked together beneath the shadows of Router and Brown Willy, while the summer winds played among the heather bloom, and kissed the wild flowers that grew in profusion.

Hugh, as he sat in the hollow among the rocks by Gray Rock Tor that afternoon, remembered all this, and then when darkness came on he found his way to Lidford Station, and waited until the Launceston train came down from Plymouth.

It was past midnight when he arrived at Lanherne Farm that night, and he would have been severely reprimanded, but Jacob Polyphant's son Miah came in at the same time, so nothing was said. Miah had walked from near Camelford, where his first, and so far his only love had gone visiting, and this fact saved Hugh from many awkward questions.

Hugh was so tired that he did not look at "the packet" that night. He put it away in the little box of which he had become possessed, and then went to sleep.

The next day rain fell continuously, fell in torrents; so, after he had attended to the cattle, he was allowed to idle away his time as he pleased. Until dinner-time he listened to Nehemiah, who related his experiences of the previous night. Then, the rain still continuing, he went to his

little room and read "the packet." This done, he sat for a long time thinking, then, heedless of the rain, he left the house and went towards Trelowry.

As I have stated, it was now November. The sky was grey, the rain fell, and the ground was sodden. Anything more bleak and desolate than the Altarnun Moors could not well be imagined, and Hugh shivered as he made his way across their dreary wastes. When he came to Trelowry, however, things were changed. The land was cultivated, huge trees grew. The house was pleasantly situated, and the hills around sheltered it from the storms which swept across the heights, although Router and Brown Willy could be seen plainly from its windows. It was a fine, substantial building, more than a century old. It had an air of comfort, and in spite of the bleakness of the day it seemed to Hugh like a little paradise.

"And the packet says it's mine," he said, "or that it ought to be mine. I wonder if it is true? It must be. My grandfather tells the same story that the vicar told me. It must be true!"

He looked at the building, surrounded by its lawns and gardens, he noted the evergreens that grew in rich profusion, the substantial stables that stood at the back, and felt the atmosphere

of rest and prosperity that seemed to surround everything.

Was it his really? Henry Magor, commonly called Squire Magor, lived there, and Henry Magor's father came to the place in default of the real owner's appearance. But if he, Hugh, were the real owner, what then?

Besides all this, did his grandfather, John Trelawney, kill his brother, as he thought? If not, Jonathan Trelawney, or his heirs, might yet be living. It all seemed very foolish and unreal to the lad, and yet the sight of the grey old homestead filled his heart with a great longing.

"It all happened fifty years ago," he mused, "fifty years ago. It is difficult to prove anything now."

Again he looked at the house. "It tallies exactly with grandfather's description. I wonder if those certificates and deeds lie in that secret closet which grandfather speaks of? I wonder if there is a secret closet at all? Was grandfather mad, as some thought? But there must be some truth in it all, or his account could not so agree with what I heard from the vicar. If it is true, I am not Hugh Launceston at all, but Hugh——"

"Hollo, my lad, what are you doing here?"

The speaker was a stoutly-built, well-dressed man, about fifty years of age. He was sitting

on a grey cob, and had evidently come from a long ride.

"Looking, sir."

"Looking! Looking at what?"

"Looking at the house, sir."

"Why were you looking at the house? Who are you? What's your name?"

"Hugh Trelawney!"

The name was mentioned without a thought, and Hugh felt his heart give a great bound as he uttered it.

"Hugh Trelawney!"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"At Lanherne. I am a servant there."

"Oh, you are the lad that Polyphant took from the workhouse? But he calls you Hugh Launceston!"

"Trelawney is my name."

"Then why——"

But Hugh turned up the road, and made his way towards Lanherne without answering any more questions.

"Hugh Trelawney," he repeated. "Hugh Trelawney!" All sorts of thoughts rushed through his mind, and strange visions passed before him. He had given it as his name, and somehow life seemed different to him. Hugh Trelawney! Yes, for the future he would be

known as such, and he must be worthy of the name.

All the way back to Lanherne he formed plans as to what he must do and be, for he felt that from the moment he called himself Trelawney a new life was stirring within him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HUGH MEETS THE MADMAN OF THE MOORS.

THE evening on which Hugh returned from his visit to Trelowry, he informed Jacob Polyphant that his name was Trelawney, and not Launceston. Jacob was not surprised at this, as he had not believed from the first that Launceston was his true name. Neither did he seem to object to "Trelawney." To the simple-minded farmer it had but little meaning. One name was just as good as another to him, and not knowing anything of Hugh's thoughts, he readily accepted it. This was also true of the family, and as for the people in the parish, they thought little and cared less.

It made a great deal of difference to Hugh, however. From that day he seemed to be inspired by new motives, and to be filled with new desires. He did his work on the farm as before, but every spare minute was spent in study. He was very careful about his speech, and did not drift into the use of the common dialect of the



parish. He also discovered a man who had at one time been a village schoolmaster, but who, on the introduction of Board Schools, had been obliged to retire upon such money as he had been able to save. This man, Peter Chynoweth by name, was in his way quite a scholar. He understood not only the ordinary subjects usually taught to children in elementary schools, but he had made himself acquainted with land surveying, as well as with what is called mine surveying. He was also a great reader, and his library was often referred to as being much superior to Parson Strong's.

Hugh spent many of his evenings with Peter Chynoweth, and in the years which followed learnt all that gentleman was able to teach him. By the time Hugh was twenty years of age he was regarded as a scholar, and was respected in the parish. People had forgotten that Jacob Polyphant had taken him from Launceston Workhouse, and during the last two years he had been treated as a member of the family. For Hugh continued to work at Lanherne. The farmer felt very thankful for this; Hugh received but little wages, and did far more work than an ordinary workman. He had also fulfilled the farmer's prognostications concerning his physical proportions. He was no longer shambling and awkward. Plenty of country air, and plain, homely food,

with much out-of-door work, had caused him to develop into a stalwart, well-built young fellow.

It must be admitted that the one great force in his life, however, had been the thought that he was Hugh Trelawney. The fact that he belonged to one of the oldest families in England influenced him in a hundred ways, while his desire to own Trelowry became the great object of his life. He had studied again and again all the histories of the family that he could get, and he became more and more sure that “ Trelowry ” was built on the site of the ancient Trelawney Barton House, and each day his ambition became stronger to possess the house and land of his forefathers, and then to alter the name from Trelowry to Trelawney. To fit himself for the position he desired, he never ceased to labour, and when one Christmas Day he visited Peter Chynoweth, and that gentleman told him there was not his equal for scholarship in the whole parish, there were few in the county prouder than Hugh.

He had consulted law books in relation to the estate, and he had discovered that, supposing all his grandfather had stated was true, he had no legal right to it. The property had passed from the hands of the family ; nevertheless he determined to buy it back. By what means he had not decided, but it should be done before many years

passed away. He was a Trelawney, and he would win a position worthy of his name. To that his every endeavour should bend, and his desire should be realised, no matter what stood in his way. He had no bitter feelings towards Mr. Magor. As far as he could see he had a perfect right to be at Trelowry. What if the land had originally belonged to the Trelawneys, the Magors had acted naturally in seeking to possess it ; only he, Hugh Trelawney, must get it back.

This became a master passion in his life. He was a Trelawney, and he must win a position worthy his name, at whatever cost. When the proper time came he would proclaim his parentage, he would show the papers which proved him to be the grandson of John Trelawney, who at one time lived with his brother at Trelowry.

At twenty years of age he had done nothing towards this, except to get what was regarded as a good education and to save a few pounds. That is from a practical standpoint. He had formed a hundred plans, he had mused over them again and again, and in most cases had given them up as worthless.

On his twentieth birthday he went to see Peter Chynoweth, and after a few minutes' conversation with him left the house and wandered across the moors alone. It was Christmas Day, and a severe

frost had hardened the earth's crust. The air was keen and biting; but he did not mind, he was young and strong, and on that day he was at liberty to do what he liked. Around him stretched the wild waste of moorland, and not a single soul was visible. He had no desire to go back to Lanherne, and he had no associates in the parish. Heedless of distance, he went farther westward than he had ever been before. Presently he saw a gorge between two rocky peaks. It revealed itself suddenly. If he had kept a hundred yards farther north he would never have seen it, so hidden was it, owing to the peculiar formation of the land.

"One might live here for ever, and no one know of his existence," he mused. "This is a strange, lonely parish, this Altarnun. I don't think there's another so desolate."

This thought had scarcely passed through his mind, when, looking down the gorge, he beheld a human creature. At first he was not sure whether it was human or no. It seemed to him like some four-footed beast, but on looking more closely he saw that it was a man.

Hugh made his way down the gorge. He made but little noise, for the heather, even in the winter time, formed a thick carpet. Silently as he went, however, the creature he had seen heard him and turned his head quickly. A curious feeling

crept into the young man's heart almost amounting to fear, for the thing came towards him like a savage beast.

The creature was an old man. His form was bent exceedingly, and he seemed to have a difficulty in raising himself. His hair was long and white, and hung over his back in thick, shaggy locks. His beard, too, was long, unkempt, and of the same colour. His feet were covered with coarse sacking, and his clothes were of a similar material.

"Who are you?" demanded the old man fiercely. "Why come here? This is my land, mine!"

Hugh was too much startled to reply. There was no house, as far as he could see, within two miles. The land was entirely uncultivated. It was a place seldom visited. Even sportsmen would find little to draw them there. The sight of this angry old creature, therefore, surprised him beyond measure.

"You are trespassing, I tell you, you are trespassing!" shrieked the old man, his eyes glaring fiercely. "I'll have no one here. I pay my price to be alone, and alone I'll be. I've been here unmolested for many a long year, and alone I'll remain. Do you hear! Get away! You'll get no good here. None! Begone!"

There was something which appealed to Hugh in this. He was in a sense alone. He had no

relations, no friends. What purpose had this angry old creature in staying here? he wanted to know. Moreover, the circumstance fired his imagination, and he felt eager to know the secret of his life, for secret he felt there must be, or he would never live here like an anchorite.

"The land is common land," said Hugh. "It is simply owned by the lord of the manor. I have as much right here as you have."

"Lord of the manor!" cried the old man. "Lord of the manor! What do you know of the lord of the manor?"

He looked at Hugh keenly, his eyes seemed to devour every feature. He appeared anxious, too, as if wondering if he were a friend or an enemy.

"I know that if the lord of the manor knew you lived here he would charge you for rent. You might get into trouble, too. The police don't like nameless strangers living in the parish."

"Nameless strangers!" shrieked this strange being. "Why, I—I'm not nameless. Lots of people know Granfer Crowle; lots of people! Don't I get milk, and bread, and butter from Boundy's? But there, you won't tell the police! No, you won't tell. Whatever you do, don't let the police know. I've lived here eight years now, eight years. I want no police asking questions. But there! Mrs. Boundy says I'm crazy; so I am, but I tell you I know, I know!" And he

chuckled as though he possessed a great secret which the world would have him divulge.

Hugh remembered now. He had heard of Granfer Crowle, or, as some called him, Nebuchadnezzar. He had been told that he was mad, in a harmless sort of way. Some said he was a miser ; others that he was a wizard, and had dealings with the powers of darkness. Rumour said that Micah Boundy, who farmed a few acres of peat land which he had "taken in" from the moors, gave him his food because he was afraid of him. It was also said that he paid Micah handsomely for what he got ; and, again, that he worked charms in order to make the farmer's corn grow. Anyhow, there was a mystery surrounding him ; no one knew who he was or from whence he came, and everybody was afraid to anger him, for the people who lived on the moors mostly believed that he possessed power more than human.

All this may seem strange in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but it must be remembered that there are few parts of England so desolate as this part of Altarnun. It is a wild moorland district, twelve miles from all railway communication. The life of the people until the Education Act was passed, was little different from that of the time when John Wesley visited this very district. Even to-day, out of more than fifteen thousand acres of land which belong to

the parish, more than eight thousand are simply wild stretches of rocks and marshes. The people who live on the lonely little farms often see no human creature from week end to week end, save the members of their own households. The superstitions of the days of John Wesley have scarcely begun to pass away, while the weird, dreary surroundings, so lonely and rugged, keep alive beliefs which under other circumstances would die.

"What do you know?" asked Hugh presently.

"Know! know!" repeated Granfer Crowle. "More than you would like me to tell you, my lad. Can a man live alone among the dead as I have done for eight years—eight years, mind—and not know?"

"Yes, but what?"

"Let me look at your face again!" he cried fiercely. He fastened his eyes on Hugh, and continued to look like one fascinated.

"What's your name?" he cried.

"Hugh."

"Hugh! That means nothing! Hark! don't you hear the spirits moaning? Go away, go away, and never come here any more. And mind, never tell any one you've seen me here, never, never!"

"Why not?"

"Because I'll haunt you if you do!"



Hugh laughed.

"You laugh, do you? Laugh at Granfer Crowle, do you? Laugh at Nebuchadnezzar, because his nails are long like bird's claws! I don't live alone for nothing, no, not for nothing! A man always knows many things when he lives alone! I've been alone eight years, and have had no one to talk to but dead people. Ha, ha!" and he laughed wildly.

"You don't live alone," said Hugh.

"Who lives with me, then?"

"That creature there," said Hugh, looking towards the side of the ravine.

The old man turned quickly, and he saw what Hugh had seen—a shock-headed girl about fifteen or sixteen years of age. She might perhaps be older, or possibly younger. It was difficult to tell. Her head was covered with a tangled mass of black hair, which hung over her shoulders and down her back. Her eyes were also black, and shone like diamonds, while her parted lips revealed white, glistening teeth. It was a strange, savage-looking face, and a look of wild wonder shone from her eyes.

"Go back, back for your life," shrieked Nebuchadnezzar. The girl turned, ran up the ravine, and disappeared.

"What right have you to keep that young girl here?" asked Hugh.

"She's my own child," he said.

"No," replied Hugh; "you are too old to have a child of that age."

"My grandchild, then."

"Then where is her father, where her mother?"

"Look, don't tell!" cried Granfer Crowle; "don't let anybody know, no, not anybody, and I'll give you some information that will make you rich. I haven't lived here eight years for nothing. Only promise you'll not tell. I am too old to make use of my secret; but you are young, you are strong. You have a future before you. You are a fine lad, too. Ah! don't I remember when I was your age!"

"I think I ought to tell," replied Hugh. "It's not right for a young girl to be reared like a savage!"

"Like a savage! Do you know who I am? But there, never mind. If you knew her you'd not find her ignorant. Oh no! I've done my duty like—like a—a gentleman! Now look, it's Christmas Day. Oh, I know! How old are you?"

"Twenty to-day."

"Born on Christmas Day! Remarkably lucky young man. But look, you say nothing about her—not a word, and I'll show you something! Promise now!"

Hugh caught the old creature's humour; indeed,

he was much influenced by him. His long, white hair and beard, his glittering, mad-looking eyes, his bent form, made an impression which he could not understand.

“If there’s anything in what you tell me, I’ll promise,” he said.

He almost lifted himself into an upright position, while a haunted, fearful look came into his eyes. He seemed to be debating with himself what step he should take, muttering fiercely all the while. Presently he turned to Hugh again, and scrutinised his face closely.

“I’ve method in my madness; method in my madness!” he cried.

Hugh was silent. In spite of himself he was beginning to fear this strange being.

“You did not tell me your name,” he continued.

“Have you told me yours?” retorted Hugh.

“Yes, I’m Granfer Crowle, Crazy Granfer, Nebuchadnezzar, that’s what I am! But what’s your name? I’ve seen your face before; when, where, I don’t know. In the night, I think, when the spirits of the dead have been grinning around me.”

“My name is Hugh.”

“Hugh what?”

“Hugh Trelawney.”

The old man’s passion seemed to die away; he became more calm, more collected.

"Trelawney, Trelawney," he repeated, still keeping his eyes on Hugh; "how did you get that name?"

"My father was called Trelawney, I suppose."

He did not take his eyes from Hugh's face.

"It's the Trelawney eye, the Trelawney features," he said. "Trelawney, Trelawney, it's a forgotten name. It's dead, dead, and yet——. Hugh Trelawney, are you a gentleman?"

"The Trelawneys all are. I'm a Trelawney."

Hugh uttered the words proudly. The desire to be regarded as the possessor of the name, and to win a position worthy of it was strong in his heart.

"But where do you live?"

"At Lanherne Farm."

"Lanherne Farm! Let me think—yes. Do you own it?"

"No. I work there."

"Then you are a—a servant—a Trelawney!"

Hugh was silent.

"Look at me—straight in the eye. There now, tell me all about yourself. Where were you born? How did you come here? You don't speak like a common farmer; tell me why?"

Hugh's pride was touched. He would not tell his story to this madman of the moors.

"No," he said.

"But I shall find out; yes—I shall find out."

"You'll find it a difficult task," said Hugh.

"Well, we shall see!" but he seemed less certain. "I must think," he continued. "Look, you must come and see me again. You want to get rich, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Hugh.

"I know it. You'd give a great deal to be rich. You need not answer. I know. Well"—he hesitated a second—"you must come and see me again."

"Why should I?" Hugh was annoyed at the dictatorial tone the old man assumed. "If I come to see you again," he continued, "I shall bring a policeman, and inquiries will be made about you and that poor girl I saw just now."

"No, you'll not," he said; "no, you'll not. You are not a talking sort. Besides, you'd be a fool if you did, a great fool. Why—but there, that's it, look at me straight in the eye again. You'll not say a word to any one of this meeting, and this day week you'll come and see me again, and that will be New Year's Day. I shall have something to say to you, something you never dreamed of. Yes, you'll be silent, and you'll come again, just before mid-day. Now go!"

Hugh felt as though he could not disobey the madman. He wanted to see where he lived, wanted to look again at the strange, eerie-looking girl who was evidently his companion.

He turned his face towards Lanherne, and walked across the moors like one in a dream ; but he knew that if he were alive he should be at the ravine again the following week.

“I wish he had fixed an earlier date !” he said to himself as he opened the Lanherne Farm gates.

## CHAPTER V.

### HOW HUGH DISCOVERED WHEAL TRELAWNEY MINE.

**D**URING the week which followed his strange meeting on the moors, Hugh sought to obtain information concerning "Granfer Crowle." He did not hint in any way that he had met him, but asked questions in a casual sort of way. He was unable to discover anything about him, however, which he did not know before. One farmer to whom he spoke doubted his existence altogether, and said that the common rumours in the parish were groundless. Another told him that while he had lived for a few months in an uninhabited part of the parish, he had now left and had gone away, no one knew whither. Jacob Polyphant told him that he believed the old man to be still living in the parish, because when he had spoken to Micah Boundy concerning him, he had evaded his questions and seemed anxious to change the subject. Jacob could tell nothing about him, however, except that he lived on the moors all alone,

and he believed him to be half madman and half wizard. Who he was and where he came from was a mystery, and since the first year after he came to the parish, people had ceased to think much about him.

"You are sure he lives alone?" queried Hugh.

"Iss; who would live with an ould wizard out there by Carn Hollow? Why, the very gipsies waa'n't go near un."

With this Hugh had to be satisfied; but his curiosity and anxiety to pay him a second visit grew stronger each day; and when New Year's Day came, a day regarded as a holiday among the farmers, he made his way across the moors towards Carn Hollow. The spot was more than two miles from Lanherne Farm, and scarcely any of the land between the two places was cultivated. It is true two cottagers had spent the few pounds they possessed in reclaiming a few acres of land and building small houses, but these were scarcely noticed in the vast sweep of land.

"What does the old fellow mean by living there alone?" mused Hugh; "and what did he mean by telling me he could make me rich? Nothing, I expect. He is simply mad. And yet his very existence seems mysterious. Besides, who is that wild-eyed girl, of whose life every one seems in ignorance?"

These and many other questions passed through



his mind as he tramped across the moors ; they also whetted his curiosity, and made him more eager to talk with the strange old creature again.

He found Granfer Crowle awaiting him. To-day, however, he was clothed differently. He was covered by an old corduroy suit, and in addition to this, a thick, heavy horsecloth was thrown over his head and shoulders. His feet, too, were encased in a pair of thick hobnailed shoes.

“ I knew you would come ! ” he cried.

“ Why ? ” asked Hugh.

“ Because my bones told me, the wind told me, the spirits of the moors told me. ”

“ Have they told you who I am, and where I came from ? ” asked Hugh.

Nebuchadnezzar looked at him savagely, as though he were baffled and yet was not willing to admit it.

“ Come with me ! ” he snarled.

Hugh followed him along the bottom of the gorge, until they came to a hut built by the side of the ravine. Hugh looked at the place curiously. It was sheltered from wind and weather, and was so hemmed in by the rocks that a casual visitor to the moors might be a few yards from this unusual dwelling-place and yet not notice it. There was a wild beauty in the scene too, and Hugh felt sure that in the summer time, when the heather was in bloom, and the furze bushes covered with

their yellow blossom, it might be a place to be desired. At that moment, however, the loneliness oppressed him, while the sight of his companion filled him with a kind of awe. The hut itself was built of the stones which abounded in the gorge, and of turf; the roof was covered with rushes.

Hugh examined the dwelling critically. He saw that it was probably "wind-and-water-tight," as the farmers would term it. There was also a rough chimney, which suggested that the occupants prepared for cold weather, while the heap of peat which had been brought there, as well as a large pile of sticks, showed that they had wandered farther afield than he had at first thought.

"Yes, I live here. Do you call it a home for a gentleman?" asked the old man.

"You are not interfered with, anyhow," replied Hugh.

"No; you are the first who has found me out for many a long day. But it doesn't matter. You'll not tell!"

"Come in—come in!" he continued; "I want to talk with you, Hugh Trelawney. Trelawney, eh!"

Hugh followed him into the hut. At first it seemed perfectly dark, but the ruddy glow from the heap of burning peat enabled him at length to see his surroundings. In spite of himself his heart gave a bound, and he forgot to notice what kind

of furniture the strange couple had gathered together. Seated beside the fire was the girl he had seen a week before, and Hugh caught the look she gave him. As his eyes became more accustomed to the light he could see her more clearly, and he became more and more interested.

Both eyes and hair were raven black ; the latter still hung in tangled masses over her head, and suggested that the owner was as wild and uncared for as the moors among which she lived. The eyes, however, were different. True, they burnt with a half-mad light, but there was also an expression of unutterable pathos in them. She looked towards Hugh in an appealing, wistful way, as though there were some yearning in her heart which he might satisfy.

“Issy,” said Granfer Crowle—he pronounced it “Izzy”—“do you know this young man?”

The girl shook her head.

“You don’t know any one, do you, Issy?”

Again she shook her head.

“You’ve no father, no mother, no home, no friends, have you, Issy?”

This time the girl spoke. Her answer, however, was half a cry, half a sob.

“No one, no one,” she said.

“How long have you lived with me?” continued the old man.

“I don’t know.”

"And where did you come from?"

"I don't know. From nowhere, I think. The hedgeside, the tent, the caravan, the fair."

"And you were treated kindly?"

"No, no!"

"And if I were to die, you'd have no friends?"

"No, no!"

She spoke in a kind of wail, all the time keeping her great black eyes upon Hugh.

"And can't you tell this young man anything about yourself? Your name—anything?"

"Nothing."

A feeling of pity came into Hugh's heart, and his sense of wonder increased. Who was this poor girl, and how did she come here? Was the dialogue which he had heard pre-arranged, and if so, what purpose had Nebuchadnezzar in making him a listener to it?

"Now, Issy," continued Granfer Crowle, and Hugh noticed that he spoke kindly, "this young man and I are going away for a bit. We shall be back in an hour or so; we shall want some dinner. You can get it ready, can't you?"

"Is he coming back?" she said, nodding towards Hugh, from whom she had not taken her eyes.

"Yes, he's coming back."

An eager look came into her face. "Yes, yes, I'll get everything ready," she said.

"Come with me," said the old man, turning

to Hugh, and then, with an activity of which he thought him incapable, he led the way down the gorge.

For some minutes neither spoke. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to be busy thinking, while Hugh felt as though he were dreaming. What did it all mean? Why was he following this mad old man of the moors? Who was the eerie, neglected girl he had left in the hut? What was to be the result of this episode in his life?

"Your name is Hugh Trelawney," said the old man presently. "You have an ambitious look on your face. You told me you wanted to be rich?"

"Yes."

Presently Nebuchadnezzar stopped.

"Before we go any farther," he said, "let us understand each other."

"Very well."

"Let's sit down."

"No; it's too cold."

"You are a bit afraid of me, aren't you?"

"Not a bit," answered Hugh.

The old man watched him closely, and seemed disappointed.

"You know how to keep a promise?"

"My name is Hugh Trelawney," replied the young man rather bombastically.

"Trelawney! Bah! I once knew—— But there, I believe you'll keep a promise. Now

mark. You want to be rich. If I put you in the way of being rich, will you promise me something?"

"I don't know," replied Hugh. "I'll promise anything reasonable."

"Will you sign the deed in your own blood?—will you carry it out to the very letter?"

In spite of himself a shiver crept down Hugh's back. He almost feared old Nebuchadnezzar. All the ghostly stories of the parish came rushing back to his memory.

"No," he replied; "if I can make a promise I will, and if I promise I'll carry it out. But I'll have no vagaries."

Again Nebuchadnezzar scrutinised Hugh's face, and he seemed to respect his coolness and self-possession.

"Very well, my lad," he said presently. "I know how you can get money, heaps of it, fit for a Trelawney. I'll tell you how to get it, on certain conditions. First, you are not to mention me in any way, neither must you mention Issy. We are to be out of it, completely out of it. That's the first thing. The second is this: if anything should happen to me—if I die—you'll take care of Issy."

"What do you mean by caring for her?"

"Feed her, clothe her, protect her, see that she never wants for anything."

“That is, of course, on condition that you help me to become rich, and also in case you die?”

“Yes. But I’m not going to die yet—no, not yet,” and he shuddered.

“I cannot promise until I see what these riches mean. All this may be a delusion. If all is fair and square I’ll promise, not otherwise.”

Without another word Granfer started walking again, and then came to another stop. He took from his pocket several stones.

“I hear you are a clever lad, but you don’t know the value of these, I expect,” holding the stones close to his face.

Hugh looked. Peter Chynoweth, who understood mine surveying, had told Hugh about minerals, and the young man saw that these stones were rich with tin.

“Would you promise if I tell you where these came from?”

“I should like to know more about them first.”

“Then come with me!”

He led him away across the moors for perhaps half a mile, until they came to another ravine. It was, if possible, more barren, more desolate than the one in which the old man’s hut was built. Hugh could scarcely repress a shudder as he stood there alone with Granfer Crowle. Above them he could hear the wind wailing across the moors, but in the gorge they were sheltered. The young man

looked around him ; the face of the rock was bare on every hand. A stream of water rushed along, and he saw that the stones at its bed were of a peculiar colour.

"You know something about mining, do you ? but of course you don't."

"Yes, I do."

"Then what do you think of this ?"

Hugh looked at the sides of the rocky ravine, and saw, what Cornish miners call "a lode." He saw, too, that it ran east and west, and was about four feet wide. This vein of mineral running through the country, usually designated "kellas" by miners, caused Hugh to wonder. He picked up some stones from the bed of the stream ; they were of the same nature as those which the madman had shown him.

"No one knows it but myself," cried Granfer Crowle. "I found it myself. Years ago, when—when I was younger, I worked—that is, I know tin. There's a fortune here !"

Hugh had visited the mines at Linkinhorne, and from what Peter Chynoweth had told him he fancied Nebuchadnezzar had spoken the truth.

"I've tried it here, I've tried it farther on," cried Granfer ; "it's rich both east and west. I tell you there's a fortune here. Why, look at this !"

He picked a loose stone from the "lode," and



then, by means of a hammer which he had brought with him, cracked it. "There, do you see?" he cried, "rich with tin, rich with tin."

Hugh saw that he spoke the truth.

"I'd work it myself," cried Nebuchadnezzar, "but I'm too old. Besides, I—— But there, I'm not going to tell you any more. Now will you promise?"

"Not yet," said Hugh. "The lode may be rich, there may be a fortune here; but capital is needed. First of all the 'mining sett' will have to be bought, and machinery will be needed."

"I've thought of all that. The 'mining sett,' as you call it, can be got for a song. Nobody suspects what's here, and Lord Tresillian's steward will let you have it for very little, that I know. As for machinery, well now, what's wanted? A water wheel and stamp heads. Well, here's a stream of water big enough, and wasting. Here's a wheelpit which nature has made. An outlay of £200 will do it. In three months after you start you can raise five ton of tin a month. Tin is £70 a ton—that's £350 a month. You can pay expenses for £50 a month, and that leaves £300 a month profit. That's £3,600 a year. Isn't it good enough for a Trelawney?"

"You forget," said Hugh, "that I've no capital. Where can I get £200? There's scarcely a man in the parish who could lend so

much. Besides, if there were, they would want securities—ample securities.”

“ I’ll advance the amount.”

“ Where can you—that is, how do you possess so much ? ” asked Hugh in astonishment.

“ Never mind, I do. Some time I may tell you ; but not now, no, not now. I want to know more first. But mind, if I advance the money, I must have a share, and Issy must be well provided for. We can go into details later. I wouldn’t tell you now but for Issy. The maid must never want. Issy loves me, and she keeps my heart alive, and when I die what will become of her ? You must promise me that she shall be treated well, generously. I will dictate the terms, and you must abide by them, or the curse of old Nebuchadnezzar the madman shall be upon you.”

He said this to himself rather than to Hugh, and the young man felt that he was alone with a madman. And yet, as he had said, there was method in his madness. His plans seemed carefully made, and he was evidently anxious to provide for the poor lonely girl he had seen in the moorland hut.

“ Come,” continued Granfer, “ we will go back, back to Issy.”

“ Who is Issy ? ” asked Hugh. “ How did she come to you ? ”

“ Who is she ? I know not. I was roused

one night by a sound of a cry on the moors. I thought first it was the spirits of the departed dead. They visit me often, very often, at night—and oftener before she came. Well, I went out, and found a poor half-starved child—dying of cold, and hunger, and cruelty. I saw the bruises on her poor little body. She told me she had lived with gipsies, and that they cruelly treated her. They had camped on the moors, and she ran away. That's all. Well, I took her in, and she's been a joy to me. I was kind to her, and she loved me, and she made the wild moors beautiful. Now I could not live without her. We are both waifs. She is afraid for any one to see her. She thinks the gipsies have a right to her, and are searching for her, and so she's glad to live with me. Farmer Boundy is willing to bring us all we need, and hold his tongue. Yes, he's afraid of me, and I—I pay him well."

"But," said Hugh, "why do you live here? You are a man of education. Why do you stay in this desolate place without friends or companionship? If you have money, why do you not go where you can have comforts? You would then give Issy a fair chance, and bring her up like a Christian."

A look of cunning came into Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. "You say you are called Trelawney," he

said. "I believe you are. Well, every Trelawney knows that each man has his secret. You have yours, Hugh Trelawney, haven't you?"

Hugh was silent.

"And I have mine. I'd give worlds if I hadn't. My secret gnaws at me, just here," placing his hand on his heart, "gnaws night and day. It's been there many a long year. I couldn't bear it but for Issy."

"But why do you live here on these dreary Altarnun Moors?"

"That's a part of my secret," and he laughed a mad laugh.

Hugh could not repress a shudder.

"You think I'm mad; well, I am sometimes; but my madness makes me wise. My lonely life has made me able to read men, read their thoughts. I know what's in your mind now. You are thinking that I don't possess the £200 necessary for you to start working the mine; but you are wrong. I'll show it you directly. You are also thinking about Issy. You are curious about her, you want to see her again. You know I read you aright, Hugh Trelawney. And I trust you. You will utter no word to any one about me or Issy, and what you promise you will perform."

Hugh was silent.

"You've begun a new chapter in your life

to-day," continued the old man. "Look, there is Issy waiting for us. A snowstorm is coming; let's get in quick. After dinner our plans must be made, I have many things to tell you. Issy, is the dinner ready?"

"It's ready," replied the girl, again fastening her eyes on Hugh, "all ready."

As Hugh entered the hut he could hardly believe that his experiences were real.

## CHAPTER VI.

HOW HUGH ENTERED THE HOME OF HIS FATHERS.

HUGH did not stay long in the hut, neither did he partake freely of the dinner which had been provided. The truth was, he felt far from comfortable. If he looked at the girl, he found that her eyes were fixed on him with a strange, unearthly stare, and he knew that Nebuchadnezzar was watching his every movement just as a cat watches a mouse. Both the girl and the old man evidently tried to read his inmost thoughts.

When dinner was over Granfer Crowle took a bag from a hole in the wall of the hut.

“Here are the sovereigns,” he said, “more than you will need, far more.”

“How did you get them?” asked Hugh.

“Honestly, honestly, my lad.”

“Are you not afraid they will be stolen? If some men in the parish knew that you had so much money, you would be murdered.”

“Ah, but who knows? No one. I trust you

because I have seen into your soul. You will tell no one. Now about my plans."

He talked earnestly, and with much evident knowledge of what he intended doing; and Hugh, when he had heard him, agreed to his terms. All the while Issy listened, but spoke no word.

When Hugh departed, he held out his hand to Nebuchadnezzar. The old man grasped it eagerly.

"Yes, I trust you," he cried; "you will be true, I know you will be true. It's best, it's best. Come and see me again soon—often; but be careful to let no one see. Come at night! come at night!"

As for Issy, she continued to look at him silently, and when he left the hut she spoke no word.

"Good-day, Issy," he said. "I hope you will have a happy New Year;" but she did not reply. Her eyes followed him as he found his way up the gorge, and just before he took the step which hid the hut from his sight, he turned and saw that she still watched him with a look partly of wonder and partly of terror.

A few weeks later Hugh had secured the mining rights of that part of the moor where the lode was, and, much to the surprise of every one, engaged men to work. He also ordered the

necessary "castings" from a distant foundry, and with surprising quickness for that part of the country commenced underground operations. Many opinions were rife as to where he got his money, and by what means he had obtained a knowledge of the mineral; but no one seemed to wonder that he took steps which were different from those of the ordinary farmer folk. He had always been silent and reserved, and nothing was known about him. He had obtained the reputation of being a scholar, and Peter Chynoweth had diligently spread the report that he possessed more brains than any man in the parish. The wonder was that he had stayed so long with Jacob Polyphant, who had often confessed that although he paid him but little wage, Hugh knew more about farming than any farmer of his acquaintance.

If "familiarity breeds contempt," mystery creates respect. So it came about that Hugh was more highly regarded than many of the farmers, and from the fact that Jacob Polyphant was glad to treat him as one of the family, he would have been a welcome visitor in the best houses in the vicinity, had he cared to go to them.

Thus while people wondered how he got the money to work the mine, every one regarded it as natural that he should, as they termed it, "do zummin out a' th' ordnery."

By midsummer the stamp heads were heard to



clang on the hard stones, while the cottagers within two miles of the mine made quite a harvest by taking in lodgers. Hugh, assisted by Peter Chynoweth, overlooked everything, and mining experts who had been led by curiosity to visit the place, declared that nothing in Linkinhorne was more promising, and that with proper management, if the lode held good, a fortune might be made. Thus Hugh's venture became the talk of the parish, and if people showed him respect before, they became quite deferential afterwards. Stories were told how that ten tons of tin had been taken to the market within two months from the time when the stamps began to work, and that Hugh had received offers of fabulous sums of money if he would sell his rights in the "Wheal Trelawney Mine." Of course all this was much exaggerated; nevertheless Hugh's speculation promised to pay him well.

He still lived at Lanherne, Mrs. Polyphant having offered him the use of the "front parlour" if he would stay with them.

All this time Hugh's desire to buy back Trelowry, the home of the Trelawneys, grew stronger. Little by little he was reaching the position he had coveted; but he wanted to obtain Trelowry as his own, and then he would proclaim to the world that he was the grandson of John Trelawney, and occupy a position, not among the farmers of the parish, but the landed gentry of the county.

It was a poor ambition, doubtless, but the belief that he was a Trelawney had kept him from sinking to the level of the lads of the parish, and often the desire to be worthy of his name had been a saving force in his life.

One evening, several months after his mining operations had commenced, Hugh was coming across the moors alone. He had been to Bodmin, and was now walking home. The time was what the farmers called “laate ’arvust” ; in other words, it was early in September. The broad stretch of moorland looked very fine in the light of the westering sun, the fresh smell of the heather was sweet to breathe. Altogether the scene had an exhilarating effect on the young man. Everything promised well, and he was in high spirits. The cool wind which played on his dark, sunburnt face affected him like some fabled elixir, the light, fleecy clouds caused flickering shadows to rest on Router and Brown Willy, and the free spirit of the moors possessed him.

“ It’s a glad, grand thing to live ! ” he cried aloud.

The sound of his own “ stamps ” reached him, and he knew that every thud meant wealth, and wealth meant the fulfilment of his heart’s desire. At least, he hoped so. He did not see as yet how he was to buy Trelowry, but the time would come. He was very young—not twenty-one

until the following Christmas Day. Fortune had been very good to him, and in the flush of his youth he felt sure it would continue.

The very mystery which surrounded his life seemed to heighten his spirits. He knew no more about Granfer Crowle, or Nebuchadnezzar, as he always called him, than on that New Year's Day when he had shown him the lode. It is true Issy's face haunted him, and he often caught himself wondering who she was; but when he visited the hut she was seldom to be seen. When he asked about her, he was told that she was well, but nothing more.

He thought of all this as he trudged along, and presently caught himself singing the old Cornish song :—

“And shall they scorn Tre, Pol and Pen?  
And shall Trelawney die?”

“No, Trelawney shall not die!” he cried.  
“I'll get back the house, the lands; but how?”

He left the main road and struck across the moors. As he climbed the hillside the scene became finer. Wider and wider grew the landscape, while the golden sunlight flooded the dreary moors with beauty.

“At one time all the parish belonged to the Trelawneys,” he cried; “all of it, and now——”

He reached a high peak, and looked around him. Yes, it was a grand sight. Here, on the one hand

was the stretch of moors reaching Router and Brown Willy, which stood like two giant sentinels keeping watch. On the other was a great rocky hill rising between him and Linkinhorne. Eastward were many farmsteads, green fields, and waving corn. Here and there the cornstacks stood, telling that the harvest was nearly over. Dreary the countryside might be in the winter, but now it was wondrously fine. Presently his eyes rested on what seemed a wood, surrounded by rich, broad meadows, but between the trees he could see a fine old house standing.

"I'll go and look at it again!" he cried. "Never as yet have I been inside, but I can view from without."

He made his way across the moors until he came to the cultivated land; then he got into a lane, which was bordered by high hedges, where honeysuckles grew in wild profusion, scenting the air he breathed. Here, too, blackberries peeped from among the bramble leaves. The bees hummed as they went back to their hives laden with honey, the birds chirped on the branches as they settled themselves to rest, the sun sank lower and lower, until the hills in the distance appeared dark and sombre. His heart seemed to grow big, his chest heaved. He was standing on the Trelawney land; close by was the house in which his grandfather had lived.

With fast-beating heart he came up to the main entrance to the house, when he heard his own name.

“Mr. Trelawney.”

He turned, and saw Mr. Magor, the owner of Trelowry.

It seemed strange to be called “Mr. Trelawney” by the owner of the land he coveted, and he started like one guilty of an evil action.

“Mr. Magor,” he replied calmly, “I hope you are well.”

“Thank you, yes. I suppose your mine is turning out well?”

“Yes, very well.”

“I was over that way yesterday. I called to see it. It struck me that you would require a lot of new machinery to work it well.”

“Yes, presently I hope to extend in that direction. At present I have not the capital.”

“Ah, just so. Won't you come in? I should like to talk with you about it, if you don't mind.”

“Thank you,” said Hugh, and he walked up the drive with Mr. Magor. It was the first time the owner of Trelowry had been friendly with him. Years before he had asked his name, as though he resented his looking at the house. Now the squire asked him to accompany him almost as an equal.

Not a detail of the house and grounds escaped

Hugh's eyes. He seemed to see his ancestors' hands in everything. The old grey stone walls, the quaint carving, the wide hall, the low ceiled rooms, he missed nothing. Yes, it was a fit home for the Trelawneys. For the time he forgot that he was an alien, and that the owner stood by his side watching him closely.

Even to Mr. Magor it seemed strange that he should have invited this one-time work-house lad to enter his house as an equal. And yet it was not strange. The squire instinctively felt that the young man by his side was not of the ordinary sort. True, he had been a farm-labourer, but he had manifested his superiority by becoming well educated—at least, he was considered so in the parish. Besides, he had a purpose in view, and as he looked on the tall, well-knit young man by his side, and saw that he was well dressed and well mannered, he could not treat him as an inferior.

They entered the library together. Hugh eagerly scanned the books on the shelves, and carefully examined the furniture, wondering how much of it belonged to the Trelawneys and how much Mr. Magor had bought.

"You must have been remarkably lucky to have discovered that lode, Mr. Trelawney," said Mr. Magor, "and you must have had a keen eye to find out its qualities."

"Yes, I was fortunate," replied Hugh.

"I have often wondered about you," continued the squire. "You are rather a mystery to the parish. Many people wonder why you came here."

"Yes, I daresay."

"You were born in England, I think?"

"No."

"You are not an Englishman then?"

"Of an English family, of course. Of Cornish—my name, as you know, is Trelawney."

"Oh yes,"—the squire hesitated. "There—there was a family of that name who lived in this parish once," he stammered.

"Yes, in this house. But the Trelawneys are a very old family, and there are many branches."

"Oh yes. Which branch is yours?"

"I suppose I am some kind of a descendant of the people who once owned Trelowry."

The squire felt like laughing. He remembered Hugh as a shock-haired, ungainly, badly-clothed boy. Looking at the young man at his side, however, the laugh died on his lips. Besides, he had a purpose in view.

"Your mine pays you well, I hear?"

"Yes, very well at present. I shall do better in a year or so. I shall be able to make further extensions. I shall buy a big engine to pump the water; then the miners will be able to go deeper."

“ Why wait a year ? ” asked the squire.

“ Because I cannot at present afford to invest the necessary money, and I do not care to borrow.”

“ But why not take a partner ? ”

Hugh looked at the squire keenly.

“ I have some money lying loose,” continued Mr. Magor. “ I shall be very glad to join you in your venture.”

Hugh’s eyes flashed. He thought of all this might mean ; he thought of possible results.

“ I have not considered such a question,” he said quietly.

“ I think it would be a fine thing,” said the squire. “ It would enable you to make all the extensions you need, you could obtain better plant, and it would give me something in which I could interest myself. What do you say ? ”

Hugh understood now why this man was so friendly ; he had heard that he had been talking with the experts who had visited the mine. He wanted to have a share in his good fortune, and to obtain this he was willing to unbend to the unknown youth.

“ Thank you,” he replied at length ; “ I will consider it.”

“ Do,” said the squire. “ By the way, will you stay and have some supper ? We are old-fashioned folks here, and abide by old-fashioned ways.”



“I shall be very pleased,” replied Hugh, and the squire noticed that the young man seemed to regard the invitation as natural, and as though it were an ordinary thing for him to be the guest of the chief man of the parish.

Mr. Magor unbent further still. “Let me introduce you to my wife and daughter,” he said; “they are in the next room.” A minute later he stood before Mrs. Magor, a sweet-faced lady of about forty years of age.

“This is Mr. Hugh Trelawney,” he said to his wife, and Hugh felt better for being in the presence of such a woman. When he spoke to her daughter, however, he felt different. He thought he remembered seeing her before, but he was not sure. He had lived his lonely life on the farm, and he had not taken notice of “ladies of high degree.” Besides, few people came to Lanherne, and since he had commenced his mining operations he had thought of but little else.

She was a tall, proud-looking girl, with clear-cut features and bright blue eyes. A mass of light brown hair was coiled at the back of her head, and in it was placed a flower. To Hugh she came almost like a revelation. She told him of a world hitherto unknown. He desired to know more about her, and felt that a new phase of his existence had begun.

She was frigidly polite. She had heard of him,

and knew that he had been a servant at Lanherne. She resented her father's action in bringing him there, and yet, in spite of herself, she admired the cool self-possession with which he spoke. She fancied that the farm-labourer, who had discovered a lode and was becoming rich, would be a mixture of an ignorant clown and a conceited prig, and so the calm way in which he spoke to her was a welcome surprise.

Hugh felt the frigidness of her reception, and was sure she resented his presence as an intrusion, and a desire to prove himself her equal was aroused in his heart.

During the meal Hugh felt awkward amidst his new surroundings, but he was careful to appear at ease. With that quick intuition which is the birthright of some, he adapted himself to his circumstances. He felt that the girl was watching him, and a feeling half resentment and half admiration possessed him.

Before an hour had passed away he had aroused Lucilla Magor's curiosity. Every woman loves a mystery, and to a young woman it is a joy beyond words. Lucilla Magor loved romance, and as yet no romance had entered her life. Her father's father, as she knew, was a farmer, who had entered into the Trelawney estates. Her mother was the daughter of Edward Courtney of Laneast, and had married her father against her grandfather's

wishes, who thought that a Magor ought not to marry into the Courtney family. But there was no romance in this, no mystery. There *was* a mystery about the house in which she lived, and she had often wondered what had become of those Trelawneys who had left the parish fifty years before. But that was in the far past. As far as she knew, she was expected to marry George Bolitho, who rode over from Blisland every week to see her ; and although no positive engagement existed, the young man seemed to regard the matter as settled. But there was nothing uncommon in his courtship. George Bolitho was a common-place, decently behaved young man. When his father died he would have the Bolitho lands, and that was all. She liked him very well, and was always pleased to see him, but she knew all about George, knew his family, knew the amount of the rent-roll.

Thus the mystery which surrounded Hugh fascinated her. She forgave her father for being friendly with him ; nay, she was glad he had brought him to the house.

“ Will you have a cigar ? ” asked the squire presently ; “ my wife and daughter always sit with me in the library after supper while I smoke. You are in no hurry, I expect ? ”

“ Yes, do, Mr. Trelawney, ” said Lucilla Magor eagerly. Hugh looked at her questioningly, saw

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the look which flashed from her eyes, and noted the proud curl on her lips.

“Thank you, I will,” he said, for a daring thought had possessed his mind and heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

HOW HUGH THOUGHT TO POSSESS TRELOWRY.

THE daring thought to which I referred in the last chapter may not appear so striking to the reader as it did to Hugh Trelawney. It was simply this: he saw in Lucilla Magor a means of inheriting Trelowry. She was the only daughter of the man who owned the house and lands he coveted. She was, moreover, handsome and well educated; she graced the old homestead. He would seek to win her as his wife.

At least, he would think about it. The way seemed easy. Mr. Magor sought to obtain a partnership with him; such a relationship must necessarily bring him often to Trelowry, and consequently he would be thrown much in his daughter's society. This would give him the opportunity of winning her affection; at least, it would allow him to try. If he succeeded, he would naturally possess the home of the Trelawneys as a consequence. He would then

change its name. He would call it Trelawney Hall, or Trelawney Barton as in the old days, and then win back the glory of the name.

Besides, she fascinated him. Those blue eyes flashed brightly upon him, and she had asked him to stay, as though she desired his presence. She would make him a handsome wife, and thus by one leap he would obtain the position he desired.

He had heard of George Bolitho, and remembered some gossip as to his being enamoured of Lucilla Magor. That might mean difficulty. Well, so much the better; he rather liked the idea of obstacles in winning a wife.

All this passed through his mind as he took a cigar from the squire's box, and with a steady hand carefully cut the end. By the time he had obtained a light he had practically made up his mind. At any rate, he would test the advisability of such a project. As for Lucilla Magor, she was pleased that he had promised to stay, pleased to see him seat himself comfortably in an armchair and apparently enjoy one of her father's cigars. She felt a great desire to know about him. She was certain he was no ordinary country clown. He was far cleverer than George Bolitho, and certainly far more striking in appearance. Those great dark eyes impressed her strangely; his face, too, denoted

singular strength. Besides, he was reserved, and there was a mystery surrounding his life.

Not that she could ever be friendly with him—that was out of the question. He had been a farmer's lad; he had even been taken from the workhouse. At present, however, he was in her father's house, he sat with them as an equal, and it was her whim to talk with him. Nay, the longing for romance, which was a marked characteristic of her nature, made her deeply interested in him.

And yet she felt unable to question him. Somehow he forbade her. He was so different from George Bolitho. She regarded him as a kind of dog, of the fetch-and-carry order. She expressed her wishes, and George seemed to regard it as his work to carry them out. The man whom she was to marry, moreover, put not the slightest restraint upon her; Hugh made her almost timid. She could not understand this, and felt angry with him in consequence. And yet this made her all the more interested; she desired to find out his history.

"You live at Lanherne Farm, do you not, Mr. Trelawney?" she said presently.

"Yes. I have lived there several years now. First as a servant, at present as a lodger."

The girl irritated him; the cold glitter of her eyes made him feel that he must be on his

guard. Moreover, he had a pride in mentioning the position he had held; it gave him a sort of grim satisfaction. He tried to read the girl, too, and thought he understood something of her nature.

"But you have not lived at Lanherne all your life?" she said.

"Oh no; Mr. Polyphant took me from Launceston Workhouse. I was an inmate there for six months."

"And before that?"

"Before that," repeated Hugh slowly, "that, at present, is my secret, Miss Magor."

It was scarcely polite, and yet she liked him none the less for his answer.

"Supposing we change the subject," said Mr. Magor clumsily; he thought Hugh was pained by such a reference to the past, and he wanted to be on good terms with the young man. "Whatever Mr. Trelawney's past difficulties may have been," he continued, with somewhat coarse kindness, "he has carved out for himself a good position in the parish. He is a gentleman now."

"I always have been," remarked Hugh quietly.

Lucilla Magor was pleased with his answer; she saw he was not to be patronised, and respected him accordingly, although she could not help



feeling slightly angry with him. Her curiosity, moreover, was more and more aroused, so much so that she was in danger of overstepping the bounds of good breeding.

"It is strange, though, that a gentleman should take up the position of a farm servant, is it not?" she said, somewhat eagerly.

"Possibly," replied Hugh. "Of course everything depends on the purpose one has in taking such a step."

"And you had a purpose?"

"It would seem so, would it not?"

She wanted to ask more, but she felt it to be impossible, and yet she began to think of means whereby she might discover the secret of his life, and this not because of ordinary vulgar curiosity, but prompted by her love for the romantic.

Hugh's mind, too, had been busily at work. He remembered the papers his mother had given him. These told him of a secret place in the walls of the house, and contained the means whereby he could establish his identity. If he could arouse Lucilla Magor's interest in him she might be willing to help him. But he must be very careful. Mr. Magor was not the man with whom he could trifle, neither could he gain the information he wanted from his wife. No, the proud girl opposite, must help him—unknown to her parents. But how?

First of all, he must converse with her alone. He must establish some sort of intimacy between them. He saw his way to do this. He would have to see Mr. Magor frequently if he allowed him to have an interest in his mine. He would have to visit the house, he would see Lucilla often. Should he take steps to establish that intimacy at once? Why not? and he looked around the room as if in search of the means.

Nothing appearing, he looked at his watch. "I must be getting back to Lanherne," he said.

"It will be a lonely walk across the moors," remarked Lucilla.

"Yes," replied Hugh; "but I like the loneliness. I like to hear the wind wailing among the rocks. It makes fine music."

"You like music then?"

"I know little about it, as it is ordinarily understood. I never hear any except at your parish church and at the Wesleyan Chapel. Of course I am no judge, but it does not strike me as of a very high order."

"Won't you give Mr. Trelawney a little music before he goes, Lucilla?" said Mr. Magor, still desirous of being friendly with Hugh.

"If Mr. Trelawney would care for it," replied the girl, "the piano is in the next room."

"I should be delighted," said Hugh. "Shall I accompany you?"

So he accompanied her into the drawing-room, where she played to him. It is to be feared that Hugh heard little of the music. His eyes wandered around the apartment, and in the dim candle-light tried to locate the position of the secret place in the wall.

"Thank you," said Hugh, when she had struck the last note. "You are very fond of playing?"

"Yes," replied the girl, "it is one's only solace in such a humdrum locality as this."

"Humdrum?"

"Yes; life here is merely a matter of get up, eat, and go to bed again."

"Life is what we make it," responded Hugh, venturing on a platitude.

"No," said the girl; "life was interesting once, but not now. Back in the old times, when men fought battles and did deeds of daring, and when women were worthy of men, then it was worth the living. Nowadays everything is matter of fact. We have ceased to be mysterious or romantic. Every one knows about every one else."

"Indeed!" remarked Hugh.

"I wish I had been born five hundred years before," continued Lucilla. "Then this parish was great. Then Sir John Trelawney lived here; then there were great deeds done, great dangers faced. Don't you feel this, you who bear the name of Trelawney?"

"No," replied Hugh; "I am glad I live to-day."

"But what is life without romance?" cried the girl.

"Poor, I admit," replied Hugh; "but the days of romance are not over. Why, think—this house is full of it. Have you explored it?"

"There is nothing to explore. It is a fine old place, but there are no secret chambers, no mysteries."

"Are you sure? I have heard there are. I am a Trelawney, and I have heard much about this house. I should like to examine it."

"You are interested?"

"Greatly—I have need to be. I have——" he stopped.

"What?" asked the girl.

Hugh was silent.

"Do you know you are an enigma?" she said, scarcely realising the meaning of her words.

"No, why?"

"I hardly know. I have heard of you as a poor farm lad. I have heard, too, that by means of cleverness and good fortune you have become prosperous."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"I am more than that."

"What are you then?" she asked eagerly.

"I will tell you some day if I may," he replied.  
"May I?"

She became more than ever fascinated by him. There in the dim light, and in the old house in which he seemed so interested, he was an enigma to her. He was surrounded with mystery, and he touched chords in her nature hitherto untouched.

"Yes, tell me," she cried eagerly. "I *should* like to know."

"I will—at the proper time, but not now. I am very curious about this house," he continued. "I have read much about the history of the Trelawneys, and your vicar has told me much about the old Barton. I suppose we are on the spot where it was built. Here the Trelawneys of old laughed, and danced, and made merry. Will you show me through the rooms some day?" He said this in a low voice.

"I am sure my father would be pleased to do this," was her answer.

"Yes, but I asked you," he persisted, "you. Perhaps I could tell you that about the people who lived here which might interest you. Why, you breathe the very atmosphere of romance."

She looked at him eagerly as he stood by her side, tall and masterful. Instinctively she compared him with George Bolitho, and felt the difference between them.

"Yes," she said, "some day I will."

"Thank you," he replied; "thank you for the music. I must go now. I have enjoyed the evening very much. You have been very kind."

So they went back to the library again, and Mr. Magor bade him "good-night" very kindly.

"I hope to see you again soon, Mr. Trelawney," he said; "then we can settle the matter about which we were speaking. Lucilla, you will accompany Mr. Trelawney to the door?"

The girl obeyed with alacrity, and they stood on the doorstep together. It was a glorious night, and the harvest moon was high in the heavens. The scent of the flowers was wafted to them, and away in the distance the winds swept musically across moor and fen.

"Humdrum in such a place as this!" cried Hugh. "It seems like fairyland. One can fancy the shades of the old Trelawneys flitting among the trees."

The girl caught the spirit of the night and walked with him along the garden.

"If you know anything about Trelowry, tell me," she cried. She had forgotten that Hugh had been a workhouse lad, a farm labourer.

"Some time I will tell you," he replied, "but not to-night. Look, see how Router and Brown Willy lift their heads into the sky. This is the finest spot in the county, Miss Magor.

Hark how the wind which plays among the flowers here, dies away in a wail across the moors! I wonder if life is like that? Music in youth, a moan in old age."

The girl was excited. She shuddered slightly.

"After all it depends on the pathway of life," he went on; "if it leads to the wild, bleak moorlands it ends in a sob; if to the flowery dells, in music. But I do envy you, Miss Magor. You live in the land of romance. The Trelawneys do not die—they live. The place is full of them. It must be a joy to live here!"

"Say, who are you?" said the girl, still forgetting herself. "Are you what you seem?"

"No," said Hugh; "good-night. Thank you for a pleasant evening. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Yes," cried the girl excitedly, "you are coming again, are you not? You must tell me about the Trelawneys."

Hugh walked across the moors. He too was excited. His heart thumped loudly. Lucilla Magor had influenced him more than he thought. Her love for romance had aroused that quality in his own nature. Besides, he was young, and ardent, and ambitious, while she was young and fair—almost bewitching.

"She is a beautiful girl," he mused, "and she

was kind and courteous. She forgot her pride as we talked together. I will go again."

He strode on until he reached the summit of a hill; then he heard the distant thud of his own stamps. Things were so prosperous that he had to keep them working at night time as well as during the day.

"Magor wants to become a partner," he said. "I do not think I shall consent to that, but I will not decide in a hurry. It will pay me to wait."

After that time Hugh went often to Trelowry—so often that the country people began to gossip about him, and to say that Lucilla Magor had discarded George Bolitho for Hugh. This was not long in reaching the young squire's ears, and he became very jealous. At first he laughed at what he called an absurd story, but when one evening he was visiting Trelowry and saw how fond Lucilla was of Hugh's company, a great bitterness came into his heart, and he knew the meaning of jealousy. Although no formal engagement had existed between them, he had come to regard the matter as settled. He loved her as much as one of his order could love, and bitterly resented the idea that Lucilla should even think of any one else. Thus, when he saw how gracious she was to Hugh, although he loved her none the less, and his desire to possess her became the stronger, a hatred grew in his heart for the



man he thought to be his rival. So he determined to watch, and to leave no stone unturned in order that his wishes might be realised.

One evening Hugh was visiting Trelowry, and Lucilla was particularly gracious to him. She had become more and more interested in him, because each day he, as far as she could see, became more and more surrounded by mystery. Day by day she had become more eager for his visits, and when he was by her side she thought but little of George Bolitho.

They were sitting in the dining-room together, and for the moment they were alone. Hitherto, since the first night of their meeting, they had met only in the presence of others.

"My father and mother are going to Launceston to-morrow," she said to him.

"And you?"

"I shall be here alone."

"It is a long drive to Launceston."

"Yes; they will not be home until late. They are meeting some old friends there. I do not expect them till ten o'clock."

"May I come and see you to-morrow?" asked Hugh eagerly.

The girl blushed, and her heart beat fast. She felt rather afraid of him, and she was not sure of her heart. He fascinated her, but she was not certain that she loved him. She thought of

George Bolitho, too, and of her father's wishes concerning him.

Hugh noted her hesitation, and continued, in a low, eager voice: "I want to tell you something to-morrow, Miss Magor. This house contains the secret of my life. There's a hidden place in the wall containing papers which I want to compare with some in my possession. I want no one to know but you—and you can help me. Will you?"

Her curiosity, her passion for romance, for mystery, mastered her. Besides, there was something bewitching in the thought of being alone with him and helping him in his search. She turned and looked at him. His eyes fascinated her.

"Yes," she said with a nervous laugh.

"What time may I come?"

"When do you wish to come?"

"I should like it to be early—you know that—but I must not come until dark. Daylight is gone now at five o'clock, and I will not be here until half an hour after that. I do not want the servants to see. I want no prying eyes."

The girl had caught his spirit. "Very well," she said. "I will sit in the library and watch for you. Then I can let you in at the side door. Half-past five, you say?"

"Yes, half-past five."

“ You say this house contains the secret of your life ? ”

“ If I am rightly informed, it contains that by which I shall be able to——”

He stopped awkwardly.

“ Able to what ? ” she asked.

Should he tell her ? She was looking eagerly into his face, her eyes flashing brightly.

He opened his mouth to speak, when, hearing a noise, he turned, and saw George Bolitho standing not far from them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HUGH'S CONVERSATION WITH THE MAID OF THE MOORS.

WHEN Lucilla Magor saw George Bolitho, she started guiltily. She wondered how much he had heard and if he were aware of their arrangement. Hugh, however, regarded him coolly. He had but little respect for this young squire. He had a habit of measuring people, and Bolitho seemed to him a mere apology for a man. Intellectually he regarded him as a pigmy, and he felt sure he had no force of character, no personality. In all this, however, he was mistaken. True, the young squire was no genius, but he was not a fool. Nay, there was lying dormant within him a certain shrewdness which the circumstances of his life had not yet aroused to activity. He also possessed a dogged perseverance with which Hugh did not credit him. Besides all this, he was one of those heavy-minded men who do not stop at obstacles when once fully aroused. He inherited from his Celtic forefathers a kind of bull-dog

savagery. It was not often aroused, but it formed a part of his nature nevertheless, and thus George Bolitho was a more dangerous man than Hugh imagined. Under ordinary circumstances he was a well-behaved, kindly disposed young fellow, one who thought little and was easily led by those to whom he might attach himself. But he was capable of being cunning, and fierce, and cruel. We have all seen dogs of this order, dogs who look decently well bred, but who have a strain of the cur and the bull-dog in their nature for all that. Many men are not unlike dogs in some respects.

“I hope I am not disturbing you?” said Bolitho.

“No,” replied Lucilla, who quickly mastered herself. Then looking around the room, she said, like one surprised, “Where can mother be? she was here only a few seconds ago.”

“You were so engrossed in conversation that you did not notice her go out?” suggested Bolitho.

“That is true,” she replied. “Mr. Trelawney was telling me about some mysteries connected with this house. Trelowry is quite a romantic place.”

The young squire turned the conversation easily into another channel, and so quickly that Hugh felt suspicious. Moreover, he scarcely seemed to notice his presence. He spoke only with Lucilla, and seemed to regard Hugh as beneath his notice.

"I must find out how much you have heard, George Bolitho," thought Hugh. "I don't want to be disturbed when I come here to-morrow."

Soon after Mr. and Mrs. Magor joined them, and the conversation became general. About ten o'clock Hugh rose to take his leave. He had two miles to walk across the moors, and the night was rather dark. Mr. Magor accompanied him to the hall.

"Well, Mr. Trelawney, have you settled whether you are willing to take me into partnership?" he asked.

"You are very kind to ask again," said Hugh; "the truth is, the mine is turning out better than I ever dared to hope. As far as I can see, I shall soon have sufficient capital to work it fully myself. The main lode is turning out to be very rich just now, and the expenses do not increase."

The squire felt somewhat piqued at the reply; at the same time he felt increasingly desirous to share Hugh's good fortune. He was fond of money, and there were no means in that part of the county whereby he could increase the savings of past years. Besides, George Bolitho's father expected a dowry with his son's wife, and Mr. Magor saw no means of giving what the old man expected without mortgaging his estate, unless Hugh acceded to his request.

"Well, well," he said; "we shall see. I am

coming over to the mine in a couple of days, then we can talk over the matter on the spot. Holloa, George, are you going?"

"Yes," replied George; "Lucilla reminds me it is after ten o'clock, and your man is bringing my horse to the gate."

"Well, it is a long ride to Blisland, but you'll have company for a mile or so. Your road is not far from Lanherne."

The two young men walked through the gardens together, Bolitho sullen and jealous, Hugh cool and thoughtful. He had been pondering as to how much the other had heard of the conversation between himself and Lucilla Magor, and wondering how he could find out. He had seen by the girl's behaviour that she was anxious to get rid of her would-be lover, and thus he had calculated upon their walk together.

It was a November night. There was but little moon, but the night was by no means dark. The light clouds were blown rapidly across the sky, and Hugh felt a sense of freedom as the cold night air filled his lungs.

"Who are you?" asked Bolitho presently. He had not mounted his horse, but walked by Hugh's side.

"Difficult to tell," replied Hugh.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that."

His curt reply angered George Bolitho as Hugh intended it should. For a moment the cur in his nature was uppermost.

"You were in a workhouse, weren't you, before you became a farm servant?"

"Yes," replied Hugh; "and before that I was——"

"What?" cried Bolitho as the other stopped.

"Oh, nothing."

"How have you become so friendly with Mr. Magor?" he blurted out again presently. "He's not of your sort."

"Indeed!"

"No. Why is he willing to sink social distinctions? I can understand why you are willing to lick his boots, but for him to allow you to visit the house as an equal I cannot understand."

Hugh's temper began to rise, but he checked it.

"I'm not a dog of the licking order," he said quietly. "Your breed now suggests——" He did not conclude the sentence, but laughed quietly.

"What do you mean?"

Hugh did not reply.

"Do you know," went on Bolitho, having nearly lost control of himself, "that it is impertinence for you to visit a house like that? What right have you to sit talking with Miss Magor?"

Hugh continued to laugh quietly.



"It shows the sort of fellow you are," he went on wildly ; "shows your low nature."

"It shows a lower nature to listen at the doors," suggested Hugh.

"I did not listen at the door," cried Bolitho ; "I entered as I am in the habit of entering. What had you to say to Miss Magor about half-past five ?"

Hugh had now brought the conversation to the point he desired.

"I wish to know by what right you ask ?"

"Because—because she is my promised wife !"

"Indeed !"

"Yes ; I demand to know what secret meeting you were arranging with her ?"

Hugh had learnt enough now. George Bolitho knew nothing of what they had been speaking. If he knew, he would not have asked such a question.

"You had better ask Miss Magor," he replied. "Surely as her affianced husband you have the right. Only I understood that such an arrangement was all on your side."

"It has been arranged for——" He stopped. He remembered that he was not acting a very dignified part. He had told Hugh that he was his inferior, but he had himself acted like a clown, and felt it.

"I presume," he said presently, "that you do not intend to explain."

"Instead, I will give you a piece of advice," replied Hugh. "Never lose your head over trifles. If ever you get jealous, let it be over something more important than about a statement as to the time my men leave their work. And another thing; never assume the responsibility of seeking to restrict a lady's liberty until you have a clear and absolute right. Good-night."

With this he left George Bolitho, and, turning to the left, walked along a cart track across the moors which led to Lanherne Farmhouse. "He heard nothing," mused the young man—"nothing. No doubt he's jealous, and I'll have to be careful; but he heard nothing that was said."

In this conjecture, however, Hugh was scarcely correct. The young squire had more brains than he had credited him with, and as he mounted his horse and dashed rapidly along the lane, he muttered savagely as he made his plans for the future.

Arrived at Lanherne, Hugh went direct to his room, and having unlocked a box, he took therefrom a packet of papers. It was the very "packet" he had hidden on the Dartmoor tor. He carefully read and re-read each word; then he turned to a rough sketch of a house. This he studied long and carefully.

"It seems plain enough," he mused. "I wonder if the old man was mad and imagined all

this? He could not have been. As far as I can see, this is a correct plan of the house; besides, I feel that it is all true. Yes, I am a Trelawney. If the information concerning the secret place in the wall which contains the family papers is correct, the fact is established. I shall know to-morrow. Well, and what shall I do then?"

He sat back in an armchair and thought carefully.

"She seems very fond of my company," he said presently. "She always welcomes me eagerly, but does she really care for me? She's not engaged to Bolitho—that I know; but I doubt whether Magor would allow her to——"

He started up and walked around the room. He seemed like one in doubt—as though he could not solve a problem which faced him.

"She's a handsome girl," he went on. "On the whole, she is a lady, well educated, clever, fascinating. I wonder if I am in love? Well, I'll be guided by circumstances to-morrow. If I find those papers, my identity will be established. Then I'll tell her who I am and what I wish. Will she marry me, I wonder? If not, I must find other means to possess the old house—if they can be found. But can they? Magor, although not rich, is comfortably off. He has enough and to spare. No, as far as I can see, my only chance of possessing Trelowry is to

marry her. Yes, I believe I am in love with her, and to-morrow will settle a great many matters."

Usually cool, he became very excited, and it was not until the small hours of the morning that he got any sleep.

The following morning he went to the mine as usual. First to the account house, as a mine office is usually called. Then he visited the floors and tested the "work" which the stamps had ground to powder. Everywhere the same story was told: the head of each "drag" was rich with tin. He tested the "buddles" and the "ricks,"—still the same result.

"Well, John," he said to the "dresser," "and how is everything going?"

"Six ton this month, sir," said John Beel proudly; "shuddn' be suprised ef ther was seven. Lot ov big wigs from Linkinhorne was 'ere 'esterday after you was gone."

"Yes, John; well?"

"They axed for you, sir. I reckon they want to buy the mine. They said they'd come over again."

Hugh then went underground. The main lode still held good and the cross-cuts promised wonderfully. After this he wended his way towards Granfer Crowle's hut. Although he had visited it several times it was not so easy to find.

At length, however, he came to it. He looked around, but nowhere could he see Granfer.

"I suppose he's within," thought Hugh; "the day is rather cold."

He entered the hut, but the old man was not there. Instead, he saw Issy, who was watching a crock as it boiled over a peat fire. The girl started as he entered and gave a cry half of fear, half of joy.

"Where is the old man?" he asked.

"Gone to see Micah Boundy," replied the girl.

"Will he soon be back?"

"Not long—not long. Stay till he comes, will you?"

"No, I'll come again in an hour or so."

"No, no," cried Issy; "stay now."

"Why?" asked Hugh; "are you lonely?"

"No, not since you gave me those books. Stay and tell me things—do stay!"

The girl caught his hand, and looked at him eagerly, longingly.

"He'll be back for dinner—stay now. Tell me about the people who live at Launceston and Plymouth. Tell me how they act—what they say."

"Do you wish to know?" asked Hugh. "Would you like to go out and see the world?"

"Oh no, never, never. I am so afraid—terribly afraid. I dare not leave here. They

might take me, you know. Then they'd drag me across the country in their caravans, and they'd starve me, and swear at me, and whip me, and torture me. But you tell me—you who know so much. There, the dinner will cook itself now," and she dragged a stool which Cornish cottage folks call a "cricket" near him. Then she sat down by his knees and looked eagerly into his face.

Hugh had never seen her in this mood before; hitherto she had been watchful, but silent.

"I know very little myself," said he, humouring her.

"Oh yes, you do," cried the girl. "I know," and she laughed gleefully.

"How do you know?"

"After I had read those books you gave Granfer for me—oh, it was good of you!—I wanted to see people. I think I forgot. I was afraid to go out when it was light; but one night, when the stars were shining, and the sky seemed black behind them, I went out. Oh, it did seem beautiful to be free, and I went a long way. Then I heard men's voices, and I was afraid—so afraid! So I just hid myself in a gully, and the men came close to where I was. I heard what they said."

"And what did they say?"

"Oh, they were talking about you. They said

you were clever—very clever ; that you knew everything—everything ; that you were getting very rich, and that if they were you they'd keep a lot of men by night to watch, because you'd got so much money at the mine. Have you ? ”

“No, not money, but there's what is worth money,” replied Hugh, and as he spoke a danger appeared to him. “And what else did they say, Issy ? ” he continued.

“Oh, lots of things ; and I've seen many people going towards the mine. I just climb up behind that rock and look. You'll not let any one hurt you, will you ? ”

“Why, who would hurt me ? ”

“I don't know ; only Granfer says how rich people are robbed and murdered. Oh, you'll be very careful, won't you ? Say you will ! ”

“Why, do you care, Issy ? ”

“Yes, I do, I do. If any one were to hurt you, I'd kill them, I would ! ” and the girl's black eyes shone brightly. “I've heard Granfer say that he keeps a pistol—a thing to fire off and hurt people. You buy one, will you, so that if any one tries to hurt you, you can keep them away ? Oh, say you will ! ”

Hugh laughed at the girl's eagerness. “I must bring you no more books,” he said ; “and I think I must persuade your Granfer to send you away to a school—away to Plymouth, say, and

then you'd learn a lot of things, and the gipsies would never be able to find you or hurt you. How would you like it?”

“Would you come and see me?”

“I'm afraid I could not.”

“Then I shall not go. I look for you every day. I climb to the rock in the morning, and watch you as you go to the mine.”

“But you ought to learn things and get clever.”

“Would you like me better then?”

“Well, I should think more of you, perhaps.”

“Then I'll learn, I will; but I'll not go to that place. Bring books, will you—a lot of clever books to make me wise, and I will learn them, all of them. Then you'll come again soon, and see if I am clever, won't you?”

“Yes, I'll come,” replied Hugh.

The girl gave a start. “There's some one coming this way!” she cried. “I can hear!” She crept out of the door of the hut and climbed up by the side of some rocks like a fawn; then she came back quickly. “It's Granfer!” she whispered; “he'll be here in a minute. Don't tell him I must go away, and I'll read the books to make me clever. And you will be careful that no one hurts you, won't you? And I'll watch—yes, I'll watch, and I'll kill any one who tries to hurt you. I'll find Granfer's pistol, and I'll——”

She did not finish the sentence, but instead



turned to the crock, and began to look after the dinner.

Granfer Crowle entered and seemed much surprised at finding Hugh there. They talked about the mine, and during their conversation Hugh often asked Issy questions, but the girl only answered him in monosyllables, and seemed afraid to speak.

Presently Hugh took his leave, and hurried back to Lanherne Farm.

"Yes," he mused as he went, "I can see how dangerous it is to leave a lot of clean tin in the sump house. I will have it taken to the market in small quantities. And I must not carry much money with me. I shall have to do my business by means of a banking account. And now I will prepare to go to Trelowry. Lucilla Magor will be expecting me. What a strange creature poor little Issy is!"

After carefully placing "the packet" inside a pocket which had been made under his vest he turned his face towards Trelowry. It was five o'clock when he left the farm, and it was half an hour's walk to the site of old Trelawney Barton. When he arrived there it was quite dark, but he saw the light shining from the library window. He was strangely elated, he knew not why. He felt that a force was at work in his life other than that of the establishment

of his right to be called a member of the old Trelawney family, but he knew not what it was.

He found his way to a postern door, and having opened it, went quietly towards a side entrance to the house. As he entered he saw Lucilla Magor standing at the window of the library; evidently she was waiting for him, as she had said. By the time he had reached the house the door was opened. She had come to meet him.

"Come into the library," she said in an excited whisper. He entered, and she closed the door quietly behind him.

"We shall not be disturbed," she said. "I have allowed two of the servants to go to Polyphant to their home; the others have friends in to tea. They will not want to leave the kitchen."

He took the packet from his pocket, and the girl's eyes shone brightly as he unfolded it. Taking the paper, on which was sketched a plan of a house, he laid it on the table.

"This is a plan of Trelowry," she cried; "where did you get it?"

"Does it correctly indicate the rooms?" he asked.

"Yes," she cried eagerly.

"I want to go to this one," he said, pointing to the plan.

"It is unused now," said the girl.

“There is a secret place in the wall,” he replied.

“I have the key to it.”

“But how? and what is in those other papers?”

“I will tell you after I have searched the unused chamber,” he replied.

“Come, then,” said the girl, seizing a lamp.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HOW HUGH AND LUCILLA FOUND THE PAPERS.

THE two walked together along a passage towards an unused wing of the house. Both were excited, especially Lucilla. To her it seemed like a romantic adventure of olden days. She liked the secrecy of their quest; the air of mystery which surrounded it was as sweet to her as mountain air.

"I never knew of a secret place," she whispered excitedly. "Father doesn't know of it; he would have told me had he known. You are sure it's true?"

"These papers say so."

She stopped and listened. "I thought I heard a sound," she said, "but all seems quiet."

"Yes, all is quiet," replied Hugh.

"This is the way," said the girl, going up some narrow stairs. "Oh, I am so excited."

Hugh looked at her, and he saw that she spoke the truth. Her eyes flashed with unusual brilliancy. On each cheek was a bright red spot, while the

hand which held the lamp trembled. She looked very beautiful too. Doubtless she was a handsome, finely formed girl, and Hugh, as he looked at her, felt his heart beat quickly.

“You are not afraid, are you?” he asked.

“No, not afraid; but you are sure we are not doing wrong? Tell me why you wish to find this secret place.”

“I am sure we are not doing wrong; but if you are frightened, show me the room, and when I have found what I want I will return to you in the library.”

“No, no,” cried the girl; “let me stay with you. Besides, the house is very lonely. I should be afraid, I am sure, if you were not here.”

Hugh caught her disengaged hand. “Then I am not altogether disagreeable to you?” he said.

She did not reply, but in the silence of the old house he could hear the beating of her heart. At that moment he felt that she was more to him than the dream of his life. She did not draw away her hand.

They entered the disused chamber. Part of the floor was covered with rubbish, but it contained nothing else. The windows were small and narrow. Evidently the old diamond panes of glass were placed there when the house was built. The ceiling was low, the air was stuffy.

It was a queer-shaped apartment, and contained many nooks and corners.

Hugh looked eagerly yet cautiously around him. This was a room held sacred by his forefathers. Here family councils had been held, here were the papers containing the history of his people. Somehow the times seemed to have changed. He was living in the distant past. The girl at his side was not a nineteenth-century maiden who was acquainted with the arts of modern civilisation, but one who lived in a time when knights fastened on their armour and fought for love and glory. The hand that trembled in his, had fastened on her colours to the warrior's armour. The world was young again, and knew nothing of the ways which later years had brought. Everything in the room encouraged these fancies: the quaint, worm-eaten oak panelling, the rough woodwork which formed the ceiling, the mullioned windows. Their quest, too, intensified all such imaginings. Lucilla had longed for romance, and now it had come to her, and in the shadows of the mystery which surrounded his life, Hugh's presence stirred her heart as it had never been stirred before.

"Put the lamp on the floor," said Hugh.

She obeyed him, and then he spread out the plans.

"It is in that corner," he said, pointing to a curious angle in the wall.

"Yes," cried the girl ; "let us go and find it quickly."

"You are not afraid now ?"

"No ; it's glorious, glorious."

The corner indicated by the sketch was a curious contrivance. Indeed, it was shaped so as almost to form a second chamber in the main apartment. Had a curtain been drawn across the alcove the room would have been more perfectly proportioned. The panelling, however, was unbroken, and on looking at it they could see no joints to indicate an opening.

"You must be mistaken," said the girl ; "there is nothing here."

Hugh hastily felt his pockets. "The other papers tell the exact measurement from this beading," he said. "I am afraid I must have left them in the library. You don't mind waiting here while I go for them, do you ?"

"Oh, do not leave me, Hugh," she cried. "If you go I must go with you. I shall be afraid without you." She had called him by his name without thinking, a fact which set Hugh's heart beating louder than ever.

"Then I will not leave you, Lucilla," he said. "It is a beautiful name. Shall I call you by it always ?"

The question brought the girl back to present-day facts. She was fascinated by Hugh, but she

thought of what her father might say. Suppose he should return, and discover them in this unused part of the house engaged on such a strange pursuit.

"Don't speak of it now," she whispered, with a low, nervous laugh; "let us find what you want first."

"I needn't go after all," cried Hugh; "I've got the papers with me. See."

Their faces were close together as they read, and he could feel her warm breath on his cheek:—

*"Measure three feet from the beading nearest the fireplace, find an indentation eighteen inches from the floor, then press hard until you hear a spring click."*

"Here it is," cried Lucilla eagerly, and she pressed her finger into what appeared like a place made by the blow of a small-headed hammer in soft wood. Her action was accompanied by no results, however.

"There," cried Hugh, "those little fingers of yours are not strong enough," and he drew away her hand with a fondling touch. "Let me try."

"Yes, Hugh; you try."

She had called him by his name again, this time with apparent intention.

Eager as he was, he noted it. He was no longer cool and cautious; he had entered into the



realm of romance, and romance is never far from love.

He placed his finger on the panel, and pressed, but he too was unsuccessful. Then he took a knife from his pocket, and with this pressed again. Still without result. The perspiration stood thick upon his forehead. He feared that he was the victim of a hoax, and his heart sank like lead. This fear was expressed on his face. The girl saw it, and seemed as disappointed as he.

"The paper says there's a spring," she suggested. "It must have grown rusty during all the years."

"Thank you, Lucilla," he cried eagerly. "Yes, that must be it."

Again he placed the head of the knife against the spot, and pressed until his hand was bruised. But he felt something yielding, and in a second or so he heard a click like the lock of a gun, only very much louder—so loud, indeed, that it echoed strangely through the house.

"Look," cried Lucilla, "the panel is opening."

She spoke the truth. With a creak one part of the woodwork was separated from the rest, until a doorway, perhaps two and a half feet wide and four feet high, appeared. The door swung back, and they saw a small closet, from which came a musty, unwholesome smell.

"Keep back," cried Hugh to Lucilla. "That

air must be poisonous. This place has not been opened for more than half a century."

At first the lamp burned dimly, but as the air became purer the light shone clear again. Both looked eagerly around them. Presently Hugh's eye fell on a box.

"This is it," he cried. "Look!" He pointed to the words painted on the box: *Deeds and Private Papers*. "There are many other things here," he said, "but we cannot stay now. This box contains what I want. We can come again and look at the rest."

"Yes, yes; you will come soon, Hugh. I can arrange it easily."

"Perhaps you will come alone," he said, "now you know the secret of the panel."

"No, no," whispered the girl with a shudder; "I dare not. If you were not here now I should shriek with fear. I seem to see all the Trelawneys that ever lived around me. Some are grinning, and some are scowling. I am not afraid to come with you, but alone—no, I could not come alone."

"Let us go into the library," he said. "Stay, the key of this box is here somewhere. Yes, here it is," and he took a rusty key from the wall. "Now let us go."

They pulled the panel door; it closed with a snap, and but for the indentation, which no one would notice, it seemed a part of the panel again.



HUGH AND LUCILLA SEARCH FOR THE PAPERS IN THE SECRET CHAMBER (p. 136)

Lucilla caught Hugh's arm. "Oh, I am so afraid," she said. "Don't go without me. Hark! what's that?"

They both heard footsteps.

Instinctively Hugh placed the box, which was but little bigger than a large cashbox, under his coat.

"It must be one of the servants," he said.

"Yes, it must be. They have missed me, and cannot tell where I am. Hearken!"

They opened the door and listened. The footsteps were retreating in the direction of the kitchen.

"Let us go down quickly," she said, still clinging to his arm.

A few seconds later they were in the library again.

"Now we can see the papers," said the girl excitedly.

"Yes," said Hugh; "but before we unlock this box I should like you to look at the packet I have brought."

"Give it to me," she cried. "Oh, everything seems so strange! Surely those old Trelawneys must be here. I am glad we have got away from that room."

Hugh unfolded the papers and spread them out before her. "I promised you that I would tell you about myself some day," he said.

"Yes," said the girl, "tell me."

"These documents will tell you," he said; "they were written by my grandfather. If they are true they will be corroborated by those in this box."

Lucilla Magor seized the papers Hugh had brought from Australia, and read them eagerly. When she had finished her eyes flashed with excitement, her hands trembled.

"Then you are one of the old Trelawneys?" she cried.

"If what is written be true."

"I have often heard of those two wild men who lived here alone—John and Jonathan."

"My grandfather's name was John."

"But is it true?"

"We will open this box and see if there are papers confirming what my grandfather wrote."

"Yes, yes; let us look," she cried.

Hugh, after some difficulty, opened the box, and from it took a bundle of parchment. Together they read it eagerly.

"There can be no doubt about it!" she cried presently.

"No," said Hugh. He spoke quietly; but there was a tremor in his voice, and the perspiration stood thickly upon his brow. "There can be no doubt about it."

"And your grandfather murdered his brother."

"He thought he did. The story says that

Jonathan thought he had murdered John. Both fled, according to the parish gossip."

"And has the other brother been heard of?"

"Not as far as I know."

"And you are one of the real Trelawneys?" said the girl, like one musing. "Your grandfather lived here as the squire, while mine was a farmer."

"Yes," said Hugh.

She looked at him keenly. To her he seemed another man; he was endowed with a fresh charm.

"And you knew this all along?"

"Yes."

"And never spoke of it?"

"Not directly. I had no proof beyond my grandfather's statements, and they wanted corroboration. I have been thinking for years how I could find these old deeds. No one knew of them but myself."

The girl seemed to study for a few seconds, then she said,—

"If this be true you are the owner of Trelowry."

"No—not legally."

"How? You can easily prove your case."

"No; it was not claimed for twenty years. Your grandfather was in possession all that time. It has therefore come to your father. It is his lawfully; no one can disturb him."

"But really it should be yours?"

Hugh was silent.

"And I have helped you to find your own, haven't I?"

"You have helped me to find means whereby I can prove who I am."

"Yes, and what shall you do now?"

"At the proper time I shall tell who I am."

"When will that be?"

"I will tell you soon if I may. May I?"

"Tell me now."

"I am afraid."

"Afraid! A Trelawney—a descendant of Sir John Trelawney afraid!"

The words stirred his heart. He turned, and saw a reflection of himself and the girl by his side in the mirror which stood near. A feeling of pride came to him. He was a Trelawney, he owned the best known name in Cornwall. And the girl was but the descendant of a farmer; and she was very beautiful—at least, he thought so then—and she cared for him. Besides, they were alone in the library, and before them lay what they together had found.

"My father would not give up his rights," said the girl; "he would never give up Trelowry."

"I do not wish that he should."

"But when it comes to me I shall give it up. It is yours, not mine. I have no right to it."

These words revealed a trait in her character

which he had not suspected. He admired her much for saying them.

“If it were possible for such a thing to happen, I should never receive the gift.”

“Why not? Oh, I am talking strangely. I shall be seeing the old Trelawneys all through the night.”

“Lucilla, did you give me your consent to call you by that name?”

She was silent; but Hugh could hear her heart beating. She felt that he was about to make a declaration. Did she love him? She did not know. The romance surrounding him, as well as the man himself, had fascinated her. She scarcely knew what she was saying. She seemed to be passing through a strange dream.

He placed his arm around her.

“Lucilla, do you love me?”

She looked into his eyes; she opened her lips to reply, when she heard a noise outside the window.

“Hark! what’s that?”

Hugh rushed to the window and looked out; the blinds, he noticed, had not been drawn. He saw the form of a man rushing across the garden.

“We have been watched,” he said; “but it does not matter.”

“It does,” cried the girl; “the man must have seen you——”



"No, I did not kiss you," said Hugh; "may I?"

"No, no," cried the girl, "not yet. I must think; I must have time. Hark! that's the sound of the carriage. Father has come home earlier than he said."

She did not think how long they had been together, or how quickly the time had passed.

"What shall I do with this box, with these papers?" asked Hugh.

"I'll take care of them," cried the girl, snatching at them, but not before Hugh had placed those he needed in his pocket.

Meanwhile, George Bolitho made his way towards Altarnun, where he had left his horse. All the previous night, and through the whole of the day, he had been thinking over his conversation with Hugh, as well as of the words Lucilla had spoken, and which had made him so bitter. As I have said, he was a slow-thinking man, yet possessed of a certain amount of cunning. He determined to play the spy, and watch. He had come to Trelowry and had asked for Lucilla. The servant told him she thought her young mistress had gone to Altarnun. Anyhow, she could not find her in the house. He was walking down the garden path when he saw a light in the disused part of the house. What could it mean? Presently a light shone suddenly from the

library window, and he made up his mind to look and see. So he witnessed the scene between Hugh and Lucilla. He saw them start as he accidentally scratched the window-pane. Then he rushed towards the village, wondering how he should act towards his rival.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOW ISSY PAID A NIGHT VISIT TO HUGH.

ISSY stood at the doorway of Granfer Crowle's hut. She had just climbed a peak near by and had taken a rapid survey of the moors. Since her last talk with Hugh a change had come over her. She was less wild and more womanly. Moreover, she seemed afraid lest something should happen to him. She had asked Granfer if it were possible that any one should hurt him ; but when the old man had asked her concerning her reasons for putting such a question to him, she seemed confused. Nevertheless, a fear haunted her. She had but few reasons to give for anything. Her strange life had made her incapable of the thoughts common to other girls of her age ; and yet in some things she was much older than those who have spent their lives in the society of their fellows. What other people arrived at by a process of thinking, she often knew instinctively. And ever since the day when Hugh had spoken to her she was sure that he was in danger.

This was why she watched every one that crossed the moors, and listened for every sound. This evening she had climbed to her usual place of observation and watched for a long time ; she had seen a man dressed like a gentleman come from one direction, then she had seen two men come down the slopes of the rocky tor which lay between her and Linkinhorne. Evidently they intended to meet each other, and a fear for Hugh came into her heart.

For a few seconds she stood at the door thinking ; then she determined to see whether the man dressed like a gentleman was going to meet the other two. She had no particular reason for doing this, but a dog-like instinct told her she must. This required an amount of courage, for the fear of being taken by the gipsies never left her. Memories of the olden days, when she was beaten and tortured by a lawless gang, were constantly in her mind, and possibly those two men might belong to them ; but she would go. The day was Saturday, and the workmen had all left the mine, with the exception of the caretaker. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, and the daylight was nearly gone.

She looked inside the hut and saw Granfer Crowle stretched on a heap of dried ferns which formed his bed. He was taking his afternoon's nap. The girl crept down the gully, and presently

reached a spot where she could again command a wide stretch of the moors. Yes, the gentleman and the men were getting close to each other, and they evidently meant to meet.

She soon saw that they did not intend going to the mine. They walked in a different direction. A great gorge was near them, towards which they went. Scarcely realising why she was so eagerly watching them, she made up her mind to follow and listen. She was sure they were Hugh's enemies. She could have given no reason for this, but she felt it, nevertheless.

So she crouched behind a huge boulder and watched. The darkness was creeping on; but she was used to the gloom of the moors, and she had no difficulty in seeing. Presently the men signalled to each other, and a minute later they were hidden from her sight.

She crept noiselessly from behind the rock, and then, as quietly and as swiftly as a cat, made her way towards the gorge. Before long she heard the sound of voices; then she listened.

"What do ee want we to do, maaster?" she heard one man say.

"Iss," added the other; "we bean't goin' to do nothin' in the dark."

"Well, you know the fellow who owns that mine?"

"Iss, we know 'un."

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"Well, he's been no friend to you."

"No, he sacked us, he ded. Kicked us out cos we dedn' vall in weth hes views."

"So I've heard. That's why I sent for you."

"Well, we be hark'nin'."

"I don't like the fellow, either."

"Ah!"

"I suppose you tried to cheat him, and he found you out. I suppose, too, you tried to nick some tin."

"Look 'ere, maaster, tha's our bisness. What do you want for we to do?"

"Well, would you do him an evil turn?"

"What shud us git for et?"

"Now, look here, I want you to do nothing that will get you into trouble, but if you'll,—well cripple him, or spoil his good looks now——"

"We be hark'nin', maaster."

"Well, what do say to it?"

"No murder, no hangin' job?"

"Not a bit of it. No one need know. Could it be done?"

"It could be done right enough. A drop of vitr'ol—and where's his good looks? Would that do?"

"Ah, I see you are the right men. You hate him, I can see—hate him as much as I do."

"Well, he gov us the sack. He expoased us afore the other men, he threatened to clap

us into gaol. We bean't the chaps to forgit, maaster."

"I thought not."

Then they talked for some time together, but in such low tones that Issy could scarcely catch a word; but presently their voices grew louder.

"No," said one of the men, "that waan't do. We be doin' the dirty work, maaster, and you bean't willin' to pay for it. Fifty suvrins aich—that's wot I say."

"Fifty pound a man? Nonsense!"

"Nothin' less, guv'nor."

Then followed more haggling, and at length the man dressed like a gentleman consented.

"But look here, maaster, who be ee? We bean't a-goin' to work in the dark. You bean't from Altarnun, or Linkinhorne, or North Hill, or Lewannick, you bean't. Who be ee?"

"That's nothing to you. You will get your money when your work's done."

"But ow do us knaw? No, ef you bean't goin' to tell yer name, ow can we have any hould 'pon ee? No, if you waan't tell yer name, pay up now, maaster."

"And then you wouldn't do your work."

"We'll give ee our word."

"Well, I'll give you *my* word."

"That waan't do, maaster."

"Look," said the other man, "ef the gentleman

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doan't want to tell hes name, he doan't. Put et this way, laive he give we haaf the money down, and when we've done the job, we'll meet here again, and he shall give us the rest."

"But spoasin' he waan't."

"But I will," said the gentleman.

"Ef he doan't, we'll find out who he es. We've done sich jobs before, sonny."

"I agree to this," said the well-dressed man.

"That's your soarts. You zay he'll come long by Bolventor Bridge on Monday night?"

"Yes, at nine o'clock."

Again there was much talking in such low tones that Issy could not catch a word, although she lay crouched like a cat and strained her every power of hearing. When the men had separated she went back to the hut again.

"Where have you been?" asked Granfer Crowle savagely.

"Oh! nowhere," replied the girl; "that is, nowhere in particular."

"Then why are you panting?"

"I'm not panting."

The old man watched her closely; then he went outside for some sticks, which he threw on the fireplace. "I want my supper," he said presently.

Issy gave it to him. He ate very heartily, watching her carefully all the time.



"There's some gipsies on the Bodmin Road," he said presently.

"Is there?" replied Issy.

"Yes, I believe they are the same lot—you know."

The girl shuddered and looked fearfully around her.

"I shouldn't be surprised if they are on the look-out," said the old man; "these gipsies never forget and never give up."

"Don't they?" asked Issy in a frightened voice.

"No, never. You must not put your foot outside the door for the next two or three days. You'll be very likely caught if you do."

"All right," said the girl, and after that the old man seemed more at ease.

Before eight o'clock Granfer Crowle laid himself down on his dry ferns again, while Issy entered another little compartment, which was scarcely worthy the name of a room, where she usually slept. The old man had added it to his hut three years before. Here, too, was a bundle of dry ferns. The girl threw herself down on the rough bed, but she did not sleep. She felt she must let Hugh know of his danger, and yet she was afraid to go across those wild moors by herself. She knew where he lived, for the old man had told her,

For some minutes she waited, and presently she knew, by Granfer Crowle's heavy breathing, that he was asleep. For an old man he was a heavy sleeper. Often he did not wake until late in the morning. There was plenty of time for her to go and tell Hugh what she had heard, because he never went to bed until late. She had heard him mention this to Granfer Crowle. But dare she face those wild moors where the gipsies had encamped? She did not debate the matter. The hunger of her heart was too great.

As silently as a cat she crept out of the little hole in which she slept, and a few seconds later was on the open moors. The night was not very dark, and accustomed as she was to the moors, she sped rapidly across them. Above her the clouds swept rapidly across the sky, around her the wind wailed and moaned. The nearest house was a mile away; everywhere, everywhere, it was wild, dreary desolation. Once she gave a cry, for her feet sunk in what the moor people called a "bog," and a moorbird rose from the rushes, and with an unearthly cry was lost in the night. But she soon recovered herself and rushed onward.

"I'm sure they mean to kill him," was the thought which filled her mind.

Presently she stopped. Near her she saw a flickering light, while the sound of voices, men's voices, reached her ears.

"'Tis they! 'Tis the gipsies!" she said hoarsely. "If they see me they will take me, they will make me go with them. Oh, I am afraid!"

But she went forward, nevertheless. The night air grew colder, but she did not slacken her speed or hesitate a second.

"I will tell him what I heard," she said to herself, "then he will not go to Bolventor Bridge on Monday night. After that no one will hurt him, and he will say I am a wise and clever girl. Yes, and he will thank me. Perhaps he will come again when Granfer is out, and will sit and talk with me."

In spite of her fear she gave a little cry of joy at the thought. Presently she struck into the high road, and soon after saw the lights shining from the windows of Lanherne House. She knew which was Hugh's room. He had told her that it was in the front of the house. Coming nearer, she saw it was dark. Evidently he was not at home, and her heart became heavy and cold. She thought of the old man in the hut. Supposing he were to wake and call for her? What would he say if he discovered her absence? Well, she would not leave Lanherne until she had told Hugh her story.

Arrived close to the house she crouched behind the farmyard wall. She dared not make a noise. Possibly there was a dog which might bark, or even attack her. What should she do then?

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She had been there only a few minutes when she saw the lights disappear from the lower parts of the house and twinkle from the upstairs rooms. Evidently the family was going to bed. Had Hugh already retired? she wondered. If so, what should she do? She soon dismissed this thought, however. He had told her grandfather that he seldom went to bed before midnight; when he was not out he sat in his room reading. Most likely, then, he was at some house in the neighbourhood; perhaps, too, he was talking to other girls as he had talked to her, and the thought made her sad and lonely.

And so she crouched behind the farmyard wall for a long time thinking, planning, wondering. The house was now in total darkness; no sound was heard save the stamping of the horses' hoofs, or the cows rubbing their necks against the "stittles."

Hugh's bedroom was just over his working room. Perhaps on this particular night he would retire early. She could find out. The window was not high. There were some sticks near, and she could make a noise against the window-pane. She took the first step towards the long sticks she had seen when she heard the sound of footsteps. Surely it must be Hugh. She watched the gate closely, and a few seconds later saw a man enter. Yes, it was he.

"Hugh, Hugh Trelawney!" she said.

Hugh started. "Who are you? what do you want?" he replied roughly.

She came up close to him. "It is I," she said; "I have something I must tell you."

"Issy!" cried Hugh. "You here?—why, child, you are as cold as a stone, and shivering too."

"I am not cold or shivering now," said Issy with a glad sob. "I am so glad I've found you. Let me tell you what I have heard. You——"

"But you are cold, Issy, cold and damp. You must come into the house."

He unlocked the door and entered his room quietly. Then he threw some dry blocks of wood on the fire, as well as some small furze sticks.

"Warm yourself, my girl," he said, "and then you can tell me afterwards what you want. Has Granfer Crowle been unkind to you? But there, don't speak yet; wait until you are warm."

"No, no," said the girl. "No, I must tell you now. It's not about myself; it's you!"

Then she told him word for word, with remarkable correctness, what she had heard.

"And you saw these men, Issy? Tell me what they were like."

She described them as well as she was able.

"One was well dressed, and the others looked like miners," he said musingly.

“You will not go to the bridge, will you?” cried the girl. “Oh! say you won’t!”

“Why, do you care?” asked Hugh, and he noticed how pale she looked, and how brightly her black eyes gleamed.

“Care!” cried the girl; “if any one hurt you I would kill them; I—I——” and she sobbed passionately. “Oh! say you’ll not go.”

“I’ll take care, Issy,” he said presently; “no one will hurt me.”

“Then I must go back,” cried Issy; “I can stay no longer!”

Hugh started. “Yes, so you must, Issy. But it’s cold outside, very cold. You must warm yourself, and drink this hot milk; then I’ll go with you.”

“You go with me! You go with me and come back by yourself! Oh, no, no!”

“Yes, I will, Issy. The gipsies are on the road, so Granfer Crowle told you. Yes, I shall see you back to your home.”

The word “home” seemed a mockery to Hugh as he uttered it, but Issy’s eyes flashed so brightly, and such a look of joy rested on her face that he forgot the poor place in which the girl spent her life.

“Are you glad I’m going with you, Issy?”

“Glad! Oh, I am happy to know you think enough about me to walk with me! Oh, I am

happy! And I will watch and listen, Hugh Trelawney. I will, I will!" and then she burst into a passionate fit of sobbing.

"What is the matter with you?" said Hugh.

"Oh, I am not like any one else. I am wild and ignorant. I should frighten people if they saw me. But, Hugh, give me books. Teach me, and I will learn; I will be wise and good."

A few minutes later they were on the moors together, Hugh quiet and thoughtful, Issy filled with a joy that had hitherto been unknown to her.

"Issy, I thank you very much," said Hugh; "you are a good girl. You have done more for me to-night than any one else would have done. You are a brave, good girl, and I thank you."

"Thank me!" cried Issy. "Why, I couldn't help coming; I should have died if I could not have come and told you. I should kill myself if I let any one hurt you." She spoke just like a child, and yet with all the intensity of a passionate, loving woman.

In spite of himself the young man was moved by her words, but little more was said as they trudged across the moors. When they arrived at the gorge the girl broke out again,—

"You will not let them hurt you, Hugh Trelawney, will you? Say you will not."

"No, I'll not let them hurt me."

“And I’ll watch and listen, Hugh, always.”

“Thank you, Issy—now go in. Listen if the old man is asleep.”

“Yes, he’s asleep. Good-night, Hugh Trelawney,” and she caught his hand and kissed it.

Hugh walked back across the moors like a man in a dream. He had much to think about. That night he had been to Trelowry again, and George Bolitho had also called. He could not help noticing how much Lucilla Magor preferred his company to that of George Bolitho, neither could he help seeing how the young squire hated him. Did Lucilla Magor love him? He was not sure. Sometimes he thought she did; at other times he was sure that she did not. If she loved him her love was not deep and absorbing. She was drawn to him by the romance surrounding his life, but she entertained no deeper feeling for him. Anyhow, only through her could he possess Trelowry, and for this purpose he had encouraged Mr. Magor to believe that he would take him as a partner. As for George Bolitho—yes, he understood his behaviour. Undoubtedly he was the man who employed the two rascals, in order that he might wreak his vengeance on him.

Well, Issy had opened his eyes; she had told him where his danger lay. He must watch, and he must be always on his guard—always. But he could laugh at George Bolitho now. No



doubt the young squire was madly in love with Lucilla Magor, but he should not have her. She would make a handsome mistress for the old house, the name of which he would change to Trelawney Barton. As for Issy, well, when the old man of the moors died, he would send her to school and do all that was necessary for the girl's happiness.

So the man proposed, but God disposes.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW HUGH ENTERED INTO HIS HERITAGE.

NEARLY three weeks had passed away since the night when Issy had tramped across Altarnun Moors to warn Hugh Trelawney of his danger. Christmas had nearly come, the snow had fallen and covered the broad stretches of waste land with a mantle of white. Hugh had seen nothing of the men who had been employed by George Bolitho, and although he had often met that young man, he had given him no hint that he knew of his meeting with the ruffians on the moors. To Hugh the matter had become clear. Bolitho was actuated partly by revenge and partly by a desire to thwart his purposes. Like most men of his stamp he would be clumsy and gross in his ideas. There would be nothing refined in his schemes of revenge ; he would think only of physical injury. This would appeal to such a nature as his, and would also have another effect. Both the young men knew of Lucilla Magor's admiration for physical beauty.

One reason why she cared so little for Bolitho was his common-place appearance, and if Hugh were physically deformed she would no longer love the man who had once been a farm-servant. Anyhow, this was the thought in George Bolitho's mind, and in this way Hugh Trelawney explained the young man's action. He had not gone to Bolventor Bridge on the night in question, and had likewise taken other precautions for his safety.

When a fortnight had passed away Hugh had begun to think lightly of Issy's news. Probably the girl had been mistaken, or had exaggerated some foolish conversation. After all, he could not believe that any serious attempt would be made to do him bodily harm. He had opened a banking account, and had very little loose money in his possession; he had also made arrangements for his property at the mine to be carefully guarded. And so, as day by day passed and nothing happened to him, he laughed at the thought of any one attacking him.

He had told Mr. Magor that when all his accounts were settled at the end of the year he would be in a better position to consider a partnership, and that gentleman looked forward towards reaping a golden harvest from the money he proposed investing in Hugh's mine.

One evening, just before Christmas, Hugh

was at Trelowry. He had become very friendly with the family, and although he had spoken no word of love to Lucilla since the night on which they had visited the room with the secret panel, she seemed as much as ever fascinated by him. She had told her mother of their discovery, and her mother had told Mr. Magor, who looked very thoughtful at the news. Up to this time he had seemed to regard Lucilla's marriage with George Bolitho as settled, but afterwards did not refer to it in any way.

"Trelawney, Trelawney," he said to his wife one day. "It is a grand name. Let him make it public that he is a descendant of the old family and submit the papers to be examined, and every house in the county will be opened to him, especially as he has become wealthy."

"Well, Trelawney," said Mr. Magor to Hugh, "you'll come and have your Christmas dinner with us?"

"Thank you," replied Hugh, "I shall be very glad."

"You are going to Truro to-morrow, you say?"

"Yes, and shall not return till the day after."

"You come back early, I suppose?"

"I shall be at Bodmin Road by seven o'clock."

"You will get a conveyance from there, I expect?"

"Just depends. If it's a wet night I shall, but

not otherwise. It will be moonlight, and at present the weather is dry and frosty. If it continues I shall walk—at least, most of the way. You see, Mr. Bray, who lives near Dosmary Pool, tells me that he is going to Bodmin that day and will give me a lift so far."

"Ah, that will be capital; you will have only about five miles to walk then. You are sure you'll not allow me to send you a trap? You can come on here for supper."

"I should have been delighted," said Hugh; "but I shall have a great deal of work to do on my return. I want everything squared up before Christmas so that I may know exactly how I stand."

"Oh, very well. Anyhow, you'll come on Christmas Day."

Hugh went out into the moonlit night alone, saying good-night to the servant whom he passed.

His visit to Truro was a very prosperous one. The price of tin had gone up £7 10s. per ton, and as his lodes still held good and even promised to become richer as he sank deeper, he knew he was becoming a rich man. According to his plans he arrived at Truro Station just before six o'clock; at seven he found himself at Bodmin Road Station with a fifteen miles' journey before him, which had to be either accomplished on foot or in an open conveyance. Taking the bus to

Bodmin, he found his way to the hotel, where he met Mr. Bray, a farmer, and soon after they were in the trap on their way home.

It was nine o'clock when they arrived at the road which led to Mr. Bray's farm, and then Hugh jumped lightly from the conveyance, glad to walk the remaining distance. It was freezing hard, and although an occasional gust of snow swept along the road, it was by no means dark. All around him Hugh could see the wild, open country. Sometimes when the moon shone he could trace the rugged outlines of Router and Brown Willy as they stood out against the wintry sky.

"It's a grand night for a walk," thought Hugh as he strode on. "Let me see, I shall soon be at Bolventor Bridge."

Immediately he thought of Issy's warning. "The poor girl was evidently mistaken," he mused; "but it was kind of her. It is a strange, lonely life that she lives with the old madman. I wonder who he is? He seems sinking fast; when he goes Issy will be left without a friend except myself. Well, I'll do my best for her, and my compact with the old man shall be carried out to the letter. Ay, but she's a passionate creature, and I verily believe it would go hard with any one; who tried to hurt me. She is a child in many ways, and yet she is quite a woman. I wonder now, I wonder——"

He had come to the brow of a hill which led down to a gully spanned by Bolventor Bridge. It was an eerie, lonely spot. All around the rugged peaks lifted their heads, while a torrent of water rushed down the gully. Everywhere the country was treeless and open, except at his right hand, where a few acres of land were covered with fir trees.

"These Bodmin and Altarnun moors are terribly desolate," mused the young fellow, and unconsciously he grasped his heavy stick more tightly.

The thought had scarcely passed through his mind when he heard a rushing sound, and immediately after two dark forms leaped upon him. A minute later he was fighting them furiously. He stood but little chance, however, although he was a strong, well-built young fellow. They were two to one and were evidently determined to master him. Still, by means of his heavy stick, he kept them at bay for some little time, when one of them crept around behind him and gave him a stunning blow, which felled him to the ground.

"Now we've got him," cried one of them; "quick, Bill—vitriol!"

"Here you are—this'll spoil his 'andsome jib," was the reply; "there, chuck et ovver 'un."

Hugh heard the words, and, stunned as he was by the blow, he cried out with terror. The sound

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of his voice rang through the startled air and echoed along the gorge.

“It’s our turn now,” said the man with grim savagery. “But what’s that?”

It was another cry in the near distance, and for the moment it diverted the ruffians’ attention. Hugh struggled to be free, but the men held him fast.

“’Tis nothin’ but a heron, or a moorbird of some soart,” he growled. “Knock the neck off the bottle, Bill.”

In another second Hugh smelt a strange odour, and a fear greater than the fear of death possessed him. With a superhuman effort he freed one of his hands and put it before his eyes; then he heard the crack of a pistol; this was followed by a terrible shriek, and one of the men with an oath relaxed his hold upon him.

“Help, Bill, help!” he cried, and Hugh heard the sound of groaning and panting and struggling.

“I mus’n’t laive ’un go. What es et?”

“It’s a woman—help, for God’s sake. My arm es brok, and she’s chuckin’ me. Help!”

“A woman!” growled the ruffian; “well, settle her.”

Then Hugh felt a heavy blow on his head, and the man who had struck him turned to help his companion. The blow, however, was not so hard as the ruffian intended; after a few seconds his senses returned, and staggering to his feet, he



caught the heavy stick which had been wrested from him.

"That's it—chuck some in her faace. We can aisy dail with he then."

"You sha'n't hurt him, you sha'n't hurt Hugh," he heard the woman cry. "Kill me if you like, but you sha'n't hurt him," and she struggled like one mad.

"It's Issy!" gasped Hugh; "she has come to try and save me."

The thought aroused him to activity. He saw one of the ruffians strike her brutally, then he lifted his stick and brought it with a heavy thud upon the man's head, and he fell to the ground like a log. The other, whose arm hung limply by his side, turned as soon as he saw this, and ran swearing savagely, and groaning with pain as he went.

"Issy!" cried Hugh. "Issy, can you speak to me?" but she did not reply; her face was white as death, save for a drop of blood which trickled down her cheek.

"Issy, it is I, Hugh Trelawney. Can't you speak?" he cried.

"There's another pistol in my pocket—I did all I could," she moaned.

Hugh saw the ruffian whom he had felled begin to move, then looking, he saw the butt end of a pistol, the barrel of which was hidden in the pocket

of the rough coat which Issy wore. Instantly the young man snatched it from the pocket and cocked it. The fellow saw Hugh's action and limped down the road after his companion.

"You are safe now, Issy. Do you hear?"

"Are you safe, master—sure?"

"Yes, quite safe; they are gone."

"You are not hurt?"

"No, I am all right."

She heaved a sigh of contentment, and quietly closed her eyes.

Hugh looked around him and tried to think what he should do. The girl was lying by a huge boulder which lay on the roadside, but she must not stay there. The night had grown terribly cold, and the nearest house was a long distance off. He noticed something dark on the road, and on examining it saw a bottle half full of vitriol. This explained the language of the men, and showed what was the purpose of their meeting with George Bolitho. He felt how terribly Bolitho must have hated him to plan such a revenge. With a shudder he poured the liquid into the road, and then turned to Issy again. She still lay like one dead.

There was but one course of action before him. He must carry her to Granfer Crowle's hut. It was the nearest dwelling, and he could find his way across the moors. He felt weak and shaken,

but no bones were broken. His head throbbed terribly, but he would do his best.

So he took Issy in his arms and commenced his journey. After a time his strength failed him, for Issy was a well-grown girl, and lay like lead in his arms.

Presently she began to move, and then her eyes opened.

"Issy," said Hugh; but she did not recognise him.

Evidently her mind was wandering, for she talked in a dreamy way of the experiences through which she had been passing.

"I have been watching so long—every day," she murmured. "I followed every one that passed along the moors; but they did not see me—oh no, I was too careful. It was very hard, but I would do anything for Hugh. When I saw the men I listened, and then I took Granfer's two pistols. It was hard to get away from him; he has been so watchful of late, and they went very fast. They said they would blind him and spoil his beauty. I'm glad I was there in time, for Hugh is safe; he told me he was. Oh, I am glad! I would willingly die for Hugh, and I should have died too if they had killed him."

She did not seem to realise that Hugh, with aching eyes and strained muscles, was carrying

her across the moors. She lay as contented as a child in the arms of its mother.

Presently he laid her beside a turf-heap on the moor, then taking his handkerchief from his pocket wiped the blood from her cheeks. For the first time he realised that Issy was beautiful when her face was in repose. The old savage look was gone. Issy had entered into a new life.

The blood still trickled down her face, and putting his hand on her head, he found that she had been wounded there. The ruffians had evidently struck her with a bludgeon. Poor Issy!

"I would gladly have died to save Hugh," she murmured dreamily.

A new feeling entered into Hugh's life. He felt at that moment that Lucilla Magor was nothing, and that this lonely girl of the moors was everything to him. She had been willing to give her life for him. Perhaps she had given it!

The thought made him frenzied. He seized her in his arms again, and carried her across the moors as though she were but a feather. His new-found love made him strong.

"And she did it for love of me," he cried joyfully; "she would have died for me!"

Presently he heard pleading cries piercing the silence of the night, and as they echoed across the waste places it seemed as though the lonely

region were inhabited by many who, sad and sorrowful, wailed out their misery to the night.

"It's Granfer Crowle," thought Hugh; "he has discovered Issy's absence."

"Hulloa! All right," shouted Hugh.

"Who are you?"

"Hugh Trelawney."

"I've lost my Issy."

"All right—I've found her. She's here with me."

But although he shouted aloud Issy heard it not; she continued to moan and to tell how hard she had tried to keep the men from hurting Hugh.

"What's the matter?" cried the old man as he came up. "Why is Issy with you? quick, tell me!"

"Let me take her into your house first—then I will tell you everything. Be careful, now—she is hurt."

The old man obeyed; he knew by the tones of Hugh's voice that something serious had happened. He watched while the young man laid the unconscious girl on the bed of dried ferns, and then listened to the story which was told him.

"She must have a doctor," said Hugh.

"No, no," he cried; "I can do all that is necessary."

"She must have a doctor," repeated Hugh.

“The moment I return to Lanherne I shall send a man with a horse and trap for him. Dr. Johnson is a clever man, and will come at once.”

“I dare not see him,” cried Granfer Crowle; “dare not, dare not, I tell you. He’s a magistrate!”

“Well, what of that? So much the better, in fact. I can tell him about the ruffians who attacked me!”

“No, no—it must not be. I dare not stand a trial now. I’ve been in hell for fifty years, but that’s better than hanging.”

“Hanging!” cried Hugh; “what of that? Issy’s head is wounded; it may be dangerously. I tell you she must have a doctor; better you should be hanged than that she should die. But of course it’s all nonsense.”

“Look you,” said the old man in a changed voice, “you say you are a Trelawney. You will not tell me to what branch of the family you belong. Well, I’m a Trelawney too!”

“You a Trelawney?”

“Yes, I. Look, I’ll tell you the secret of my life. You’ve heard of the two brothers who lived fifty years ago and more at Trelowry—John and Jonathan. You heard how they fought—about a woman! Well, Jonathan Trelawney killed John. I am Jonathan Trelawney, and I’ve carried the curse of Cain for more than fifty long years. I

could not help coming to Altarnun, where I could sometimes see the old home, to end my days; but I am old, and I can't bear a trial now!"

Hugh stood aghast. He had never dreamed of such a revelation.

"You Jonathan Trelawney!" he cried; "then you are my grandfather's brother!"

"Your grandfather's brother! How can that be?" cried the old man.

Rapidly Hugh told his story, and the old man listened like one spellbound.

"Then I did not kill him?" he gasped.

"No—he died years ago in Australia. But talk of that later," cried Hugh. "What of Issy? I tell you a doctor must be got for her."

"Yes, yes—and you are ill; I can see you are. I will go to Boundy's now. He will do as I bid him. Stay till I come back. To think of it—a life wasted because of one day!" The last sentence he spoke like one in a dream.

When he was gone, Hugh sat watching Issy's face. He had not thought how beautiful it was before. He listened, too, while she kept murmuring how she tried to save Hugh, and all the time the young man's heart burned with a great joy. Presently, however, he seemed to be losing consciousness. A dull pain possessed him, and he could hardly sit upright on the stool by the side of the bed of ferns. He knew when Granfer Crowle

came back, and then he remembered nothing distinctly. He had hazy ideas about being carried away through dark spaces, and of people who stood around him whispering in strange tongues ; but nothing was real to him. He had gone far down the valley of the shadow of death, and when, many weeks later, he woke to consciousness in Lanherne farmhouse, health seemed far away from him, and that through which he had passed but a strange dream.

The first question he asked, however, was this,—  
“ Will you tell me how Issy is ? ”

The doctor shook his head sadly as he looked in the young man's pale face.



## CHAPTER XII.

“AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE?”

MANY days after Hugh's first awakening to consciousness passed away before he was able to think coherently. The terrible night through which he had gone would, had he been a weaker man, have killed him. As it was, the doctor often despaired of his life. As soon as he was able to see visitors, Jonathan Trelawney came to see him and told him that Issy still lay in a precarious condition. Seemingly she had recovered from the brutal wounds she had received, and yet she lay like one dying. The doctor could see no reason why she should not recover, but day by day she grew weaker rather than stronger.

“I cannot bear the thought of losing her,” said the old man; “she is all I have now.”

“Yes,” said Hugh, “and yet you look better.” And he noticed that he was decently dressed.

“Yes, what you told me has made everything new. The burdens have gone, but I am alone—all, all alone, but for Issy.”

“Do you know anything about her save that which you told me?” asked Hugh presently.

“No, nothing. She is only a waif. I cannot believe she is of gipsy blood; but I know nothing. She has been everything to me. After my quarrel with my brother I rushed away to try and escape myself. Ah! but I’ve had a weary life. I got work as a miner down in the west, and during the years I saved money. My one hope was to get enough to live upon, and then come back to the moors and live within sight of my old home. Oh, I have been mad, mad! If I had not found Issy I should have killed myself.”

After this the old man told Hugh many things about his past life, about life at Trelowry, and as he was able, Hugh told him about his grandfather.

Mr. Magor came to see him too, but Lucilla did not come near Lanherne. She had paid a visit to some friends and had been spending a gay time her father told him. She had sent a message, however, and hoped he would soon be well. But that was all, and as Hugh thought of it he wondered.

As soon as he was strong enough he decided to pay a visit to Trelowry. For days he had evidently been pondering over a great problem. With increasing strength had come back with all its old force the great desire of his life. He was a Trelawney, and he wanted to possess the home of

the Trelawneys. During his conversation with Mr. Magor he had endeavoured to find out his wishes concerning Lucilla and his feelings regarding the house and lands which his father had inherited so strangely. And Hugh saw plainly that he could never possess Trelowry except through Lucilla. This caused many anxious thoughts to come into his mind. He wanted to be true to the name God had given him; he wanted to win a position worthy of a Trelawney.

Lucilla was at home when he reached the house, and she was evidently startled when she saw how thin and pale he looked. She greeted him warmly, however. He still aroused the love for romance in her nature; the history of his life still had a strong hold upon her.

"You have not looked at the secret panel since we opened it together?" said Hugh questioningly, after they had been talking some time.

"No," said the girl with a shudder; "I dare not without you. When shall we explore it again?"

"I do not know," replied Hugh. "I am so dreadfully weak yet. I suppose I have been nearly dead."

"Yes, it was terrible. I was so sorry; I did not enjoy my visit to Tresillian nearly as much as I expected I should. Once or twice when I went to dances the remembrance of your illness took away nearly all my pleasure."

“I am very sorry for that,” said Hugh drily; “still, it was kind of you to take so much interest in me. You did not forget me altogether then?”

“Oh no; how could I?” and the girl’s voice trembled a little.

“And if I had died?” suggested Hugh.

“Don’t speak of it,” she replied. “Have you discovered who those dreadful men were?”

“Yes, I know who they were, but they have left this part of the country, I suppose. Anyhow, no trace of them can be found. And so you are glad I am getting well again? You do care enough for me for that?” He said this with an effort.

“Hugh! How can you ask such a question? Why, don’t you remember——”

“What?” asked Hugh.

“That night when—when we found the packet!”

“And I asked if I might kiss you, but you didn’t let me.”

“Not then,” whispered the girl coyly.

They were alone in the library together—the library of the house which had belonged to the man whose name he bore, the house he longed to possess. And he had the power whereby the dream of his life might be fulfilled. The girl had spoken as plainly as she dared. She was very

handsome, and she would shine in the world that he longed to enter. His race had lived on the land around him through long generations, and he seemed to hear the old Cornish song again, as the sturdy men of the past had sung it—

"And shall they scorn Tre, Pol and Pen?  
And shall Trelawney die?"

He had but to speak the word and the girl would give him her hand, and with the gift of her hand would come the possession of the house and lands he coveted. But did she love him? She was able to dance and be gay when she knew that his life was trembling as in a balance. No, she did not love him. There was a sense in which he fascinated her, but she did not love him. He was sure of that.

And did he love her? He thought of the lonely maid of the moors who had offered her life for his, and his heart burned. But she was a gipsy child—a child of unknown parents, uneducated, passionate, wild. And he was a Trelawney, and when he married, his wife must be worthy the name.

He did not speak the words Lucilla Magor expected, and when her mother entered a minute later she wondered why he was silent.

When Hugh left the house he looked long and steadfastly at the grey walls of the old house;

he noted the rich broad acres around it : they might all be his for the asking.

When he reached Lanherne he sat long, looking steadfastly into the fire, and as he looked these words were constantly ringing in his ears,—

“ And love is of God, for God is Love.”

And all the time the nameless girl, whom he called Issy, lay sighing away her life in a lonely hut on the dreary Altarnun Moors.

The next morning he was driven to the mine, and after he had remained there a few minutes, found his way to the hut.

“ She is very weak,” said old Jonathan Trelawney, “ very weak. The doctor says unless she is aroused she will die. She is perfectly conscious, perfectly sensible, but she takes no interest in anything.”

“ Is any one with her ? ” asked Hugh.

“ No ; she will have no one but me. You see, she is in no immediate danger. Her life seems slowly ebbing away—that is all.”

“ And you, Jonathan Trelawney,” said Hugh, “ you look stronger.”

“ I am seventy-six,” replied the old man, “ but I seem to have a new lease of life.”

“ Are you strong enough to go down to the mine for me ? ”

“ Yes, yes,” replied he, and at Hugh’s bidding

he went away. Then the young man entered the lonely hut. He noticed at a glance that several items had been added to the room, and saw that Issy lay on a comfortable bed.

The girl opened her eyes as he came near.

"Issy," said Hugh quietly.

"Hugh—Hugh Trelawney—master," said the girl tremulously. "Oh, you are better; say you are well."

"Yes, I went out of doors yesterday for the first time."

He took the girl's thin, wasted hands in his, and fondled them.

"Issy," he said, "you saved my life; you almost gave your life for me."

"Yes," said she, and a flush mantled her cheeks. She looked very beautiful, and Hugh could not help but feel it.

"And you have been very ill, Issy?"

"Yes," she replied; "I am going to die."

"No," said Hugh.

"Yes," she replied; "but I saved your life for the beautiful lady who is to be your wife, Hugh. I want to ask you something. May I?"

"Anything, Issy."

"Then will you bring her here that I may see her? I want to very much. I saved you for her, you know. I think I could die gladly then."

The tears started to Hugh's eyes. The poor

lonely maid of the moors lay there so wan, so helpless. Her request, too, was so pathetic. A great fear came into Hugh's heart.

“ Issy, will you do something for me ? ”

“ Anything, master, anything ! ” and her eyes shone with eagerness ; “ anything I can,” she added sadly.

“ Then you must get well and strong.”

She looked up at him, the tears standing in her large black eyes.

“ You must get well and strong,” repeated Hugh. “ You must not die.”

“ Do you care ? ” asked the girl wistfully.

“ Care ! ” cried Hugh ; “ but for you I should have been maimed, blinded, perhaps killed. You saved me ; you offered your life for mine.”

“ Yes, but that was nothing,” said the girl. “ I could not help it, you know. How could I ? ”

“ Then you will do what I ask you. You will get well and strong for my sake ? ”

“ Yes, I will try,” said Issy. “ Would it grieve you very much if I were to die ? ”

“ Grieve me ! ” cried Hugh. His lips trembled as if some passionate words were upon them, but he restrained himself.

“ If I get well,” she said, “ I do not want to see the beautiful lady you are to marry. Don't bring her as I asked.”



"No, I shall not marry the beautiful lady."

The girl looked at him wonderingly. "Granfer said you would," she said wistfully.

"No," replied Hugh; "I could never marry any one I did not love, and I do not love her."

Again the light sparkled in the girl's eyes. "I am glad of that," she replied.

"Why?" asked Hugh eagerly.

"I do not know, but I am."

"And you will get better?"

"Oh yes, I shall get better. You wish me to, don't you, master?"

"Yes; if you do not get better you will make my life dark. I could not be happy if you were to die."

"Couldn't you? Oh, I am so glad. Yes, I will get better now. Yes, I shall get better quickly."

"I shall not be able to come and see you to-morrow—I am very weak yet—but I shall be here the day after. You promised me you would get better, so when I come I shall expect to see you quite strong."

"Yes, master," and the girl's face flushed again. "The day after to-morrow," she repeated quietly.

Soon after Jonathan Trelawney came to the hut, and Hugh was taken slowly across the moors in a trap. He spoke no word to the driver, and

the man wondered as he saw the bright light in the young man's eyes.

The following day was sunshiny and clear, and the young man walked slowly from Lanherne farmhouse to an eminence from whence he could see Trelowry. He looked at the house long and steadily; his eye travelled along the fence which marked the boundary of the estate. Presently he saw a young girl come out of the house and wander among the garden paths. It was Lucilla Magor. She had almost told him that he might win her for his wife, but he was sure she did not love him. She could forget him in a month. She had no deep feeling for him like he hoped Issy had.

But was he willing to sacrifice the place he coveted? Could he give up the dream of his life? Yon maid was tall, and fair, and handsome. From her mother she had inherited some of the best blood in the county. And she was the *open sesame* to the place he longed for. And Issy was a nameless, untutored girl of the moors. She had no name, no home, no possessions. He thought of her as he had seen her first—shock-headed, ragged, and savage-looking. But she had changed since then. She had become more quiet, more subdued, more thoughtful. She had read the books he had sent her with avidity; she was quick to learn and eager to please him. Besides, she had offered her life for his.

He went back to the farmhouse and unlocked the safe in which he kept his most important papers. First he looked at those he had brought from Australia, and thought of the time he had hidden them in Gray Rock Tor, among the wild hills of Dartmoor; thought, too, of the time when he awoke to find himself in Launceston Workhouse, and of that day when Jacob Polyphant brought him to his home among the moors. Yes, the hand of Providence had been in it all. He examined the documents he had taken from behind the secret panel in the old home of his race.

He caught himself humming the old county song—

"And shall Trelawney die?"

"No, Trelawney shall not die," he said to himself. "Trelawney shall be true to his name."

He put away the papers.

The next day he was strong enough to walk to the mine alone; but he did not go there. He made his way to the hut in the lonely gorge. He found the old man sitting near the fire, and Issy sat by his side in an easy chair he had himself sent on his return from the hut two days before.

Issy had evidently been expecting him, for she started at every sound, and looked up eagerly as he entered.

“Are you better, Issy?” he asked; “are you obeying me?”

“Yes, master, yes; I’m getting strong.”

Old Jonathan Trelawney stood up. “She’s taken a new lease of life,” he said. “She took a turn on the day you were here.”

He spoke calmly; the strange, haunted look had gone from his eyes.

“That is right,” said Hugh. “Mr. Trelawney, I want to speak to Issy alone. Can you leave us together for an hour?”

He looked at Hugh eagerly. For a moment he reminded the young man of the madman of the moors.

“You wish to speak to Issy alone?” he repeated. “Yes, I will leave you as you desire.”

When he had gone Hugh sat in the old man’s chair by Issy’s side. He took one of her hands in his.

“You are sure you are better, Issy?”

“Yes, I am getting better, master—you told me to, you know. Are you glad?”

“Yes, very glad—more glad than you can think.”

Her eyes sparkled.

“I shall soon be strong, master—very soon.” Then she looked at his face, and her eyes were full of longing, yet she did not know what she longed for.

"Issy, you must not call me master. I do not like you to think of me in that way."

"Don't you? Then I will call you Hugh, only it makes me afraid. But why must I not call you master?"

"Because I love you, Issy,—love you like my own life. I want you to be my wife, Issy, my beautiful maid. Will you?"

She looked at him like one dazed. At first her face became as pale as death, then the blood rushed to her cheeks, her eyes shone with joy, great surging joy.

"Hugh, Hugh!" she cried; "do you mean it? Am I your beautiful maid? do you love me? do you ask me to be your wife?"

"Yes, yes, Issy. Will you?"

He stood up, while Issy also started to her feet. She, the lonely girl of the moors, had never dreamed of such a thing. Hugh had been to her a kind of god—a creature far, far above her. And the news from his own lips that he loved her made the rude hut seem a palace, and the forsaken moors a paradise.

"You cannot mean it!" she sobbed.

"Yes, yes. Tell me, Issy; tell me, for I suffer."

"You suffer for want of me?" she cried.

"Why, Hugh, Hugh—my king! I—I only want to live for you!"

Then she came to him, and even at that time

Hugh felt, in spite of her coarse, ill-fitting clothes, how lovely she had grown during her illness, both in face and figure.

But as she sobbed out her joy on his bosom Issy's womanhood came to her—came like a flash of lightning, and she started back. For the first time she truly realised who and what she was.

“ No, no, it can't be ! ” she said hoarsely. “ I cannot be your wife. I am ignorant and savage. I know nothing. I should disgrace you. I was a gipsy child, I have lived here among the moors. No, master, no ! ”

“ Then you do not love me ! ” cried Hugh.

“ Love you ! ” cried she ; “ love you ! It is because I love you that I dare not. No, master, no ! ”

“ But if you love me you will go to school and learn—learn all that a maid should.”

“ Could I ? ” cried she, her eyes flashing joyously again. “ Yes, Hugh—yes. Let me go away this very day. Send me anywhere where I can learn and make myself worthy to be your wife. Yes, and I will—oh, I will ! oh, so quickly ! And you will care for Granfer while I am away—and I will not return until I am worthy ! ”

“ Then you consent, my little maid ? ”

“ When I am worthy, Hugh. Oh, and I will not rest until I am ! ” And as the young man looked into the humid depths of her eyes he saw

a love that was stronger than death, and he thanked God with great thanksgiving, and rejoiced that he had been true to his name.

\* \* \* \* \*

I who write this story lived among the Altarnun Moors years ago, and it was while I was there that I came to know Hugh Trelawney and to learn his story. There is to-day in that same parish a quaint house built in a secluded dell, through which the river Inney runs. Close to the house, which is called Trelawney, are sunny meadows, and all around grow tall, stately trees. Looking up the valley you can see the heights of Router and Brown Willy, and a part of the bleak moors over which these two hills tower.

It was in the house built there—a house surrounded by large gardens and green lawns—that I first saw Issy Trelawney. She was not savage or untutored, but a cultured, beautiful lady. I saw two happy, romping children, too, children who had great, black, laughing eyes. That their mother loved them there could be no doubt, but the love she bore them was nothing to that which burned, ay, and still burns, in her heart for their father. This I know, for I have seen the love-light flash in her eyes and the expression which rested on her face when she looked at him. Thank God true love is not dead, and there are few hearts in which its fires are felt more truly

than in those which beat for each other in the house built by Hugh Trelawney.

I never saw Jonathan Trelawney; he died before I went to the parish, died peacefully in Issy's arms; but I have seen Lucilla Magor. She is the wife of George Bolitho, who is on the whole a decent fellow, and who, I am sure, is heartily ashamed of his one-time scheme of vengeance.

There is but little chance that Hugh will ever possess Trelowry, although he is a wealthy man; indeed, I do not think he is anxious to do so. He feels he has been far more true to his name by being loyal to his heart and entering into the joys of home, than by stultifying his manhood in order to possess the home of his fathers.

THE END.



# THE MIST ON THE MOORS

# THE MIST ON THE MOORS.

## CHAPTER I.

### HOW THE MIST GATHERED.

THERE are those who say that the life lived on Altarnun Moors is very gloomy and monotonous. This, of course, is true when one considers the goings on in places like Bodmin and Liskeard, to say nothing of Plymouth and Exeter. At the same time, I am inclined to think that people living in these great towns set too high a value on their kind of life, and forget that the country places are centres of attraction, of excitement and romance. Anyhow, I claim that Altarnun Moors, and all that region around Router and Brown Willy, dreary and desolate as it may be, have had interests as exciting, ay, and as tragic, as those found in great centres of population. Not that I am much acquainted with the great towns. I have been to Plymouth and Exeter several times, and on one occasion I went to London. I do not want to

go there again, however. There was too much noise and hurry for me. I never had a chance of resting, and even when I was tired and wanted a little peace, there was always something to make me keep on rushing about like the rest of the people. However, that is not what I wanted to write about. I claimed just now that Altarnun Moors and all the vast tracts of the land round about are just as interesting as places like Liskeard or Bodmin, and that things have happened there as exciting as any one need wish for. I know that, in these days, story-books are written by clever men who invent all sorts of exciting incidents in order to amuse people. But I, who tell this story, have no need to invent anything; and although I do not pretend to write like people who do but little else, and who, as a consequence, are practised hands, I have the advantage of them, for what I am going to relate actually took place. Perhaps you who read this may not regard it as remarkable, but the facts I have to tell caused no little stir in the parish in which I was born.

As I have something to do with this story, perhaps I had better tell who I am, and how my path crossed that of people who are far more interesting than I can claim to be.

My name is Robert Tremain. Tremain is an old Cornish name, and although there are branches of the family wealthier and better known

than mine, I must confess to a certain amount of pride because of my ancestry. Rosecarrol House and farm have belonged to our family for generations, and while we never claimed to rank with the landed gentry of the county, we held our heads as high as those who did. Indeed, my father, just after I was born, determined that I should not be a whit behind the Magors, the Hansons, and the rest of them ; so, in order to add farm to farm, he speculated with his ready-money on some clay works and mines which lay in the neighbourhood of St. Austell. He also, as soon as I was old enough, sent me to Probus Grammar School, where I was supposed not only to obtain an education befitting a gentleman, but to acquire the manners of one.

What the results of my being a pupil at Probus School were I will not say, but my father's speculations in clay works and mines were anything but successful. Indeed, such failures were they, that on my twenty-first birthday my father asked me to consider the condition of affairs.

“Robert,” he said, after drinking a good part of a bottle of wine, “I intended making you a rich man, and I have made you a poor one.”

I was not altogether prepared for this, for while I knew that the clay works and mines had been a failure, I still depended on Rosecarrol, which

meant a thousand acres of land, five hundred of which were arable. I knew, too, that there were several hundred pounds' worth of cattle on the land, for while the farm was not stocked as heavily as it ought to be, it by no means spelt failure.

So I said, "What do you mean by making me a poor man, father?"

"Just exactly what I said, my lad," said my father, finishing the first bottle of wine, and opening another as if trying to keep his spirits up.

"I know your speculations have failed, father," I said, "but we've still got Rosecarrol."

"No, we haven't," he said.

"What!"

"No, we haven't," he repeated.

"How is that?"

"It's mortgaged—for every penny it is worth."

I knew now what my father's behaviour during the last few months meant. For, ordinarily an abstemious man, he had taken to drinking heavily, and while on some days he seemed in high spirits, laughing and shouting hilariously, at others he was gloomy and depressed.

I did not speak for perhaps a minute; then I said angrily, "I suppose I'm a beggar, then?"

He nodded his head, and was silent for a time; then he said, "Unless——" and hesitated again.

"Unless what?" I demanded.

"You marry money."

I had not thought of marriage at all—at least seriously, and somehow my father's words hurt me. Like all other lads, I had dreamed of the girl I was to love, and, when the proper time came, to marry, but to hear my father speak in this way seemed to wound what finer feelings I possessed.

“Marry—money,” I repeated slowly.

“Yes,” said my father, starting up, “that's the only thing that can save us, Bob. Rosecarrol is mortgaged for all it's worth ; I am in debt for all the stock would bring. Sell me up to-morrow and I am not worth sixpence ; and soon, very soon, my credit will be gone.”

“Do you mean to say that people know that—that you aren't worth sixpence ? ”

“Many have doubts about it, and it might become known any day.”

“Then—then——”

“You are a young fellow, good-looking, and all that. You—you—but there——” and my father sat by the table and covered his face with his hands.

My father's sorrow drove away a good deal of my anger, for I was angry. To think that Rosecarrol did not belong to me, and that all the stock was practically the property of other people, after all my plans and hopes concerning it, made me feel that my father had acted badly towards me.

And yet, as I saw him in his suffering and sorrow, the bitter feeling began to leave my heart. After all, he had ventured his all for me, and had he been successful I should have praised instead of blamed him. Still it was with difficulty that I refrained from uttering angry words, for I was a proud fellow and hated the thought of being poor. Moreover, the suddenness of the blow made it harder to bear.

“When will—will matters come to a—crisis?” I asked presently.

“The fellow who has advanced the money on Rosecarrol may want to call it in any day,” he replied.

“Who is he?”

“Hezekiah Tamblin.”

“What, the fellow who went to California and made money in the gold diggings, and who regards it as the height of his ambition to keep a public-house?”

“That is the man; he says he keeps the public-house because he likes company, and because the farmers stop with him on their way to market. He farms a good piece of land, too; all Tredudle belongs to him.”

“But why did you go to him for money?”

“Because he had it, and because he seemed anxious to lend it to me. You see, the fellow wants to get a position among the good families

for whom he worked fifteen years ago as a servant."

"And what danger is there of his wanting to call in his money?"

"He is hoping some young gentleman farmer will marry his daughter, and he has promised £3000 as her marriage dowry. When her marriage takes place you and I are ruined—unless——"

"Unless what?"

"You marry money."

Hezekiah Tamblin had not long been in our neighbourhood, and, although I had seen him several times, I had never spoken either to him or his daughter. For one reason, I had not been in the habit of going to Bodmin market, and so never had occasion to call at "The Queen's Head" on my way; and another was, that I considered it rather beneath me to frequent wayside public-houses. I had often gone to Launceston on horseback, and had met most of the principal men of our parish there, but did not remember having spoken to Hezekiah Tamblin.

My father's revelation, however, had made me interested in him; I wanted to meet the man in whose power we were. I wanted to talk with the girl whose marriage meant ruin to my father and myself.

I went to the window and looked out. It was



a grey October day. Near the house were well-cultivated, loamy meadows, but beyond were the wild, dreary moors so common in the north of Cornwall. Both meadows and moors I had regarded as mine, but now I remembered with pain that they were the property of a coarse fellow who had gone to California as a farm-servant, and who had by some means made money. Fifteen or twenty years ago he had doubtless come to my father for favours; now he was my father's master, ay, and my master, too. The grey autumn day was fast drawing to a close; in an hour or so more it would be dark. Although I did not feel cold, a shiver passed over me; I felt lonely, desolate.

"Father," I said, "does mother know anything about this?"

"Not a word."

I gave a sigh of relief. Perhaps—perhaps the pain of knowing might be kept from her. For my mother was an invalid, and had been for many years. When I was five years old my mother nearly died in giving birth to my little sister, who lived only a few hours; and although the doctors said they saw no reason why her health should not return to her, she was confined to her room year after year. She was very gentle and very loving to me, and dearly did I love her. For that reason I did all in my power to keep

her from trouble and pain, especially as the slightest worry caused her to be prostrate for days. Perhaps my mother loved me more than sons are usually loved ; chiefly, I expect, because I was her only living child, and because I spent as much time as I could with her.

“She has not the slightest idea that anything is wrong?” I asked anxiously, after hesitating a few seconds.

“Not the slightest. I believe it would kill her if she knew of it,” and my father went to a cupboard and took out a bottle of brandy, from which he poured a quantity into a tumbler and drank it at a gulp.

“It would kill her if she knew you were drinking so much,” I said sternly.

“I can’t help it,” he replied. “It keeps up my spirits, it makes me forget. But for this I should have told her before now.”

“But for that I don’t believe you would have thrown away your money,” I said.

“Do what you can, Bob,” said my father. “Believe me, I am sorry for you ; but do what you can, if—if only for mother’s sake.”

“What can I do?” I asked angrily.

“You are a good-looking, well-educated fellow, Bob,” he cried ; “marry an heiress, Bob ; marry an heiress, become a squire !”

I saw that the brandy was getting into his

head, and the thought of it made me still more angry. I dared not stay in the room with him for fear I should forget what was due to him, so I put on my hat and went out among the fields.

I had not been out more than a few minutes before a cloud of mist swept over from the moors, and away in the distance I heard a low moaning sound, which told of a coming storm.

I tried to think what it all meant : Rosecarrol the property of another, while debt swallowed up the value of all the farm stock. I went into the stables, and saw my own horse—the best horse for miles around—and I remembered that he might be sold any day. But more than all I thought of mother—homeless, penniless ! I knew how she loved the old home. She had brought a good deal of money to father when they were married—indeed, virtually, Rosecarrol belonged as much to her as to him, and to think of the effect that the news of my father's position must have upon her maddened me.

Then my father's words rang in my ears : "Marry money, marry money." It seemed a base thing to do ; and yet, as I remembered mother, I was prepared to do it—if I could.

A hundred plans passed through my mind, but none seemed feasible. Presently, however, I started for a walk across the moors. "I'll see the man who may ruin us any day," I said. "I'll

see the woman whose marriage means making mother homeless."

An hour later the lights of "The Queen's Head" appeared to me as I trudged over the prickly heather.

## CHAPTER II.

### A STRANGE VISIT TO ALTARNUN MOORS.

WHEN I arrived at "The Queen's Head" the kitchen was fairly full, but there was only one customer in the parlour. On Saturday evenings, I was given to understand, this bar-parlour was generally full of that portion of the community who could afford to pay for spirits instead of beer or cider, but on the present occasion only one person was present. This was young Tom Nicolls, of Trewint. He was a decent fellow, and did fairly well with his farm, although some said he had hard work to live, on account of his inability to stock his land properly. Trewint was not a rich estate, but it would pay for farming, only report said that although Tom's father left him the estate he left him nothing to work it with. Of course, the place was nothing to Rosecarrol; indeed, the Nicolls family did not pretend to stand as high as mine.

But Tom was not the only person in the room. Behind the counter sat a young woman, perhaps

twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. She was a well-grown, buxom girl, with fair, fresh skin, and far from bad-looking. Indeed, I thought as I entered the room, that in the whole of the district there was not one to compare with her. She smiled on me as I entered, which caused dimples to come in her cheeks and made her face very pleasant.

“What can I serve you with, Mr. Robert?” she said, after I had shaken hands with Tom Nicolls.

For a second I hesitated; then I said hastily, “Is—that is, can you tell me where Mr. Tamblin is?”

“He will not be home for hours yet,” she said. “He has gone to Bodmin, and will not laive there until eight o’clock. Is there anything I can tell him?”

“Oh, never mind,” I said. “I’ll stay a few minutes, anyhow, and I can easily call again.”

“I’m sure father’ll be very pleased to see ’ee, Mr. Tremain,” she said graciously.

And so we got to talking, and I was not long in discovering that she would rather talk with me than with Tom Nicolls, in spite of the fact that Tom tried to make himself very agreeable. Every time I spoke to her she blushed, which, I thought, made her face prettier than ever, while I couldn’t help feeling rather pleased that she

evidently preferred me to Tom. And yet I was sure that Tom was in love with her. It was true her father had been a labourer, but he had made money, and her dowry, or, as the Cornish folks called it, "her fortin," was just what Tom needed to stock Trewint Farm properly, while Kezia Tamblin was a young woman who, apparently, would grace any farmhouse in England.

I could not help feeling, however, that there was something in her appearance I did not quite like. Her eyes seemed full of fun, and yet there was a look in them which suggested cunning. She was fairly tall and finely formed, but somehow her beauty appealed rather to my lower than my higher nature. There was a taint of coarseness in her conversation, too. Not so much in her Cornish dialect—I did not mind that—but in the thoughts to which she gave expression. But then her occupation was not of the highest nature, and it might be that the constant hearing of rough jokes from farmers and their labourers might have dulled her finer nature.

All this I felt rather than thought, and yet I was fascinated. The fair, fresh face and the full, red lips charmed me. Besides, she was older than I, and I think that young fellows of one-and-twenty are often drawn to women four or five years older than themselves. In later years it is different.

I stayed talking for two hours, and still her father did not appear. I was not troubled about this—nay, rather, I was glad, for his absence gave me an excuse for staying on. No other customers came to the parlour, and presently Tom, evidently much against his will, left us alone.

“Is Mr. Tom Nicolls your sweetheart?” I said to her, when he was gone.

“He would like to be,” she said, with a meaning smile.

“That’s nothing strange,” I replied. “For that matter, I should think lots of fellows around here would like to be.”

She looked at me curiously, and then, some one calling her from the kitchen, left me alone. Somehow the fact of my poverty was less galling to me now. If Kezia Tamblin was the real owner of Rosecarrol I did not so much mind, for I felt sure I should be able to retain my rights there by asking her to marry me. This, I know, may appear vain, but I regarded her evident liking for me as an indication of that fact. Still, the thought was not pleasant to me at first. She was different from the wife which, as a boy, I had dreamed about; but I loved Rosecarrol, and my father’s words still rang painfully in my ears.

When I left “The Queen’s Head” I was under promise to visit it again soon, and for the first half-mile of my journey I pondered gravely



whether I should not strike out boldly and ask her to be my sweetheart, with the understanding that a marriage should take place as soon as was mutually convenient. Unlike most youths of my age, I weighed the *pros* and *cons* very carefully, but you must remember that the news which my father told me had seemed to add years to my life, and left me with the feeling that in the future I must act for myself. Besides, I remembered mother, and I could not bear the idea of her being turned away from the home she loved.

It was a dark, misty night, but I knew the road well, and I had gone about one-third of my journey home when I heard the sound of carriage wheels.

“I wonder who’s out with a carriage here?” I asked myself, when I heard a stifled scream.

I turned towards the conveyance, and, in spite of the mist, saw that it was not an ordinary farmer’s trap, but a close carriage. Knowing the manners of the whole countryside as I did, I was sure that it came from no place nearer than Bodmin, Liskeard, or Launceston,—unless, indeed, it was the property of some of the landed gentry. For be it understood these were the towns nearest my home, and no railway was to be found within a dozen miles of Rosecarrol.

“Anything the matter?” I asked.

“What’s that?” I heard a man’s voice say, roughly.

“I asked if anything were the matter.”

“Matter enough—we’ve lost our way.”

“I know the countryside well,” I replied. “I shall be pleased to give you any information in my power.”

There was, however, no reply to my offer, and, on coming closer to the carriage, I saw two men enveloped in long coats, who, as far as I could judge, were conversing earnestly in low tones.

“Look here, my good fellow,” said one of the men presently, “I want to know——”

He did not finish the sentence, however, for he was disturbed by a second cry from the carriage, a cry which was immediately stifled.

“No more of that,” shouted the man who had spoken to me, “there must be no noise.”

“Anybody ill?” I said; “the nearest public-house is ‘The Queen’s Head.’”

“We don’t want any public-house, my man, and there’s nobody in the carriage that you need to trouble about.”

The man spoke roughly, as though he were anxious to be rid of me, and yet he was evidently in a dilemma as to the course he ought to take.

I became interested. Such an incident was, to say the least of it, somewhat uncommon, and so I waited for further developments. The

occupants of the carriage were now quite silent, only I thought I heard some one gasping as if in pain. Meanwhile, the two men whispered together again, while the driver sat still and dumb.

As I caught those unusual sounds, although I had been reared in a part of the country where intrigues were few, I could not help being suspicious. The affair was evidently mysterious, and some of the persons concerned did not wish to be identified.

“Well, I’m zorry I caan’t ’elp ’ee, gen’lmen,” I said, relapsing into the Cornish vernacular, “for tes a wisht night to be out in when you doan’t knaw the rooad.”

“But you can help us,” said the man. “Who are you?”

“I work ’pon the farm,” I replied.

“And where have you come from now?”

“From ‘The Queen’s Head’ down to Be-suddle.”

“And you know all the places around here?”

“Aw, iss, very well.”

“Well, what are the places called?”

“Well, there’s Altarnun, Tredaule, Trevague, Bolventor, Trewint, Bowithe——”

“Are these the names of farms?”

“Oa no, they be places weth several ’ouses in ’em.”

“But what are the names of the farms around here?”

“Oa, there’s Tolskiddy, Rosecarrol, Besuddle, Trelyon, Dreardowns, and Bol——”

“Ah, which is the way to Drea—that is, to Trelyon?”

“Well, ’tes ruther a bad place to vind from ere, but ef you go down this laane for ’bout——”

Again I was interrupted by a noise from within the carriage, a noise which, to me, sounded like the cry of some one in pain, then the window opened, and a woman’s voice said, “Come, Mr. Edgar, quick.”

Both men gave an oath, which was followed by a hurried conversation in a whisper between them; then one rushed to the carriage, while the other came to me.

The mist was so thick around us, and the night so dark, that I could by no means detect the man’s features, but I saw that he was about the medium height, say five feet eight inches, or some five inches shorter than myself.

“This is a funny business,” he said to me confidentially; “we ought to have arrived at our destination before dark, but the roads from Bodmin are awfully bad, the carriage broke down, and we lost our way.”

This statement aroused my suspicions more than ever. As a matter of fact the road from

Bodmin is a splendid one. It would be next to impossible for anybody to miss the way, while if they had come from Bodmin they must have passed before "The Queen's Head," in which case I was sure I should have heard them. However, I was wise enough to say nothing.

"Then," he went on, "we've got an old aunt of mine in the carriage who isn't exactly right, and the doctor at Bodmin Asylum says that nothing will cure her but a regular change of air, so we are taking her on to Camelford."

"Oa, then you've got a ticklish job, I reckon," I said, with all the evident credulity of a farm-servant.

"Yes, we have, indeed. Which did you say was the way to Trelyon?"

I told him, just as an uneducated rustic might.

"And which to Bolventor?"

Without showing any surprise I told him, although it lay in the opposite direction.

Then he asked me about all the places in the neighbourhood, although I noticed that he took most interest in my description of the road to a farm called Dreardowns.

"I used to have a friend living in this neighbourhood," he said, "and I was going to stop at his house to-night, but the way is too hard to find."

"Yes," said the other, coming to us, "I have decided to drive on to Altarnun; there's a public-

house there, and we must put up for the night. Here, my man, is a shilling for you, and you'd better get back to your home, or you'll get into trouble. Let me see, where did you say you lived?"

"I 'ave to git to Penliggle, sur," I replied, mentioning a little off farm which was a part of Rosecarrol estate, and through which I had to pass in order to get home.

"Ah, well, I hope your master won't sack you for being out so late."

"I 'ope not, sur."

"Good-night."

"Goo'-night," I replied gravely, and then stumbled up the lane which led to the moors. I did not go far, however. I determined, if possible, to see what the thing meant, so, after waiting a few minutes, I got behind the hedge, and crept quietly back to them.

I saw that the men were lighting the carriage lamps and making other preparations for the journey.

"I wish we'd asked old Sleeman to meet us," I heard one say, "we should have got rid of all this unpleasantness then."

"Still, I think we can find the road from that fellow's directions. Keep down this lane till we get to the moors, then follow the track across the moors till we come to a very big rock. Then

take the left track down the hill till we get to a lane. Old Sleeman has got the right name for the place—it is a Dreardowns.”

“I almost wish we had kept the fellow, so that he might have guided us there.”

“That would not have done,” was the reply; “these fellows are always fond of talking, and it would end in our affairs becoming known, and we don’t want that, you know.”

“Is she all right now?”

“Yes, she will be quiet until we get to Dreardowns, anyhow. Now we are ready to start.”

“You think that fellow is beyond hearing?”

“Oh yes, he’ll be in bed by this time. He suspected nothing. All those fellows are more stupid than the cattle they drive. There, let us be off.”

Slowly the carriage rumbled along the lane. In several places the road was very rough, and once they were in danger of upsetting the conveyance; but by-and-by they reached the open moor. I kept near, for I suspected foul play and determined to know their destination, while a great desire came into my heart to find out who was in the carriage. The man had evidently tried to deceive me in relation to the other matters, and I had very little doubt but that the story of the crazy old aunt was also a fabrication.

Presently we drew near to Dreardowns Farm

buildings, and I judged by the flickering lights that the party was expected. Dreardowns Farm was doubtless well named. The land comprising it had been reclaimed from the moors, and prior to the time of its cultivation, was as dreary a place as could be found within sight of Router and Brown Willy. The house was built in a sheltered valley, which valley was so situated as to be completely hidden until you came close to it. It was an awesome, lonely spot, and was made, if possible, more eerie by the fir-trees, whose prickly foliage nearly hid the roomy house which the father of the present owner had built. I knew "old Sleeman" slightly, and remembered his voice as he said gruffly to the party, "You've come then!"

"Yes," was the reply; "is everything ready?"

"Everything."

"I suppose you can put us up for the night. I don't feel like crossing these vile moors again in the dark, but we must be away by dawn to-morrow."

"Iss, I s'poase we c'n manage it. You'll want to taake 'er upstairs to wance, I reckon."

"That's it."

I stood near while the carriage door was opened, being completely hidden by a tree behind which I stood. The mist had enabled me to gain this position without fear of detection.



The two men lifted a slight form from the carriage, while the farmer held a lantern. Perhaps Peter Sleeman was anxious to see the kind of inmate he was to have in his house, for he let the light shine upon her face. By so doing he dispelled whatever doubt I might have had about the occupant of the carriage being old. The flash of light which rested on her was only momentary, but I saw the features of a young girl. She was very pale, as pale as death, and in the flickering light of the candle looked ghastly. I was not sure, but I thought her chin was streaked with blood.

She lay perfectly motionless as the two men I had seen on the moors carried her into the house, and then I saw another woman, much older, follow them silently. I still waited, hidden behind the tree, and listened intently, but heard nothing distinctly. There was a confused hum of voices within, afterwards heavy footsteps on some bare wooden stairs, and then by the light from an upper window I saw they had taken their burden to one of the bedchambers. The blind was drawn, however, so that I could see nothing that happened in the room.

A few seconds later, and I heard steps on the stairway again, followed by the sound of voices in the kitchen. "She'll be all right now," I heard Peter Sleeman say. "There's a good supper

on the kitchen table, so you'd better git it while I go and 'elp the man to put up the hoss. I'll be back d'reckly."

I still waited while the farmer assisted in foddering the horse, and with the driver pushed the carriage into the waggon-house; after this the two joined the others in the kitchen.

There was a good deal of talk on various matters, but I heard nothing concerning the young girl in whose fate I had become interested. My limbs were becoming cramped with remaining in one position so long, and the mist had wetted me to the skin. I was about to creep silently away, when the kitchen door opened, and one of the men came to the door and looked out.

"It's as dark as dominion, Peter, and as lonely as death. You get no visitors here, I should think," I heard him say.

"Noan as you need bother about. We'm bettern a dozen mile from town or railway station. Sometimes weeks pass and we doan't spaik to nobody but the people on the place."

"Everything is safe then?"

"Ef you've done your paart, it is."

"That's all right, then. Well, I'll lay down for an hour or two. We must be off before five."

"All right; I'll be up."

"Good-night, then, Peter."

"Good-night, sur."

A few minutes later all the lights were out save that in the room where I believed the young girl was. I waited a few minutes and watched, but I heard no sound. The light burnt steadily, but there was not even a shadow on the blind. No one seemed to move. If death reigned supreme the stillness could not have been more profound.

I crept away like one dazed. I could not understand that which I had seen and heard. The whole matter was shrouded in mystery. What was the meaning of those cries? Why was there struggling in the carriage? Who was the young girl who was carried into the lonely farmhouse like one dead? What had Peter Sleeman to do with it all?

I was young, and my nature was not free from a love of romance and mystery. I imagined all sorts of possible solutions to the problem, but none seemed probable. As I silently crept into my bedroom that night, however, I determined that I would solve the matter to the very bottom and understand what it all meant.

## CHAPTER III.

### HOW THE MIST THICKENED.

“ROBERT,” said my father, the following morning, “I am very sorry I had to tell you what I did yesterday. I had always looked forward to your twenty-first birthday as a grand time in your life. I intended inviting a lot of people, and having all sorts of merriment, but I felt it would be a farce to do so when at any time you might be turned out of your home.”

I did not reply, partly because there seemed nothing to say, and partly because my mind was filled with my last night's experience.

“I know it's hard on you,” my father continued. “You've not been home much; what with visiting your Uncle Jack at Tresillian, and being away at school longer than most young fellows, you didn't know how things were going. Besides, I have always hoped that matters would take a turn, and that by the time you were twenty-one everything would be straight, so that you might begin life well. But there,

I have done my best, and it has turned out badly.”

“But wouldn’t Uncle Jack have lent you the money, father?” I asked. “Surely it would be better to go to him than to strangers.”

“No. You see, Jack and I haven’t always got on well together. Besides that, he was deadly opposed to my speculating. He told me I was ruining your prospects and sacrificing the land which had been in the family for generations. Of course, I laughed at him, and we have had high words about the matter, but it has turned out that he is right. I think I might have borrowed money from him, giving the stock as a security, but I didn’t wish him to know that things were so bad.”

“And how long is it since you mortgaged Rosecarrol to Tamblin?” I asked.

“Oh, it’s been done by bits. Tamblin took over the whole thing about a year ago. It was just after he took ‘The Queen’s Head.’”

“But supposing Tamblin should want to call in his money,” I asked, “wouldn’t some one else advance it? Could you not transfer the deeds?”

My father shook his head. “I’ve been through the whole business, my boy,” he said sadly. “I consulted Lawyer Coad about it, and he says that no one would advance as much as Tamblin has done, while they would require a far higher rate of interest.”

“And the mines, father, may they not turn out well after all?”

“I’ve got a thousand pounds lying dead in East Polgooth mine, my boy, and the thing is knocked. Nobody would give me sixpence in the pound for what I have invested.”

“And is there any danger of Tamblin calling in his money at once?”

“He’s been giving me hints, Bob. The other day he told me he thought of buying Trewint from young Tom Nicolls, and then only yesterday morning, before I had this talk with you, he told me that two or three fellows were wanting his daughter, and he had promised her £3000 as a fortune. I know what it means—he either wants the money or else he wants to own Rosecarrol out and out.”

“He never shall,” I said grimly.

My father looked pleased, but he only said, “How can you manage to stop him, Bob? The only way I can think of is that you must marry money.”

“Who can I marry that has the money?” I asked, feeling ashamed of myself as I put the question.

“Times are bad, and ready-money is anything but plentiful,” my father replied slowly. Then, as if with an effort, he blurted out, “Have you seen Tamblin’s maid, my boy?”

I had felt sure, ever since the day before, what was in his mind, and I knew, too, that only pride had kept him from mentioning her name.

"Yes," I replied, "I've seen her."

"When?" he asked. "I know that you never put your foot inside a public-house, while on Sundays you always go to Laneast, and she, when she goes anywhere, goes to Bolventor. I've asked you to go to Bolventor, but you wouldn't."

"Father," I said, and I felt the blush of shame rise to my face, "if I were to marry Kezia Tamblin would it make you safe? Would Rosecarrol be ours—would mother be saved from the misery of being turned out of the home she loves?"

"It would, Robert, my son," replied my father in a hoarse voice.

"And do you think she would marry me, father?"

"She has seen you two or three times, but there's several young farmers who would be only too glad to have her."

"Seen me! Where?"

"At Altarnun harvest festival for once. She was struck with you."

"How do you know?" I asked, a little bit flattered, but a great deal more ashamed.

"She told her father, and Tamblin——" My father hesitated.

"And have you and Tamblin been talking about this matter?" I asked angrily.

"Bob, my boy," said my father eagerly, "I wanted to do for the best. I'm thinking about your future, my boy, and about your mother, too. It would kill me if—if——" My father hesitated and walked to and fro the room. "She's by no means a bad girl," he added falteringly.

It went to my heart to think of my father sacrificing his pride and doing what I knew would be hateful to him in order to avert the calamity he dreaded. Then I remembered Kezia Tamblin as I had seen her the night before, and the prospect did not seem so terrible. I was young and susceptible to a woman's influence, and while I did not love her, I thought of her as a buxom, dimple-cheeked, good-looking young woman. Besides, she had money, and by marrying her I should lift the awful incubus of debt from my father's shoulders, I should save my mother from pain, and I should secure my own position.

"She might refuse to have me," I said, as I thought of the way she had treated me the night before.

"Try, Bob," said my father eagerly, "try."

I did not reply, but walked out into the yard. The clouds of mist had lifted from the moors, and I must confess that Rosecarrol never looked so fair to me as it looked that morning. The corn had all been cut and carried, while what we called "the Mowey" was filled with great ricks, or



stacks of hay and corn. Away in the distance I saw the men ploughing in the fields, while the well-fed cattle and sheep mouthed the autumn grass eagerly. Then I looked towards the house. My mother's bedroom window was opened. It was one of her "good mornings," and she sat near the window and looked out across the meadows to the great wide moors beyond.

I had been in to see her that morning as I had always done when at home, so that I might speak to her before going out for the day; but this morning I could not help going back to her again.

I will not repeat our conversation, for it ill accords with my feelings, neither would it interest my readers, but that conversation made me desire more than ever to sacrifice anything in order to keep Rosecarrol.

At dinner father and I sat alone, for while we often had our meals with the servants in the long kitchen, there were times when we preferred being together in what we called the "front kitchen," a room used as a sitting-room.

"Well, Bob?" said my father questioningly.

"Do you know much about Peter Sleeman?" I asked, instead of replying to the question I knew he longed to ask.

"Nobody does," replied my father. "His father and he were always quarrelling, and when he was about two-and-twenty he ran away from

Dreardowns. He was away for nearly twenty years. What he was doing during that time nobody knows. Some say he was a soldier, some that he was a sailor, while others hint that he went to the bad altogether and took to very questionable pursuits. Anyhow, he came back to Dreardowns ten years ago, just after you went to Probus School, and soon after his father died, leaving everything to him. As you know, he is not married, and no one cares much about having anything to do with him."

I knew most of this in a vague way before, but I wanted to have my father's opinion about him. I had an idea that he might help me to solve the mystery which had gathered around the house.

"Why do you ask, Bob?" said my father.

"I have often wondered," I replied vaguely. "I suppose he's well off, isn't he?"

"No one knows. Some think his father had a good deal of money, and thus left him a rich man, while others say that he had a lot of debts when he came back to Dreardowns and that he's had a hard pull to pay them off. But as I said, no one knows. He's not a man I care to have anything to do with. He has no conscience and sticks at nothing."

"Wasn't there some story about his father dying in a strange way?" I asked.

"There are many who believed Peter got him

out of the way in order to get his money. But old Dr. Maynard signed the certificate, so nothing could be said. People's tongues wagged a good deal, however. He was always a bad one. He was called 'ould Peter Sleeman' when he was only twenty, because of his curious ways. He has always looked old and ugly. If you think of getting money out of him, Bob, give it up. The devil himself couldn't be worse to deal with."

I did not undeceive my father concerning my thoughts about Peter Sleeman. Somehow, I could not bring myself to tell him what I had seen, and yet my mind was constantly reverting to the strange sight I had seen at Dreardowns on the previous night.

About five o'clock I went away over the moors towards Dreardowns alone, and reached a point which gave me a view of the house, while there was yet sufficient light to see it plainly. Never, until that moment, did I realise what a lonely place it was. The house, as I said, was so built that you had to go very near before seeing it. A few fir-trees grew around it, while the farm buildings were in close proximity. But there was only one other dwelling-house near, and that was the cottage of the farm workman. Look whichever way I would there was no sign of human life. Around the farm buildings were, perhaps, forty or fifty acres of cultivated land,

but all beyond was a dreary, stony waste. A number of undersized sheep picked their way among the rocks on the lonely moors, while a few cattle fed in the cultivated fields, but except these I heard and saw nothing.

“Perhaps,” I thought, “Peter Sleeman will be in the house. It must be about supper time now. I’ll try and find out.”

Carefully I drew near to the farmstead, and looked intently, but no one was visible, while the place was as silent as death.

“Was that girl forced to go there?” I wondered. “What is the meaning of such a proceeding? Isn’t it my duty to tell of what I have seen? May there not be foul play in the matter?”

But I could not bring myself to think of this. What would these country people do? Simply gossip. If I told the parish policeman, he would probably do what was altogether wrong.

Hidden by a hedge, I watched the front of the house until the light was nearly gone, and I was thinking whether I could not invent some business errand in order to see Peter, when the front door opened and a woman came out on the little garden plot. It was the same woman I had seen the previous night. I had caught only a passing glimpse of her then in the flickering light of the lantern, but I recognised her. She was a woman of perhaps fifty years of age, by no means bad-

looking, and very neatly dressed. Her clothes, I was sure, were not made by a country dress-maker ; to my rustic eyes they looked graceful and stylish.

She walked slowly around the garden as if in deep thought, while often she lifted her eyes to the window above her head as if to keep watch.

“That young girl was brought as a prisoner,” I thought, “and she is still there. What is the meaning of it?”

But there seemed no answer to my question. The woman remained in the garden for half-an-hour, slowly walking about and constantly lifting her eyes to the window ; then, when daylight had quite gone, she opened the door and crept silently into the house.

I still waited and listened for the sound of voices, but heard nothing. Presently, however, I saw a light gleam from the window towards which the woman had been looking, but I could see nothing, for the calico blind, which was fastened to a roller, was pulled down, thus hiding everything from my sight.

A few minutes later, and it was quite dark, but I still remained, and presently my heart beat loudly, for behind the blind I detected two forms. They were indistinct, however, for the light in the room was by no means bright, while the spot on which I stood was much lower even than the

ground floor of the house ; but I was sure they were female forms, and I thought I distinguished them as the woman I had seen in the garden and her prisoner. Twice they passed by the window, and then I heard the sound of voices ; the one stern and dictatorial, the other at first pleading, and then sobbing.

I had a difficulty in restraining 'myself. Every bit of romance in my nature was aroused by the thought of a young girl imprisoned, and perhaps cruelly treated, in that lonely place. But what could I do? I had no right to interfere. I had no sufficient grounds for taking definite action. Perhaps the fact of her presence there under such a guard was perfectly justifiable, and that if I interfered I should be doing harm instead of good. This method of reasoning, however, did not satisfy me. I felt sure something was wrong. Else why those screams and struggles in the carriage? why the strange behaviour of the men who had escorted her there? why a nocturnal journey, which those men evidently wished to be unknown?

Presently the sound of voices ceased, and again a deathly silence pervaded the house ; so, feeling I could do nothing, I turned away and wandered aimlessly across the moors. For a long time I thought of what I had seen and heard, and wondered how I should be able to discover the

meaning of it all, and as I wondered my desire to know became stronger. So eager was I in forming plans, that for a time I forgot that I had promised to go to "The Queen's Head" that night, forgot the other plans which were intended to lift the burden of care from my father's shoulders as well as from my own.

At length, however, it all came back to my mind, and I turned my face towards Besuddle. I had not gone far when I saw a ghostly-looking form crossing the moor, and, in spite of the education I had received, I could not repress a shudder. For, as most people know, the Cornish folk are very superstitious, and, added to this, it was whispered among the folk Peter Sleeman's father often came back from his grave and haunted the lonely moors, as if to bemoan his untimely death.

All ghostly fears were soon dispelled, however. The familiar clink of a horse's hoofs upon the stones scattered over the moors suggested the fact of a farmer returning home. A minute later I saw that the horse's rider was no other than Peter Sleeman, and, the night being clear, I saw that he was attired in a respectable suit of clothes. This was unusual for Peter. Some said that for five years he had never donned anything but his working clothes, so I felt sure he had something important on hand.

“Good-night, Mr. Sleeman,” I said.

“Who be you?” he asked gruffly, riding up close to me. “Oh, I see—young Tremain. Where be you off to?”

“I’m going to Besuddle, Mr. Sleeman. It’s rather lonely at Rosecarrol, and I’m going for a bit of company. I suppose it is quiet at Dreardowns, too?”

“Yes, we have nobody there,” he said gruffly.

“I suppose not. I was thinking only to-day I would like to have a look at your mowey. Have your corn crops been good this year?”

“Only middlin’. There’s nothin’ at Dreardowns for a young fellow like you to come and see. Chaps like you want to go where there’s wimmen. I ain’t got noan at my place, except old Gracey Grigg, who was ’ousekipper for father, and she’s sixty ef she’s a day.”

“But she can’t do all the work, can she?”

“Well, my hine, Bill Best, es married, and his wife do come up sometimes, but they’m the only wimmen that do ever come to Dreardowns.”

“Well, no one can say you are overmuch burdened with the society of women, Mr. Sleeman. But have you no friends or relations that come to see you?”

“Nobody. There ain’t a bin a livin’ soul but they inside my ’ouse since ’arvest, and that’s six weeks ago. I doan’t want nobody, nuther.



Mine esn't a plaace for people to come to. Good-night."

Knowing what I did, Peter's words more than ever confirmed my suspicions ; neither could I drive them from my mind as I trudged towards "The Queen's Head."

A few minutes later Hezekiah Tamblin was shaking me heartily by the hand, while his daughter Kezia, as she met me, told me with a giggle that she had "amoast gived me up, thinkin' as 'ow I was like moast young men, and didn' kip my word."

Somehow the moral atmosphere of "The Queen's Head" was different from that of Rose-carrol ; it was different, too, from that which I could not help associating with the prisoner at Dreardowns ; and yet I remained like one charmed, and when I left Kezia Tamblin that night I felt her warm kiss burning on my cheek.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FACE AT DREARDOWNS' WINDOW.

FOR the next month I think I was bewitched. I spent a good deal of my time at "The Queen's Head." Kezia Tamblin always gave me a warm welcome when I went, while I was more and more eager to go as the time went by. For the first few days I felt a kind of shame in visiting her. I knew, in spite of all I could tell myself, that I was making love to her just to keep Rosecarrol; and although I knew I should be saving my mother from untold pain in doing this, I dared not tell her of the step I was taking. Somehow I felt sure that mother could never welcome Kezia. It is true she was good-looking, she was wealthy—that is, according to our ideas of wealth in that part of the country—but she was coarse. Perhaps I should not have felt this so much if I had not known and loved my mother; but she had given me high ideals of what a woman ought to be, and when I discovered that Kezia did not fulfil those ideals I was saddened. But this did not last long. Somehow

her robust health and animal spirits made me forget my dreams. I thought less and less about my boyish fancies, and gave myself over to the pleasure of the moment. She was good-looking, she had money, and she was very fond of me,—what could I want more?

So much enamoured with her did I become that I forgot the mystery at Sleeman's house, or, if I thought of it, I did not feel sufficient interest in it to take any further steps in the matter. Kezia claimed all my spare time and attention; Kezia's warm, soft arms would be placed around my neck to welcome me whenever I came; and so I forgot the things I should otherwise remember. And so my passion—for I cannot call it love—grew day by day, until Hezekiah Tamblin regarded the marriage between us as settled.

“Robert, my boy,” he said one night, confidentially, “this es a providental arrangement; that's wot et es. You've got the naame, and the breedin', and Kezia hev got the money to kip et up. I was lucky in California, oncommon lucky, my booy, and I used to tell mezelf that when I got 'ome Kezia shud be a laady. I da conseder yours to be the best family in the parish, Robert. Law, you'll be a magistrate some day. You're a cute chap, and you'll make Rosecarrol into the grandest plaace in the county. Tell

'ee, I wanted things to be like this a long time afore I knawed 'ee, else I shudden a bin willin' to lend so much money to yer vather. But 'tes oal right. I'm glad you and Kezia hev valled in love weth aich other."

"Does Kezia know that my father owes you money?" I asked.

"Never you mind that, my boy. 'Father,' ses she to me, after she'd come 'ome from Arternun 'arvest festival, ses she, 'ef ther's a young man I shud like to have 'tes young Robert Tremain.' Oa, 'tes oal right, Robert."

I must confess that this did not make me very comfortable, but just then Kezia came in, and then I forgot what a coarse man her father was.

A fortnight after I had first seen her at "The Queen's Head," Kezia Tamblin was talked about among the country folk as "Robert Termaain's maid," while Hezekiah Tamblin was heard to say that his "intended son-in-law was the finest young man in the county."

A month after I had first seen her I went with her to see her aunt who lived at Linkinhorne, and Kezia introduced me to her as her intended husband. I suppose she meant nothing indelicate when she did this, and I am sure she felt very loving towards me; but somehow it hurt me, and I am afraid I was not very good company that night.

I think she felt that something was wrong, for as we were going home she asked me if I were cross.

"Certainly not, Kezia," I replied.

"And you do love me, Robert?" she said; "doan't 'ee now? I would die for you, Robert," and she caught my arm and held it fast.

"Of course, Kezia," said I, and at that moment I felt I was speaking the truth.

"Because," said she, and her voice became curiously intense, "I could not do without you now."

"Couldn't you really, Kezia?" I said; "do you love me so?"

"Love you!" she cried, and she lifted my hand to her mouth and covered it with kisses. "Ef any woman was to try and take you from me I would kill 'er."

"Nonsense, Kezia," I said, with a nervous laugh.

"It may be nonsense," she replied, "but I wud. I've got 'ee, Robert, and nobody shall 'ave 'ee but me. When be 'ee goin' to take me to Rosecarrol and shaw me to yer mother?"

"Soon," I said with an uneasy feeling in my heart.

"I knaw I bean't so well brought up as you be," she said passionately. "I knaw that father used to be a farm labbut, but I love you, Robert,

and I feel mad when I see 'ee spaikin' to another maid. You doan't want nobody but me, do 'ee?"

"No one, Kezia," and I spoke the truth.

"And if ever you do want anybody else, as I said, I'm sure I should kill the maid that took away yer love. I used to laugh when I read about sich things in story-books, but I doan't now. I didn' 'knew what it was to care 'bout anybody then. Kiss me, Robert, and tell me you'll never love anybody else."

I kissed her, and told her not to fear, but there was a strange feeling in my heart all the same.

That evening, after I left her, I could not help thinking about what she had said. I was held to her by a strange fascination, and yet even then I knew that she had never stirred my higher nature. The love which held me was the love of the brute rather than the angel, while I felt that my manhood was not uplifted by visiting "The Queen's Head." When I went there at first, I felt a kind of loathing for the inmates of the bar-parlour, with their coarse jokes and ribald songs; but now the loathing was gone, while I often caught myself eagerly listening to their conversation.

All this was passing through my mind when I met Peter Sleeman. He was riding away from Dreardowns, and he was attired in the same clothes he wore when I last saw him. It was

now seven o'clock, but the middle of November had come, and thus daylight had quite gone. At times, however, the moon shone out from between the black clouds, enabling me to see plainly.

He nodded to me as he went by and gave a surly grunt.

"I wonder where Peter is going," I said to myself, and then an intense desire came into my heart to go to Dreardowns. As I said, the company of Kezia Tamblin had driven away all thoughts of Dreardowns and its mysterious inmates. For the past month I had been in a sort of dreamland, and if flattery and demonstrated affection could make one happy, I had been happy.

I had never spoken to any one about the incident I have related, however. Somehow I felt incapable of telling any one about that pale face which bore such a look of agony. I could not describe the meeting on the moors when a woman's cry had aroused my curiosity. Sometimes during that month I had felt that I ought to take definite steps towards finding out its meaning, but something kept me back.

After meeting Peter Sleeman, however, and remembering what he had said the last time I had seen him, I had, as I said, a strong desire to go to Dreardowns again. I fancied all sorts of

wild, improbable things. I pictured the woman I had seen walking in the garden, treating her prisoner with barbarous cruelty ; I thought of the pale young girl suffering untold anguish as she remained a prisoner in the dreary house.

Almost involuntarily I turned my face towards Peter Sleeman's dwelling, and then hurried thither without questioning what possible good I could do. It was yet early in the evening, so I determined to get behind the garden fence, from whence I had seen the woman about whom I had been so greatly puzzled. I had no difficulty in reaching this spot unobserved. Not a soul stirred, and at that time a cloud hid the light of the moon, so that the darkness was great. I looked over the fence between the scanty bushes towards the window of the room to which the young girl had been taken, and saw that the blind had not been pulled down. The room was very dim ; probably it was only illumined by a candle. I looked eagerly, but could see nothing within the apartment.

A few minutes later, however, a brighter light gleamed from the window ; then I saw the elderly woman bring a lamp and place it near the window. I could discern her features plainly, and I thought I saw a bored, weary look on her face. I saw, too, that she moved away listlessly, as though she were tired.

Close beside me was a fir-tree, and, acting on



the impulse of the moment, I climbed up to the first branch, a distance of perhaps ten feet. From this position, in spite of several thick iron bars which had been placed across the window, and which made escape seemingly impossible, I could see the interior of the apartment, could see every article of furniture. It was not a bedroom, but fitted up as a sitting-room. I saw an easy-chair, a narrow, uncomfortable couch, and two cane-seated chairs. The floor was covered with coconut matting, while on the walls were hung a few cheap prints. A dull, miserable-looking fire smouldered in the grate. Altogether, the room, for a farmhouse, was not badly furnished.

Presently my heart gave a bound, for I saw the young girl enter. At first I could not see her features plainly, for she walked around the room, and thus turned only the side of her face towards me. By-and-by, however, she came to the window and looked out. I was only twenty feet from her, while the branch of the tree on which I stood placed me on a level with the room in which she was. I saw her plainly now. The light of the lamp revealed every feature. She remained a long time, too, looking steadfastly out into the darkness.

I shall never forget to my dying day the feeling which came over me as I watched. What caused it I can scarcely describe, even now. Perhaps

it was the look in her eyes. Perhaps——, but let me describe her appearance as well as I can, just as I saw her that November night.

She did not look more than twenty, perhaps barely that. In the lamplight both her hair and eyes looked as black as the raven's wing, the former being tossed in curling tresses back from her forehead, and the latter shining like stars. I learned afterwards that neither were her hair nor eyes black, but a rich dark brown. Her face was very pale; it looked unhealthy in the dim lamplight, but the features were to me more beautiful than any I had ever seen.

I looked long and steadfastly; and as I looked I realised that the dream of my life was fulfilled. I saw the fulfilment of my heart's desire; I saw one whom I felt sure responded to the deepest cravings of my heart.

But oh the sadness, the utter hopeless misery that rested on her features! Never before did I think that eyes could reveal such unutterable longing as hers revealed! Never did I think a face could tell such a story as hers told!

It was with difficulty that I refrained from jumping to the ground, going into the house, and demanding her liberty. I soon realised the foolishness of such an act, however. My new-found love gave me discretion, I think, and told me to be wise. For the throbbing of my heart,

the hunger of my soul told me that I did love her, that I should love her until my heart ceased to beat, until the wheels of my life stood still.

The world became changed to me from that moment. Everything had a new meaning. In a true, deep sense, "old things had passed away, and all things had become new." I had heard the preachers tell about being born into a new life, and I felt that this new life had come to me.

I did not know who she was ; at that moment the thought did not trouble me. I had seen her. I knew that the light which shone from her eyes was pure ; I saw nobility stamped upon her face. She appealed to all that was pure and true within me, and I loved her with all the fulness of my life.

At that moment I never thought of the companionship I had formed, never thought of the fact that I had been ready to barter my soul for a mess of pottage. I remembered only that I was looking into the face of the one woman in the world, and that my heart burned as if there were great fires within me.

Joy ! Until that moment I did not know the meaning of the word ! For the first time I understood the language of the poets I had read when at school, and who had taught that love was heaven.

How long she stood looking out into the night

I know not. It might be only minutes, it might be hours, but all the time, as I watched her, I thought of plans whereby I might let her know that she was not uncared for; I pondered over means whereby I might set her at liberty.

Presently I saw her give a start; then she looked around her as if afraid, while a look of pain shot across her face. I saw her no more that night, however, for she hastily pulled down the blind, and from that time it seemed to me as though the night were darker and the scene more drear.

Just at that moment, too, I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and then I felt sure that she had a reason for leaving the window. She was afraid of being seen, perhaps, or it might be that she expected news from the outside world. At the sound of the horse's hoofs I turned, and from my hiding-place saw Peter Sleeman ride up. I heard him muttering to himself as he stabled his horse, and then, as he made his way towards the farmhouse door, I distinctly heard him utter these words, "I'll know more about this business to-night."

He stood for a few seconds by the door, as though he hesitated to enter; then he said slowly, "There's more in it than there seems, but *I will* know."

A moment later he was within the house, the

house that contained a treasure dearer to me than all the world besides.

Without hesitating a second I slipped down from the tree and made my way to the back part of the building. I saw a light in the back-kitchen window, towards which I went, and hid myself in an angle of the house, from which I could see the room plainly. As every Cornish countryman knows, especially those who have lived in the neighbourhood of which I am writing, the back kitchen is a room mostly used by farm-servants. It is anything but elegantly furnished. Generally all that is to be seen is a deal table, a wooden settle, a form, and two or three three-legged stools. This room was no exception to the rule. There was no window-blind fastened to the window, and had there been, it would not, in all probability, have been drawn. Where there are no neighbours country people trouble but little about such things.

On the table a tallow candle flickered, while beside the peat fire in the huge open chimney-place crooned an old woman. Peter Sleeman stood not far from her, looking uglier, I think, than ever I had seen him before.

"Hello, Graacey," he shouted, "you bean't gone to bed, then?"

"No, Pitter, no. I thot I'd jist wait till you comed 'ome, my dear. Oa 'tes fine an' loanly."

"I s'poase Liza Best hev bin up?"

"Iss, but she've bin gon' an hour or more—ever since Bill comed up to give the bullocks ther straw, and bed 'em down for the night."

"And ain't Mrs. Foxey a bin 'ere toal?"

"No, she's bin slaipin', I reckon."

"And the maid?"

"I ain't a zid her."

"Ugh! Well, you go to bed now."

"What?"

"Go to bed! Caan't 'ee 'ear? I be hollin' to 'ee like a hedger. You be as deaf as a addick, and be gittin' deefer every day."

The old woman hobbled off to bed, muttering to herself as she went, while Peter stood looking into the peat fire.

"I'll have her down," he said presently; "I'll know more 'bout this business. I will, ther' now!"

He hesitated a few seconds, as though in doubt, then he went to the foot of the stairs and called aloud, "Mrs. Foxey."

"Yes, Mr. Sleeman."

"'Ere, I want 'ee."

"All right, I'm coming."

A minute later, the woman of whom I have spoken before came into the room.

"I want to have a talk weth 'ee, Mrs. Foxey," said Peter Sleeman with a nervous giggle.

“Allow me to tell you again, Mr. Sleeman, that my name is not Foxey, but Foxwell.”

“Aw, well, 'tes all the same to me, my dear. Look 'ere, I want to knaw more about this maid bisness, and wot's more, I'm goin' to knaw.”

Eagerly I drew nearer to the window, so as not to miss a word.

## CHAPTER V.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN PETER SLEEMAN  
AND MRS. FOXWELL.

IT may be thought that I was scarcely acting an honourable part in listening, but, in looking back, I do not feel that I was wrong. I felt that evil was being done ; I was sure that injustice was rife, and that in fathoming the designs of those who wrought the evil I was justified in taking this course. Besides, my heart was on fire. The intense longing, ay, the misery expressed on that young girl's face nerved me to do anything, while the love which grew stronger at each beat of my heart would admit of no obstacle.

And yet did I not compromise with my love, and—but I will speak of that presently ; let me tell my story now, as best I can.

The night had become quite dark now. No longer were there blue patches in the sky. From the north-east a great black cloud had arisen which covered the whole heavens, and I knew by the moaning of the wind as it swept over the



moors that a storm was coming on. That fact, however, did not trouble me. I was intent on hearing what the woman whom Peter Sleeman had called Mrs. Foxey had to say to him.

"There is nothing I have to tell you, Mr. Sleeman," I heard Mrs. Foxwell say.

"Iss, there es, my dear," said Peter with a leer. "Come now, I'm goin' to knaw." And he went to the chimney-place and stirred up the fire.

"'Tes gittin' awful cowld, my dear," he continued. "Ther', now, I'll put some 'ood [wood] on, an' pull up the settle, too. Ther' now, zet down and we'll have a good crake [talk] 'bout this."

"I've nothing to tell you, Mr. Sleeman," she repeated.

"Then I sh'll 'ave summin' to tell to people," responded Peter with an ugly look.

He threw some furze sticks on the fire, which caught into a blaze, and then, pulling up the settle, he sat down, while Mrs. Foxwell sat on a stool near. I could see them plainly, and the wind not being yet risen, and one of the panes of glass being broken, I could hear them plainly.

"Come now," said Sleeman, "ould Graacey es gone to bed, so nobody can 'ear. What do et oal main?"

"I tell you, Mr. Sleeman, I don't know. I'm

as much in the dark as you are. You are paid for keeping her here, I am paid for taking care of her. That is all."

Peter gave an unsatisfied grunt; then he said sharply: "But you started weth her from the beginnin', you must know 'bout that. All I got was a letter axin' me to take a young person privately, and to keep her in strict secrecy. Now, that may be all very well. I'm paid very well for it, but it might pay me better—iss, and pay us boath better, ef we was to git the rights of it and help t'other side."

"No, it wouldn't."

"How do 'ee know?"

"She hasn't a penny, never had a penny. She remembers all about her past. She has always been poor. She is perfectly in the dark as to what it all means."

"I doan' know nothin' 'bout that," said Peter slowly. "But you must be lunny to think that any Trelaske in this world es agoin' to do a thing like this without ther's good raison."

"Mr. Edgar is very deep," said Mrs. Foxwell thoughtfully.

"Deep! deep as the bottomless pit," said Peter savagely. "They all be. I was sarvent to th' oull major I was, and well I knowd it. Tell 'ee he *was* deep, and so when I gits a letter from young Edgar askin' me to kip a maid 'ere in

privacy, to taake her in at night and not to laive anybody know that she was 'ere, I knowd there was summin on foot. The maid may know nothin' 'bout it, but I tell 'ee there's summin in the wind. Look 'ere, 'ow ded *you* git on this 'ere job?"

"I was maid to Mrs. Trelaske," she replied.

"What, th' oull major's wife?"

"Yes."

"Then you had a purty time ov et, I reckon."

"Anyhow, I was her maid; when she died I got married."

"What, to Foxey?"

"To Mr. Foxwell. He was coachman in the old gentleman's days. He took a public-house afterwards and took to gambling."

"Iss, that's the way ov 'em."

"Well, when he died, a few months ago, he left me without a penny."

"Iss, what then?"

"I started a dressmaking business in Plymouth, but I got on badly. I couldn't get a connection worth anything, so when I got a message from Mr. Edgar asking me to do this, I consented."

"And tha's all you know?"

"Ye-es."

Peter looked at her suspiciously.

"And he took you because you was a woman to be depended on," he said with a leer; "and

he comed to me because this es the moast God-forsaken spot in the country. We'm twelve mile from everywhere, and there edn't 'ardly a 'ouse for a mile round 'ere, and nobody do come 'ere. He do know that I was never one to talk, and he do know, too, that I doan't make friends weth people. Iss, I've seed et oal. But, Mrs. Foxey, we must find out 'bout this."

"We can't."

"Have you pumped the maid 'bout her history?"

"I've asked her questions. But she will tell me nothing. Either there is nothing to tell, or she distrusts me. But I am sure from what she says that she's been poor."

"Um! lev me see, she's called Joyce, ed'n' she?"

"Yes, Joyce Patmore."

"Patmore, Patmore—no, I caan't think of anybody I know by that name. Have she tould 'ee where she lived and what she used to do?"

"No, she will tell me nothing. I wish there was an end to this. I'm tired of it. I'm wearied to death of this dismal place. I've seen nobody for a month, and I can't bear it."

"Tha's nothin' wuth talkin' 'bout, Mrs. Foxey, my dear. I know you had trouble in gettin' her 'ere; didn't 'ee?"

"I got into the carriage at Plymouth. Mr. Edgar was there, and the other man that came

on here. She was just like one in a trance. We got out at Doublebois, a little roadside station, and one of the loneliest places you can conceive of; there are woods all around, and not a house near."

"Iss, I knaw it. Well?"

"Well, we found the carriage waiting. Mr. Edgar told the porter, a thick-headed fellow that collected the tickets, that the lady was ill. He was too stupid to think of asking questions, and so we got into the carriage that was waiting for us, and drove across the dreariest part of the country in the world."

"Iss, I knaw it. She waked up, didn't she?"

"Yes, twice; but Mr. Edgar gave her something to smell and she went off again. We had most trouble just before we got here. An awful mist came over the moors, and we didn't know which way to come, but Mr. Edgar found out by inquiring of a farm-servant, and then told him we would go on to Altarnun."

"Iss, I heard 'bout it. Edgar told me. She squalled and wriggled a good bit, dedn' she?"

"Yes—and that's all."

"We must find out, Mrs. Foxey."

"If we do we shall lose our pay, and do no good."

"She seems more tractable now, doan't she?"

"Yes, she seems to have settled into a sort

of stupor. At first she was passionate, and I suspected that she was trying to devise means of getting away. Now she just sits all day and says nothing. For my part, I believe she'll either go mad or die."

"Mr. Edgar doan't want her to die, do 'a?"

"No; I must give her a little more liberty, I think. She doesn't know where she is at all."

"How do 'ee know?"

"By her questions. Once she asked me if we were in Somersetshire, another time she asked if these were the Dartmoors."

"I doan't like doin' things in the dark," said Peter reflectively. "Still, not a soul ain't the laistest idea that anybody's 'ere; that es, 'cept ould Graacey, and she's safe enough."

"Yes; but all this makes it hard for me. I've always to be on the watch. I've no liberty at all. I've had to lock the door in order to come away now. I shall write to Mr. Edgar to send some one else to help me."

"Then ther'll have to be mait for another," said Peter, "and that'll main a pound a week more for me, mind that."

"I think he's paying all he cares to pay."

"But I'll make 'un. I'll threaten to tell."

"And if you do you'll rue it."

"How?"

"Why, if he's done wrong, so have we. If

he's done anything for which he can be punished, so have we. We should be imprisoned as his accomplices."

An ugly look came into his eyes, and he seemed to be about to speak when the woman started up.

"There, she's moving," she said. "I hear her steps overhead. There, she's walking up and down the room. The window is barred, and she would have to come down these stairs in order to get out, but I'll go up and see."

She left the room hastily, while Peter sat staring into the fire. Presently he started up, and then sat down again. At that moment Mrs. Foxwell returned.

"She was walking in her sleep, I think," she said, in an excited tone of voice. "She was going all around the room, her eyes wide open and seeing nothing. She took no notice of me, but went on whispering to herself. I tell you, she'll go mad or die. She's getting very weak."

"You must take her for a walk over the moors to-morrow," said Peter. "Take her Brown Willy way; there ed'n' a house that way for more'n two mile. Go out jist afore Bill Best do come to tie up the cows, and come back 'bout six o'clock. It'll be a change for both of 'ee."

"I think I will," she said quietly.

"And afterwards," said Peter, "we need'n' be like strangers; we can send ould Graacey to

bed, and have a chat 'ere together. I think you be a nice woman," and Peter looked at her amorously.

"Don't be foolish," she said, in not a displeased tone of voice.

"I bean't foolish, Martha—you'm called Martha, bean't 'ee? I was never a woman's man, my deear, though I was in the Artillery after I runned away from vather here. Wimmen dedn' like me. But I like you, you be a nice woman, and a nice-looking woman, too. I knaw I bean't much to look at, but I'm wuth a good bit a money, and you and me can make a good bit more out ov this bisness, ef we'm careful, Martha."

"I don't see that. Do you hear the rain? 'Tis an awful night."

"But I do, Martha. And we may so well be comfortable. Give me a kiss now, will 'ee?"

"Nonsense, Mr. Sleeman. Good-night."

"But, Martha, now," said Peter coaxingly, and trying to smile, which made his face uglier than ever, "we may so well be friendly. Give me a kiss."

"Certainly not—why, this is the first time you've spoken civilly to me since I came."

Peter caught her arm, but she slipped from him, left the room, and went upstairs.

I still waited, wondering what Peter would do. I was cramped and cold, and the rain had



drenched me to the skin; but I cared nothing for that. A young farmer thinks nothing of wet clothes—besides, I was not in a state of mind to trouble about such things. The young girl's pleading eyes haunted me, and I longed with a great longing to set her free.

Peter looked steadily into the fire, sucking a black clay pipe as he did so. Several times he gave a low chuckle, as if pleasant thoughts were passing through his mind. But he said nothing that I could hear, and presently he took the candle and left the room.

I felt nothing of the beating rain as I went over the moors towards Rosecarrol; I thought of nothing but the young girl who had entered my life, and of the conversation to which I had listened. Kezia Tamblin was only a name, while the danger of losing Rosecarrol never troubled me at all.

“Joyce! Joyce Patmore!” I cried aloud; “do not be afraid, Joyce, you shall be free! You have a friend, a lover, Joyce, although you know it not! Don't be afraid, Joyce, I will help you!”

I repeated her name over and over again. I called her all sorts of endearing names. I laughed aloud and listened while the sounds died away in the moaning of the wind.

Presently I seemed to enter into the spirit of the wild night; there was something akin to me

in the great stretch of the moors, and in the sobbing of the storm as it swept onward. I heard her name everywhere—a thousand voices seemed to tell me that I must deliver her from her prison, that I must solve the riddle of her life.

“And I will—I will, Joyce, my beautiful,” I cried. “Come what will, I will help you, Joyce ; I will set you free, my darling, for I love you ! I love you ! Do you hear, Joyce, I love you !”

Then the winds roared around me as though they understood, and the moor-birds cried as though they were witnesses of the vow I had made.

As I drew nearer Rosecarrol, however, a new mood came over me. A great darkness seemed to rest on everything, and the wild winds, instead of speaking words of cheer and hope, only breathed the wail of despair, while the beating rain gave only sullen moans. But my heart beat warm with love through it all ; and I saw Joyce’s face and Joyce’s eyes everywhere, and I determined that, come what might, she should be free, and she should be happy.

I know that this may seem foolish to those who have never caught the spirit of a stormy night, nor been torn with conflicting thoughts as I was torn, but I have told the truth nevertheless, just as what follows is true, strange though it may seem.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW MATTERS CAME TO A CRISIS.

WHEN I drew near to Rosecarrol I saw that a light was in the room to which my father repaired when he had any writing to do. I think I have mentioned that sometimes we called it the sitting-room and sometimes the library. To my surprise my father met me.

“Robert, my boy,” he said, when I entered, “you’ve had a wet night to come from courting. It’s a rough walk over the moors, too. I should think,” he continued, with a nervous, apologetic sort of laugh, “that you’ll want to end it soon, and—and settle down.”

I said nothing, however. Somehow I did not care to tell him that I had not been with Kezia Tamblin since early in the evening, while it was now midnight.

“It is very wet,” I said; “I’m soaked to the skin.”

“Well, get on some dry clothes; I want to talk a bit,” he said. “I’ve got some hot milk and

egg for you. I told Matilda to get it ready. I suppose you won't have a drop of brandy in it?"

"No," I said, remembering the habit which had been growing upon him, although I must confess he had not drunk so much since I had taken up with Kezia Tamblin.

"Well, put on dry clothes, anyhow, and come down here. You see what a good fire I've got."

I was not adverse to this, for I did not feel like going to bed, and the fire certainly looked cheerful. So I quickly changed my wet clothes for dry and came back to my father.

"You've had supper, I suppose, Bob?"

"I could manage with some of that chicken-pie, anyhow," I replied, for I had eaten nothing since early in the afternoon. So I sat down and ate the chicken-pie; and then I drank the milk and egg, feeling very much better for it, too.

"You've been to 'The Queen's Head' to-night, I suppose, Bob?" said my father.

I nodded.

"Hezekiah Tamblin has been here."

"What for?"

"I sent for him."

"Why?"

"That's what I wanted to speak to you about," said my father anxiously.

Like one in a dream I sat beside the fire. I was wondering what Joyce Patmore was doing just

then. Hezekiah Tamblin's visit was nothing to me.

"You remember that I told you how Rosecarrol was mortgaged for all it was worth to Hezekiah Tamblin?"

"Yes."

"You know, too, that I told you how I had borrowed money on the stock?"

I nodded.

"Well, Lawyer Coad wants his money."

"What money?"

"The money I borrowed from him."

"Oh, I see. You borrowed money from him. I thought you had it all from Tamblin. Well, you say Coad wants his money back?"

I hardly realised what I was saying; for, simple though my father's meaning was, I barely grasped it. My thoughts were elsewhere.

"Yes, Coad wants his money back. I got a letter from him this morning. It's a fairly big sum. I should have to sell off all my stock to pay him, and you can see what that would mean."

His meaning was getting clearer to me, but I did not speak.

"Well, I sent for Tamblin, and asked him to lend me the amount."

"Yes."

"Well, he consents—on condition that——"

“What?”

“That you marry Kezia at once.”

I awoke from my dream at his words. I saw clearly now what he had been aiming at; I realised, too, what it meant. At that moment I loathed Kezia Tamblin, I loathed myself for paying her any attentions. By so doing I had blighted my life, I had been untrue to my best self, I had destroyed my chances of ever winning as my wife one for whom every fibre of my being longed. It was with difficulty that I refrained from rising to my feet, denouncing my father's action and refusing ever to speak to Kezia Tamblin again. At that moment I saw her as I had never seen her before. She was blowsy, vulgar, coarse. She had never appealed to my manhood at all—only to my selfishness, to my lower nature. My new-found love, on the other hand, seemed to me an angel of purity, leading me upward.

My father, however, never dreamed of the thoughts which passed through my mind. He went on talking quite calmly.

“You see, Robert, Tamblin is entirely wrapped up in this girl. He is a coarse sort of fellow, but he really loves his daughter, while she is simply crazy about you. It seems she fell in love with you before you ever saw her, and it was she who persuaded him to advance so much

money on Rosecarrol. Well, whether Tamblin doubts you or not I can't say, but he says that he'll advance this money on the condition that the wedding takes place at once, and that he'll give her Rosecarrol and this money as a fortune. I tell you, my boy, I don't know where you'd get such another chance. Why, it's as good as—yes, more than five thous——”

“Stop, father,” I cried; “stop, I want to think.”

“What's the use of thinking?” responded my father. “You've courted the girl for a month, and, as far as I can see, the wedding may as well take place in another three weeks or month as in several months' time. Besides, the whole matter would be settled, and money troubles would be over.”

“Have you spoken to mother about it?” I asked.

“Well, she knows you've been courtin' Kezia. You know she's only anxious about your happiness. Let the wedding come off, and she'll never know anything about money troubles, and she'll be happy in the thought of your joy.”

“But couldn't you borrow this money elsewhere and pay Coad?”

“Why should I?” asked my father. “Tamblin's money is as good as anybody's else. Besides,” and my father looked at me suspiciously, “if you

try to get out of marryin' Kezia, her father will ruin me in a moment ; he will drive us out of the house, and that will kill your mother. If I were to *try* to borrow anywhere else, his suspicions would be aroused, for, mind you, he's no fool, if he is rough and coarse."

"I can't talk any more about it to-night," I said hurriedly. "I'll let you know to-morrow morning," and I left the room with an unsteady step.

Not one wink of sleep did I get that night ; my mind seemed preternaturally awake. And yet I could not think clearly. Everything was mixed up. Sometimes Peter Sleeman and Hezekiah Tamblin were the same persons, while the money difficulties presented a riddle which I could not solve. Before daylight I got up and dressed, and then, after a thorough sousing of my head in cold water, I was able to grasp the situation in which I was placed.

What should I do ? Try and crush my new-found love for the lone maiden of whom I knew nothing, and give up all my plans for rescuing her ? No, home or no home, property or no property, I could not do that. Whatever happened, I would set her free, and I would try and win back her rights for her, whatever they might be. But what did this mean ? What of Kezia Tamblin ? Had I not won her heart and led her to believe I cared for her ? Was it not my duty to fulfil



my promises? Besides, if I did not wed her, my home would be sacrificed, while my father and I would be left penniless. And mother! Yes, I was sure it would kill her to know that we were bankrupt and homeless.

Then, again, had I any right to marry Kezia Tamblin when I did not love her—ay, when I was ready to give my life's blood for another? Better poverty, better death, than a loveless marriage. Should I not sin against this affectionate country girl more by marrying her, when all the time my heart would be yearning for another, than by refusing to be a party to a loveless union?

All this passed through my mind in a hazy, indistinct sort of way, and as the morning passed away the question remained unsettled.

I determined that I would set Joyce Patmore at liberty, but I could not believe that she could ever care for me. I might love her, but how could she love me? As yet she had never seen me, she did not know of my existence. Still, I was young, and youth is always daring, always hopeful; and although I could not make up my mind what to do, I did not despair but that some course would open up.

A man in a dilemma always seeks a course which, although it seems easiest at the time, is often the most difficult in the long run. I was no exception to the rule, and I tried to procrastinate.

“Father,” I said, after I had gone through the farce of pretending to eat my dinner, “what is the latest date on which this matter must be settled?”

“The sooner the better,” said my father.

“Yes,” I replied; “but you see it’s very quick. Kezia and I have only been keeping company a month. It’s hardly fair that I should be expected to marry a girl in less than two months after I first saw her.”

My father looked at me curiously. “What do you mean, Robert?” he said. “Things were different when I was your age; I’d a-married your mother in less than a week after we started courtin’ if I could. But there, I needn’t settle up with Coad for a week, although I promised to see Tamblin again on Friday night.”

It was now Tuesday, thus I had three days in which to act. I determined that I would go to Dreardowns again that very night. I remembered what Mrs. Foxwell had said about taking Joyce Patmore over the moors, and made my plans accordingly. Of course, things might be different from what I imagined, but I must be governed by circumstances and do the best I could.

No doubt my plans were clumsy, no doubt that other and cleverer fellows would have arranged better than I, but God knows I did the best I could. As I look back now I can see how I ought

to have taken greater care and risked less ; indeed, the first step I took might have destroyed all my chances of helping her. Still, as I said, I did my best. I was not accustomed to mystery and intrigue ; I had lived my life on the open moors, and that kind of existence does not prepare one for scheming and planning. Still, love makes us wise as well as foolish, and I loved—Heaven knows I loved Joyce Patmore with all my life.

I knew that Kezia Tamblin expected me at "The Queen's Head" that evening, but directly dusk came on I turned my face towards Dreardowns. I remembered Peter Sleeman's words, "*Take her Brown Willy way ; there ea'n' a house that way for more'n two mile. Go out jist afore Bill Best do come to tie up the cows, and come back 'bout six o'clock.*"

Of course, this plan might not be carried out, but I determined to be prepared to act upon it. I arrived within sight of Dreardowns just as the light of day was beginning to fade. The sky overhead was grey, but no rain was falling ; at any rate, the weather was favourable to walking. Placing myself in a sheltered spot I watched the house, and presently saw two female forms come out and go in the direction of Brown Willy. As I said, the sky was grey, but the moon being nearly at the full, the night would not be very dark. I saw, too, that they followed the cart

track which led over the moors, so there would be no danger of their losing their way. Instantly my plans were made. Putting the note I had scribbled just before leaving Rosecarrol in the side pocket of my coat, I took rather a circuitous route towards the hill, and having reached it saw that the two women walked side by side, Mrs. Foxwell holding the young girl's arm.

I kept them within sight easily, as long as daylight lasted, but when that faded my work was more difficult. They went farther across the moors than I anticipated, but presently they turned and came slowly back towards the house. I got behind a big rock, and so hid myself from them as they passed by me. When they had gone a few yards I determined to carry my plan into effect. As I said some time ago, my arrangements were very clumsy, and had not good fortune favoured me all might have been different. However, this was what I did. Walking along on the heather, I made no noise until I came close to them, then I strode boldly up and took hold of Joyce Patmore's hand.

"Good-evening, Miss Langham," I said, just as young fellows do to young farmers' daughters with whom they are well acquainted. "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to Treduda, sha'n't I? It's just in my way."

I slipped the note into Joyce's hand before they

recovered from their surprise, and I am certain Mrs. Foxwell did not see my action.

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Foxwell, "you are mistaken. Neither of us bears the name of Miss Langham."

"Forgive me, ladies," I said, in a loud, boisterous way, "but it is rather dark, and I cannot see plainly. Hope no offence, I'm sure. I wouldn't offend for anything."

While I spoke I pressed Joyce Patmore's hand over the note I had placed within it. I felt her arm tremble as though she were afraid, but she gave no other sign of fear.

"There's no offence," said Mrs. Foxwell. Then, as if she desired to know who I was, she said, "Do you live near here?"

"A long way from here, ma'am. I hope I have not frightened you. I meant nothing but kindness in speaking, and I know that Miss Langham always comes this way when she goes visiting her aunt at Downderry. That's Downderry," I continued, pointing across the moors. "Don't you see that flickering light?"

Mrs. Foxwell looked in the direction towards which I pointed, and while she did so I pressed Joyce Patmore's arm as if to assure her that I was a friend.

"Good-night, ladies. Hope you'll get safely to your journey's end. I wish I could help you,"

I added meaningly, "but I must hurry on, seeing you are not going my way."

I went on, whistling, and turned on a branch track which led to Treduda, where a Miss Langham really lived.

I had not gone more than a few yards before I was harassed with a hundred fears. Had I done right? Did Joyce Patmore understand? Would she give Mrs. Foxwell the letter? Did the woman see the note I had given to Joyce? Supposing Mrs. Foxwell had no suspicion, would the lonely girl trust me, an entire stranger? These and a hundred other questions troubled me. I saw now, when it was too late, that if Mrs. Foxwell were to see the letter, my chances of helping her would be gone. And yet what else could I do? Anyhow, I hoped for the best, and while a hundred other plans shaped themselves in my brain, and while I told myself again and again what I ought to have done, I had faith to believe that my efforts would not be futile.

Of my feelings towards Joyce as I held her arm I will not speak. Nothing but a keen sense of her danger kept me from saying and doing that which would have been wild and foolish.

Not long later I had again hidden myself behind the garden fence and was watching the window of her room. If my note had done its work

she would appear there alone, and would in some way tell me if she would accept my help.

Presently the light shone from the window, but the blind was drawn before Joyce appeared. Soon after I saw the shadows of two forms, but these moved rapidly past the window; after that I think the room was empty. A long time I waited, until I almost gave up hope. I was almost sure that Mrs. Foxwell had discovered my ruse, and that in the future Joyce would be more securely guarded, or perhaps spirited away to another hiding-place.

At length, however, I heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. They were not loud but I heard them plainly in the silence of the winter night. Then I heard the click of the farmyard gate, and saw Bill Best come up and open the cattle-house door.

“Is that you, Bill?” It was Peter Sleeman who spoke.

“Iss.”

“Aw; I may sa well 'elp 'ee.”

“Oal right.”

Peter came into the yard, and I heard the indistinct mumbling of their voices as they talked. A few minutes later their work was done.

“Nothin' else, I s'poase?” said Bill.

“No, nothin'.”

“Oal right. Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

Peter came back to the house again.

“Graacey, 'ave 'ee 'ad yer supper?” I heard him shout.

“Iss, Pitter cheeld.”

“Then be off to bed.”

I did not hear her reply, but a few seconds later I heard feeble footsteps tottering up the bare wooden stairs.

After that there was, perhaps, ten minutes of silence, and then I heard Peter's voice again.

“Mrs. Foxey, ther's a capital fire in the back kitchen. I've brought in the aisy chair, too.”

My heart began to beat with more hope. At any rate, if Mrs. Foxwell had discovered anything, it did not appear that she had as yet communicated it to Peter.

A little later I heard footsteps on the stairs again, and then all was silent. I could hear the loud beating of my heart as I sat and listened; for I was very excited. The next few minutes would decide whether I should be able to help the young girl who had become as dear to me as my own life.

Scarcely a breath of wind stirred. Now and then, it is true, I could hear a kind of low moaning out in the moors where the breezes swept across the open spaces, but here it was sheltered, and not a movement could be seen among the prickly



foliage of the fir-trees. The house lay in silence ; so silent was it that the cry of the moor-birds sounded quite plainly in my ears.

After waiting a few minutes longer I saw the window-blind slowly begin to roll up. No noise was made, and the light in the room was so dim that I could not see who was the occupant, nevertheless I felt sure that Joyce Patmore waited to speak to me.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PRISONER'S LETTER.

I DID not hesitate a second. I crept over the fence as noiselessly as possible, and then went across the little garden-plot towards the window. I saw it slowly and noiselessly lifted.

"I am here," I said, as plainly as I could in a whisper.

"Who are you?"

"I gave you that note on the moors. Have you read it?"

"Yes."

"Has that Mrs. Foxwell seen it? Does she know that I gave it to you?"

"No."

"Will you let me help you? I will take you from here, if you will let me."

"Who are you? Oh, forgive me; but I feel I can trust no one. How did you find out I was here? Do you know why I am here?"

"You may trust me—you may!" I whispered eagerly. "I—I would do anything to prove

myself your friend. I found out that you were here by following the carriage across the moors on the night you came ; but I do not know why you are here. But I will find out—if I can.”

“ I have been here, oh, such a long time—why, if you are my friend, did you not try and help me before ? ”

Her words wounded me like the stab of a poisoned knife. I had not tried to help her, because I had been with one who expected me to wed her.

“ Forgive me,” she went on, “ but I have been nearly mad, and it is so terrible to be here.”

“ Hav’n’t they been kind to you ? ”

“ Yes, in a way ; but I am imprisoned here without knowing why. I don’t know where I am, I don’t know why I am kept here. I am frightened at the loneliness ; it is so terrible here. And everything is a mystery.”

“ You are in Cornwall,” I said ; “ you are about a dozen miles from Bodmin, and a few miles from Router and Brown Willy.”

“ And you, oh, who are you ? ”

“ I am a young farmer. My name is Robert Tremain. I live at Rosecarrol, which is about three miles from here.”

“ Hush,” she said, “ don’t speak so loud. Mrs. Foxwell watches me very closely. If she were to discover me here—oh, I daren’t think of it.”

I listened intently, and thought I heard the murmur of voices in the kitchen.

"It's all safe," I said. "Mrs. Foxwell is talking with Sleeman. Oh, I want to help you, if you will let me."

She was silent for a minute, while I looked eagerly towards her. I could not discern her features plainly, but I could see the dim outline of her form.

"I am afraid to dare anything," she said. "I have been so ill, and—oh, I am sure there is some one coming."

I listened again, but could hear nothing. "It's all safe," I said; "go on, tell me."

"Do you know Edgar Trelaske?" she asked suspiciously.

"No. If it was he who brought you, I never saw him save on that night when he came here."

"Why should you want to help me?" she asked again. "What am I to you? There is no reason why you should wish to help me."

"That night when they brought you here, I followed," I replied. "I heard you scream in the carriage and I felt sure there was foul play. I saw you as you were carried into the house, and I made up my mind that I would find out what it meant. But I could not. Last night, however, I came here and saw you looking out of the window. Your face was very sad, and—and I

felt I would do anything to help you. After that I crept by the kitchen window and listened while Sleeman and Mrs. Foxwell were talking."

"Did they say anything about me? Do they know why I am kept here?"

"No, I don't think they know who you are, although they were talking about you. Mrs. Foxwell said you would not confide in her in any way. It was Sleeman who suggested that Mrs. Foxwell should take you for a walk; that was how I came to you on the moors and gave you that note. Oh, I do want to help you."

"Oh, thank you; I believe you do!"

"I do, and if you will trust in me, I——"

"Oh, I will—but stop. She's coming, I'm sure! There, go away. Here's a note I've written in the hope that you might be a friend. Perhaps to-morrow night——" She left the window before completing the sentence.

Eagerly picking up the note, I went quickly to the tree behind which I had hidden myself on the night that Joyce Patmore was brought to Dreardowns, and there waited and listened. I heard no sound, however. All was silent as the grave. Whatever Joyce Patmore had heard, I could hear nothing.

I did not go to the kitchen window to see if Sleeman and Mrs. Foxwell were together, I did not think it best; besides, I was anxious to get

home, to be in the secrecy of my own bedroom, so that I might read what she had written.

Again I forgot Kezia Tamblin; again I forgot all difficulties, save the difficulty of setting at liberty the woman I loved. Again my heart throbbed with a great joy—she had spoken to me, and she trusted me! She would not have given me the letter but for that, and as I thought of this, I felt that my strength was as the strength of ten. I determined that no obstacle should keep me from fulfilling my purpose; I vowed a vow that it should be ill with the man who stood in my way. A hundred times on my way home did I put my hand in my pocket to assure myself that her letter was safe, while each minute my eagerness increased to read what she had written.

“She expects me again,” I cried; “her last words to me were, ‘Perhaps, to-morrow night.’ I will come, Joyce; don’t fear, my love, I will come.”

As soon as I arrived at the house I went straight to my room, and, having lit a candle, took her letter from my pocket and began to read. It lies before me as I write, Joyce’s first letter to me, and I copy it here word for word. This is how it ran :—

“In the letter which you placed in my hand, when we were on the moors a little while ago, you told me that you were my friend and that you

wanted to help me. I am not sure that I can speak to you to-night as you suggested, so I am writing this in the hope that I may be able to give it you.

“My name is Joyce Patmore, and I was brought here a month ago, brought against my will, brought by force, and I am not sure of the reason why. I am quite ignorant of where I am, for I was unconscious during nearly the whole of the journey. I am treated kindly here—that is, as kindly as such a prisoner as I can be treated. The loneliness, the sense of terror, and the mystery which surrounds me nearly drives me mad.

“I cannot tell you more here ; but if you are my friend, as you say you are, I pray you, as I have prayed to God, to set me at liberty. I am friendless, I am penniless, so that I can do nothing ; but if you will take me from here, if you will help me to get away from the power of the man who brought me here, I shall never cease to thank you, never cease to ask God to bless you.

“I can give you no positive clue as to why I am thus treated ; but I cannot help thinking and believing that there must have been some terrible reason for taking such measures as those taken in bringing me here.

“Oh, if you are my friend, help me, and deliver me from this terrible place.

“J. P.”

I read this letter over again and again, until I knew it by heart. The writing was clear and bold, although here and there it was blurred as if by tears. But it gave no further clue to her identity. She had told me nothing of her early life ; she had not revealed her birthplace, nor the name of the home from which she had been taken. Evidently she did not trust me enough to tell me, or perhaps she was afraid that by some means the letter might be miscarried.

That she was a lady I did not doubt. Everything told me that. Reared as I was on the wilds which surround Brown Willy and Router, I had been to school, and I had visited my Uncle Jack, at whose house I saw many of the most respectable families in the county. But more than all I had thought of my mother, and Joyce Patmore reminded me of her. Her words and manner, excited as she was, were those of a girl tenderly reared ; her letter, written as it was under strange circumstances, was undoubtedly that of one who had been well educated. Anyhow, I loved her more and more as I read, and my determinations to set her at liberty and to find out the secret of her imprisonment became stronger.

By-and-by, however, the difficulties appeared greater. My relations towards Kezia Tamblin loomed up before me, while the difficulty of providing a safe asylum for Joyce Patmore, even



although I might take her from Dreardowns, was very great.

I was very poor ; everything reminded me of that ; and I knew it would be impossible to take her to Rosecarrol. What, then, should I do if I set her at liberty ? She had no money, I had none. What could be done ? Yet such is the divine madness of love that I laughed at difficulties and was willing to trust to the uncertain future.

Still I must do something, and all that night, whether sleeping or waking, I was making plans in order to rescue Joyce Patmore.

The following morning I went to Penliddle, the place I mentioned at the beginning of this history as an off farm belonging to Rosecarrol. It is nearly as lonely as Dreardowns, and the house there, at that time, was not so good as the one at Dreardowns. I went there, however, because my nurse lived there. She had married one of my father's men, who had acted as a sort of manager on the farm, and had lived there ever since I first left home in order to go to school at Probus. If ever a servant loved a young master Sarah Truscott loved me. I remember very well how, when Nick Truscott, who had been courting her several years, wanted her to get married, she told him very plainly that she never would while Robert was at home and wanted her.

“B’leeve you love the young maaster mor’n you love me, Sarah,” grumbled Nick.

“Never you mind,” retorted Sarah; “this I know, I shaa’n’t git spliced till Robert do go ’way to school, mind that now.”

Neither would she; and, although she married him the day after I went to Probus, Nick stuck to it that I always stood first in her affections. She was about fifty at the time of which I write, and if report spoke truly, and I have a shrewd suspicion that it did, she kept her husband well in hand.

“Nobody do know what a boobah he’d make of hesself ef I dedn’ taake un down a peg now and then,” she would say, and perhaps she was not far wrong.

Sarah was a shrewd, keen-witted, sensible woman, while Nick was a good-tempered, thick-headed specimen of a country labourer. On ordinary occasions he was fairly discreet, for the simple reason that he daren’t be otherwise, because he stood in healthy fear of his wife. The way to make Nick tell all he knew was to give him about two quarts of middling strong ale, and then he took the world into his confidence. Owing to the fact that Sarah kept the purse, this happened but seldom; but it had taken place on two or three occasions, after which for some two or three months Nick was never seen in society.

I concluded that, on the whole, if any one was able to help me it would be Sarah. She had no children, and having, as people said, "noashuns 'bove 'er staashun," she kept a spare bedroom. I was sure, moreover, that she knew how to hold her tongue, and, above all, she loved me.

Accordingly I went to her, and found her busily engaged in dressmaking, for Sarah added to Nick's wages by making the attire of several of the servant maidens in the district, as well as that of a few of the farmers' daughters.

"I was wonderin' when you was a-comin', my dear," was Sarah's greeting; "but I s'poase you've bin too bissy a-coartin' to care 'bout me. But there, I *be* glad to zee 'ee, my dear."

"I haven't forgotten you, Sarah," I said, "even if I haven't been."

"Of course you aan't, my dear; but to tell 'ee the truth, I thought you'd a towld me, and, I must zay, I bain't plaised. She edn' good 'nough for you, Robert. You dedn' ought to 'ave she."

"Sarah," I said, "you don't know all."

"I knawd ther' was summin' in the wind."

"What, Sarah?"

"Well, I knaw that 'Kiah Tamblin zaid two months ago, that he knawd who was boss ov Rosecarrol. Be I right? Es that the mainin' ev et, Robert, my dear?"

"I'm afraid it is, Sarah. I know I can trust you. You love our family, and you love mother as much as I do. It seems the only way to keep Rosecarrol in the family."

"Es et for sure now? Well, I be fine and sorry. I've saved up a few pounds, Robert, ef they be——"

"No, Sarah, 'tis no use. Ten times your savings would be of no use, and yet if it hadn't been for mother, I'd give it all up rather than marry her."

"Would 'ee now? I do 'ear as 'ow she's fairly maazed 'bout 'ee."

"I'm afraid she is."

"'Fraid?"

"Yes, afraid—Sarah, there's something else. I can tell you, I know,—tell you anything, and know it will never go any farther. I know you love me, Sarah."

Any one looking at her for the first time would never accuse her of being sentimental or even affectionate, but she got up from her chair, came to me and put her arms around my neck, and gave me a hug while tears trickled down her cheek.

"What es et, Robert, my dear? Ef ould Sarah can do nothing, ounly zay et and she'll do it."

So I told Sarah what I have written in these pages, while she constantly interrupted me by

ejaculations and questions. When I had finished she said :

“ Iss, Robert, my dear, she’s the wawn ; she shud be missus of Rosecarrol.”

“ But how can it be, Sarah ? Kezia is jealous, while old Tamblin is just longing to see his daughter the wife of a Tremain.”

“ We must zee ’bout that, my dear, we must zee ; but fust of all, Robert, you must take away poor Miss Joyce from there.”

“ But where can I take her, Sarah ? ”

“ Taake ’er ? Why, taake ’er ’ere, to be sure. I’ll never laive nobody know. Nobody do come ’ere, my dear ; and she can ’ave the little parlour, and the room ovver ; then you can come and zee ’er, caan’t ’ee now, Robert, my dear ? ”

“ And Nick ? ”

“ Nick ! ” she said, with proper scorn ; “ Nick do know his plaace, my deaar—you jist be aisy ’bout Nick.”

I left Sarah soon after, and as she had promised to be ready night or day, I had no fear about a temporary hiding-place for Joyce. So much scheming, however, had made me wise, and although I hated the idea, I made up my mind to go and see Kezia that evening before paying another visit to Dreardowns.

Kezia greeted me very coolly, when, about six o’clock, I arrived at “ The Queen’s Head.”

"Why didn' 'ee come last night?" she asked.

I parried the question as well as I could, which led to her putting other queries. As a consequence, my visit that evening was by no means a pleasant one, and when I left about eight o'clock, although there was no breach between us, we were more cool towards each other than we had ever been before.

I had not been away from the house two minutes, however, before I had ceased to think of Kezia's anger, for the picture of Joyce Patmore was before me, and the last words she had spoken to me were ringing in my ears as I hurried towards Dreardowns.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW JOYCE PATMORE AND ROBERT TREMAIN  
WENT FROM DREARDOWNS TO PENLIGGLE.

I HAD scarcely reached the garden fence, when my heart gave a great bound. I saw Joyce Patmore's face plainly in the lamplight, saw her as she looked wistfully out into the darkness. But she was not so sad as when I had first seen her, the light of hope was in her eyes, her face was not drawn with pain.

The window was, I saw, slightly open; just enough to ventilate the room, and I remember wondering at the time whether means had been used to keep it from opening wider.

I made a slight noise, and then I saw to my great joy that she gladly welcomed my coming.

"I am come to take you away," I said.

"When?" she asked eagerly.

"To-night, if you will come with me," I replied.

"I have arranged with my old nurse, who is as trusty as the sun, to give you a hiding-place until further arrangements can be made."

“But how can I get away?” she asked. “This window has iron bars across it, the door of the room is locked, and even if it were not the only way out of the house is by the stairway which leads into the kitchen where Mrs. Foxwell and the farmer are sitting.”

“I’ll gag them both,” I said readily, “and bind them hand and foot. They will lie all night, and not be set free till the morning. By that time you will be safe.”

“Oh, don’t use any violence, if you can help it,” she whispered anxiously. “I could not bear it. Can’t you use any other means?”

I was rather glad she did not approve of this method, as I did not wish for Sleeman or the woman to see me. If they did, they would know something of Joyce’s whereabouts. Besides, I did not wish to use violence.

“Then I’ll fetch a ladder,” I said. “I’ll climb up and pull away those bars; then I will lift you out of the window and bring you down here.”

“Can you?” she asked eagerly. “I have tried to move them, but I cannot.”

“But I can,” I said. “The wall is rotten, and there are but few men in the parish stronger than I. That was proved at the last wrestling.” I said this a little proudly, partly because I wanted her to think well of me, and partly because I wanted her to have faith in me.



“ But you will make a noise ; you will arouse their suspicions.”

“ I will see,” I said. “ Old Graacey Grigg is in bed, isn’t she ? ”

“ Yes ; she came upstairs half an hour ago.”

“ Very well ; be brave, Miss Joyce, make all the preparations you can, and then wait. Never fear, nothing shall harm you, and if God gives me strength I will set you free.”

“ Oh, thank you ; you are kind. Be careful for yourself, won’t you ? That Sleeman is a terrible-looking man ; besides, there’s a dog.”

I laughed quietly, because my heart was glad. She was interested in my welfare ; she did not wish harm to happen to me. Still her words made me anxious. I remembered Sleeman had a dog. It had been a mystery to me how I had failed to escape him on my previous visits. Possibly, however, it was because I had not gone near the strawhouse in the barnyard where the dog usually lay ; anyhow, I had to reckon with the brute that night, for, in order to get a ladder, it was necessary for me to go into the yard. Not that I minded him so much—that is, for all the harm he might do me ; I was rather afraid lest he should start barking and thus put Sleeman on the watch.

I therefore crept quietly into the yard, and noted with an amount of satisfaction that the

wind would carry any sounds which might be made in the "mowey" away from the house. Besides, I hoped that Peter would be sufficiently amorous that night to forget all else.

I had scarcely passed the first corn mow [stack] when the dog saw me. He started up with a low growl, and began creeping towards me with his head close against the ground.

"All right, Shep," I said; "all right, old boy. Good old dog, then."

But Shep knew that I did not belong to Dreardowns, and his growl became louder, while his eyes burnt red. I am sorry now for what followed, because I am fond of dogs, and can't bear unkindness to any dumb animal. But I could not help it; Joyce Patmore's liberty was more to me than all the dogs that ever barked. I had to make short work of Shep, therefore, and a minute later his power of barking was gone for ever. Knowing where a farmer always keeps his ladders, I made for the spot and seized the one that seemed about the right length—that is, a fifteen staved one—and then made my way back to the garden again.

By this time I began to feel excited. A sort of fever came over me, and had Peter Sleeman or any other man tried to stop me I should have made short work of him. I placed the ladder against the wall, and climbed up. By this time

the wind blew loudly, and thus drowned any sounds I might make ; my fear now was that Mrs. Foxwell might come back to the room before I could get Joyce away.

I found her waiting by the window. "Is all well?" she asked eagerly.

"All well," I replied ; "don't be afraid."

I seized one of the bars. It held strongly. Evidently the wall was firmer than I thought. Not that I had any fear that I was not man enough to pull them away ; I feared rather that the ladder would break when I put forth my strength. It did not, however, and in a few minutes the two lower bars lay in the garden.

"Now, Miss Joyce," I said, "can you creep through here?"

Without hesitating she came. Placing one hand in mine, which act sent a joyful thrill through my whole body, she crept out, for the bottom frame of the window was lifted as high as it could be. The window-ledge on which she stood was a good many feet from the ground, and I was wondering whether she would be hurt if she fell, because I feared about the strength of the ladder.

"Look," I said ; "do you think if I went down that you could get on the ladder by yourself? I don't know whether it is strong enough to bear us both."

"I am afraid by myself," she replied; "if you let me go I should fall. The wind blows so terribly."

I was almost glad she said this, because to hold her hand was joy beyond words to me.

"Very well, then," I said; "perhaps it will bear us. There, lean as much towards me as you can."

She trusted me implicitly, and a minute later all her weight rested on my left arm. To me she seemed as light as a feather, although I felt the ladder bend terribly. Never shall I forget the joy I realised as I felt my arm around her. I seemed to have the strength of ten. Carefully I carried her down, and a few seconds later I placed her on the ground.

"You are not afraid?" I whispered.

"Not with you," she replied; "but let us get away quickly."

"I will carry the ladder back where I found it, and then, perhaps, they will think you have got away by yourself. We are close to the barnyard."

"But the dog is there," she whispered. "I have often heard him barking."

"The dog won't hurt you," I said. "Come."

I held her with one hand, while with the other I carried the ladder. We reached the yard in safety, and I had scarcely deposited the ladder

when she gave a slight scream, and pointed at poor Shep's body.

"Look!" she said.

This put another thought in my mind. "He's dead," I said. "I must take him where he will tell no tales, at least for a time."

She shuddered as I took him by the leg, and dragged him behind me until we reached a big pool. I had some stout cord in my pocket, and with this I fastened the poor animal to a heavy stone, and then threw them both into the pool. The sound of the splash had barely died away when I knew that her escape had been discovered. Above the roaring of the wind I heard Peter shouting, while a woman's cry reached our ears.

"Let us get away quickly," I said; "in a few minutes we shall be beyond their reach." I hurried her along until she was out of breath and then stopped.

"Shep! Shep!" I heard Peter call. "Where can the dog be?" He had followed us for some distance, while the wind blew the sound towards us.

Above us was the open moor, and there was sufficient light to discern us, if we ventured at that moment. So I crept to one of the many big rocks, and we hid ourselves behind it.

"You'd better come back, you maid," Peter shouted; "you caan't git away, so you'd better



WE CREPT TO ONE OF THE BIG ROCKS AND HIED OURSELVES BEHIND IT" (p. 2

come back paiceable now. It'll be wuss for 'ee ef you doan't now."

Joyce Patmore nestled close to me. "You won't let him take me, will you?" she said.

I put my arm around her, and she did not resent my action. "I'd die first!" I said fiercely.

She gave a sigh of relief, and my heart seemed too big for my bosom. It was joy beyond words to feel that she depended on me and trusted in me.

"We'll wait here for a little while, if you are not afraid," I continued. "You are not afraid, are you?"

"Not with you," she said a second time.

"Then," I cried joyfully, "I will take you to Sarah Truscott, my old nurse, and she'll give you a home till you care to make other arrangements."

"I will tell you everything that I can," she said, "then, perhaps, you will be able to help me to find out why I was taken here." She seemed to know what was passing through my mind.

"Yes," I said, and then we were quiet for a few seconds.

"It is so good of you to take such trouble," she said impulsively, after the silence. "I—I'm a stranger to you, and yet you are so kind. But I sha'n't trouble you long. To-morrow I can go home if—if——" but she did not finish the sentence.

I did not answer her, because my heart was so sore at the thought of her leaving.

"I think I should have gone mad if you did not give me hope ; I had begun to despair," she went on. "I pleaded, oh ! how I pleaded with that woman to let me go, but she would not. She became angry with me, too," and she shuddered as if in fear. "I was afraid of that terrible man, too," she whispered ; "he looks so dreadful ; and then I was in constant dread about the future. I did not know when those—those who brought me here would come, and I was not sure what they had in their minds. Oh, it was terrible ! Thank you so much for helping me."

"It has been a joy to help you," I said. "Look ! they have a lantern now ; there it is, among the fir-trees. Ah ! they are going to search the other way ; we shall soon be able to go now."

She gave a shudder.

"Are you afraid ?" I asked.

"It is so lonely on these moors—so very forsaken. Listen how the wind moans ; and the rain is beginning to fall."

"And you are thinly clothed, too."

"Yes, all my clothes were in the bedroom, but I could not get there ; my boots are very thin, too."

"Never mind," I said, "Sarah Truscott will



help you. She's a poor woman, but I think she'll have all you need."

"I have no money," she said; "it was all taken from me; but I have two good rings here—they should be worth sufficient to pay for all I want, till I get back home."

"You must not think of travelling to-morrow; you'll want a few days' rest after all this excitement. There, we can go now. Will you hold fast to my arm?"

I seemed to live a lifetime as I walked across the moors that night with Joyce Patmore resting on my arm. Never before did I realise such joy, such fear, and such anxiety; never before did I hope so much from the future, never before did I dread it so. Never was the sky of my life so bright, and never had it been so dark. For when the joy at feeling Joyce by my side almost made me shout in my gladness, I remembered Kezia Tamblin, I thought of the debt on Rosecarrol, I remembered that this young girl, for whom I would die to serve, would leave me soon.

Still it was heaven to feel her near, to hear her voice. As the distance between us and Dreardowns increased she became more hopeful, more confident, her dread of the loneliness grew less.

Perhaps this was because I told her of myself, of my boyhood, my schooldays, my life on the

farm, and of my mother. As we drew near Penliddle she made me repeat the story of how I came to know about her, and asked me many questions concerning what I had seen and heard. Then she asked me about Sarah Truscott, and what she had said, and then I had difficulty to keep from telling her of my love—ay, I wanted to tell her all my story as I have told it here, that she might understand why I had dared to try and rescue her.

Perhaps it was the light from Penliddle that kept me from doing this ; indeed, I think it was this that kept her from relating her story then, instead of afterwards.

We found Sarah in a great state of excitement. She had been expecting us for hours. My news had aroused all the romance in the dear old soul's nature, and she thought when we came that she might welcome Joyce as the new mistress of Rosecarrol without further delay.

“Bless yer 'art, my dear Miss Joyce, 'ow you be tremblin'. Come upstairs to waunce, my dear, and taake off they wet dabs. I've jist made a new frock for Miss Coad ovver to Bolventor, and it'll suit 'ee to a T, my dear. Doan't 'ee be 'fraid. Nick es gone to bed, and es snorin' like a pig. I've fried som' 'am rashers and eggs for 'ee boath. Wait down here by the vire, Robert ; there, taake off that jacket ; I'll bring

down Nick's Sunday wawn for 'ee. It'll be rather tight, but it must do for t'night."

And so the good old soul talked on, while a great peace came into my heart. It seemed like a great calm after the storm.

A few minutes later Joyce Patmore came into the little parlour, and for the first time I saw her as she really was. I will not try and describe her as she appeared to me that night; I could not if I tried. Even now my heart feels strange as I think of that moment. As her great dark eyes met mine, and flashed a look of thankfulness and hope, I knew that in all my life I had never seen any one so beautiful and so pure. The reader may smile at this, and say I was only a country lad of twenty-one, and that in my state of mind I was not fit to judge. This may be so; but since those days, I have seen the beauties of Plymouth, of Exeter, and London, but never have I seen any one like her.

And yet I felt uncomfortable, for I knew that her eyes were upon me. She seemed to want to look into the depths of my soul and read my life. It was then that I felt how much she had trusted me, and how much that night's step might mean to her. I was afraid, too, that she would regard me as rough and uncouth. Who was I, that a maiden tenderly reared (as I was sure she was) should care about me?

"You are safe now," I said; "you needn't fear anything. Sarah is as faithful as harvest time, and I assure you that I—I would do anything to serve you."

Then her face blushed a rosy red, just like a June rose, and her eyes became dim with tears. I saw her lips tremble, too, as though her heart was touched, and this set *my* heart beating more wildly than ever.

What did she think of me? I wondered. Did I repel her, or did she think kindly of me? I believe I should have asked her, but Sarah came into the room with a steaming plate of ham and eggs.

"Ther' now, my dears, you must be wisht and could, and 'ungry as adgers. Now, ait some supper."

Neither of us satisfied Sarah, however,—we were too excited to eat; besides, Joyce was anxious to tell her story and I was eager to know it.

Penliddle had once been a farm by itself, and the house was far more comfortable than an ordinary labourer's cottage. Moreover, the room in which we sat had shutters to the window. These I closed, and then pulling the most comfortable chair that Sarah possessed close to the fire, I led Joyce to it, and, Sarah having finished her duties, we sat down and listened to the young girl's story.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE STORY WHICH JOYCE PATMORE TOLD.

“ I HAD better tell you all about myself,” she began, “then you will be able to judge better why I am here. My home is in Devonshire, on the north coast, not far from Ilfracombe. My mother died when I was a child, and my father, who was almost heart-broken at her death, went to Australia. He cared very little about me, I think, for he has written only about once a year, and never speaks of coming home. It is more than a year now since I heard from him. I have always lived with my uncle, my father’s elder brother. Uncle is rich, and my father is, I believe, poor. You see, uncle being the elder brother the estate fell to him ; and so, when my mother died, my father said he had nothing to keep him in England. I have lived very happily at Grassdale, for both my uncle and my\* cousins have been very kind to me.”

“ Cousins ? ” I said ; “ what are they like ? ”

“ Well, George, the elder, I have not seen for

two years. He quarrelled with my uncle, and left home. He declared that he would never come back to Grassdale any more, while my uncle declared that he would set the dogs upon him if he ever came within Grassdale gates. You see, George was very headstrong and easily roused, while my uncle is a man who cannot bear to be thwarted. My other cousin, Arthur, is very handsome and very clever."

"Will you tell me about this Arthur?" I said, for already I began to feel jealous of him.

"There is little to tell," she replied. "George being the eldest son, and the one who would inherit the estate, Arthur has been trained for the Bar. He has never liked it, however, and as he is anxious to get married at once, he blames his father for asking him to adopt a profession which, he says, will not bring him an income for years."

"Who does he wish to marry?" I asked.

"Miss Helen Trelaske. Bodinnick lands join ours, and we have been friendly with the Trelaskes for years."

"Yes," I said eagerly; "go on!"

"Some time ago news came to Grassdale that George was dead. The letter which contained the information was written in America, and said that he had died of swamp fever. This made my uncle repent of the quarrel he had had with him, and altogether altered his feelings.

He has never been the same man since. He thinks he has treated George unfairly, and I am sure he would sacrifice anything if he could only recall the angry words he spoke to him.

“Then a few days before I was taken here my uncle had a fall from his horse, and was brought home unconscious. He was a heavy man, and the doctor despaired of his recovery. For hours he lay unconscious, and when I last spoke to Dr. Gray about him he said he did not think Uncle George could live more than a few days at the outside; not that the fall was so bad, but he, the doctor, believed that something was weighing on his mind, and that he did not want to live.”

“Yes,” I said; “and did anything particular happen, Miss Joyce, before you were taken away?”

“Yes. It was this way. The day when—when——” she shuddered as if in fear.

“Yes, I understand,” I said.

“Well, that day, when the postman came, I noticed two letters each bearing an Australian post-mark. One I saw was addressed to me, and I felt sure it was in George’s handwriting. I opened it eagerly, and found that I was right. He told me that he bitterly repented of his behaviour to his father, and that he was writing him, begging him for his forgiveness, and that he

hoped to return in a few weeks, when he would bring me a glad surprise. I had just time to note that the other letter from Australia was addressed to Uncle George and in my cousin's handwriting, when Arthur came into the room. 'Look, Arthur,' I cried, 'George is not dead, after all; I've got a letter from him. He'll be home in a few weeks. Here's one for uncle, too. Won't he be glad? I'm going to take it to him. Isn't it glorious?'

"'Stop!' said Arthur. 'I'll take my brother's letter to father—that is, if it is my brother's letter?'

"Just then a servant came, telling me that a new housemaid whom I thought of engaging was waiting to see me in the housekeeper's room, and also that a gentleman wished to see Arthur.

"I went to her, leaving my cousin to receive his visitor. I stayed with the girl perhaps a quarter of an hour, and then was just going upstairs to see my uncle when Arthur stopped me.

"'Father is asleep,' he said, 'and you know the doctor tells us it is very dangerous to waken him. I've got the letter here, and I shall take it up again in a few minutes. I say, Joyce, tell us what George has written you.' He seemed very excited, naturally :—I too was excited beyond measure.

"So I told him, and we talked about the letter



which informed us that he was dead, and wondered who wrote it. We had been talking about a quarter of an hour, perhaps more, when a servant came in, greatly excited.

“‘Miss Joyce,’ she cried, ‘I’ve just seen old Tommy Williams. He says that poor Molly is taken suddenly ill, and he’s afraid she’ll not get over it. He was coming here to tell you that she wants to see you before she dies, and begs that you will come. She’s all alone, for he had no one to send, and now he’s gone for the doctor.’

“‘Poor old Molly,’ I cried, ‘I’ll go at once.’ Molly was once a servant at Grassdale, and I had known her from childhood. ‘Arthur,’ I said, ‘will you tell Beel to put a horse into the trap and drive me over? Poor old soul, she’s been ailing a long time.’

“‘Beel is away,’ said Arthur, strangely moved, I thought, ‘and you could get there by the time a horse is harnessed. Besides, you *must* walk through the fields.’

“Being anxious to get to Molly, I did not stay to argue, but hurried off at once. I saw no one on the carriage drive, neither did I meet any one in the lane outside the gates. I hurried through the fields, thinking, as I did so, that Arthur was right about the trap, because the cart track to Molly’s cottage was a long way around.

“Not a soul was to be seen around the house ;

but that was not strange, and so, remembering that the poor old soul was all alone, I opened the cottage door and entered. No one was in the kitchen, but I heard Molly coughing in the room overhead. I was about to go up the narrow stairway, when I heard a step behind me. Before I could turn around to see who it was, I felt something pressed before my mouth, and I remember a strange smell. I tried to struggle, but I was powerless. I tried to scream, but could not; then I became unconscious."

"And after that?" I said.

"I remember nothing distinctly, until I found myself at the place you call Dreardowns. I recall what seems like a curious dream of riding in the dark, and I have a faint remembrance of strange rooms and strange faces, but nothing definite."

"And that is all?"

"That is all."

"And have you any idea—that is, can you guess who put the handkerchief before your mouth in Molly's cottage?"

"I've thought of many, but I am afraid to—to——"

"It could not have been your cousin Arthur?"

"No, I left him in the library, and I went very fast to the cottage."

"Have you an enemy?"

"Not one in the world that I know of."

“Good Loard !” exclaimed Sarah, “I wonder et dedn’ drive ‘ee maazed, my dear.”

“I think I was almost mad for days after I was brought to Dreardowns. The place was so terribly lonely, and that Sleeman is such an awful man. I was ill too, and for many days I thought I was going to die.”

“I know who brought you,” I said.

“Yes ?” she said absently.

“Edgar Trelaske came with you.”

“But what could be his motive for doing so ?”

“I think I see that, too. Will you tell me all you know about him ?”

“As I said, his estate joins my uncle’s. He has always been very friendly with Arthur, and the two have been in London together. Then, you know, Arthur is engaged to Helen Trelaske. She lives with Edgar at Bodinnick.”

“Is Trelaske wealthy ?” I asked.

“The old major left him a good deal, but there have been reports about his squandering it. George never liked him !”

“And you say that this Trelaske and your cousin are very friendly ?”

“Very. There was scarcely a day passed without their meeting.”

“It’s all plain,” I said ; “as plain as a pike-staff.”

“But how ?”

“Can't you see it?”

“I'm afraid to think of what seems the only solution. I have driven it from my mind again and again—it seems too mean, too base. They are both gentlemen.”

“Ah!” I said, catching my breath, “you are led to the same conclusion as I.”

“What es et?” asked Sarah excitedly; “'tes oal a riddle to me.”

“If George were dead, of course Arthur would naturally inherit all your uncle's wealth?” I queried.

“Yes, uncle willed nearly everything to him.”

“But if George came back and became reconciled to your uncle, then he would take the greater part of it.”

“He's the eldest son, and naturally Grassdale, with all the farms belonging to it, would fall to him.”

“Just so, and then Arthur would not be in a position to marry Miss Trelaske, neither would he be able to get out of the money difficulties into which he and Trelaske have probably got. Have you any idea who your cousin's visitor was at the time you were called away to engage the new housemaid? Might it not be Trelaske?”

“Very probably; as I said, they met every day.”

“Is Trelaske clever?”

“Very.”

“And would know the use of such a thing as chloroform, as well as the means of getting it?”

“Oh yes; but he has known me from a child and——”

“Has been in love with you?” I asked.

“No; he has been paying attentions to Miss Henley, of Tor Park.”

“That’s all right,” I said with a sigh of relief, for I feared otherwise. “I think the way is very plain, Miss Joyce.” Then I repeated the conversation I had heard between Peter Sleeman and Mrs. Foxwell.

“Then what do you think they intended doing with me?” she asked.

“They intended waiting in the hope that your uncle would die before your cousin could return, and then, when their position was assured, they would spirit you back in the same mysterious way that you were brought here. I should not be at all surprised to hear that your cousin was pretending to use every means in his power to find you, so as to deceive the people in the neighbourhood.”

“Then what would you suggest now?” she said anxiously.

“It seems to me,” I replied, “that what is done should be done quickly. As no steps have been taken to set you at liberty, I should imagine

that your uncle is still living. Of course, it may be too late," and I reproached myself for the way I had spent that month when I thought of no one but Kezia Tamblin.

"Anyhow," I went on, "I think the right step will be for me to take you home to-morrow. I can drive you to Launceston in the morning, and from there we can book for the station nearest your home.' I said this with a sad heart, for the thought of leaving her pained me beyond words.

"I should be afraid to be left there now," she said, with a shudder. "If what you think is true, Arthur and Trelaske would stop at nothing."

"I don't think they would dare to take any further steps," I said. "I should take you to the house boldly, and if your uncle is alive you will see him and tell him. Besides, the servants will protect you."

"I will go if you wish," she replied, "but I am afraid."

"There is another course," I said. "I could go alone, and find out how matters stand. I might leave to-morrow morning, and perhaps be back again by night. You will be quite safe here," I said, looking at Sarah, who had been eagerly drinking in every word.

"Saafe!" cried Sarah; "I'd like to zee anybody hurt 'ee 'ere, my dear. Besides, nobody'll

think you're 'ere. Why, even Nick shaa'n't know you're in the 'ouse, ther' now, and he'll never think ov axin'."

In this, however, Sarah was mistaken, as after events proved.

"I will do what you think best, Mr. Tremain," Joyce said, looking at me in such a way that my heart seemed to leap to my throat for very joy.

"And you can feel comfortable here?" I asked; "you can feel quite safe with Sarah?"

"Perfectly comfortable; my only fear is that Sleeman may find out that I am here. He will naturally let Edgar Trelaske know I escaped from his house, and then—oh, you'll protect me, won't you?"

"Doan't you be 'fraid, Miss Joyce. Nothin' shall harm you—nothin.' Maaster Robert here is as strong as a hoss, and I—well, never mind," and Sarah looked as though she could conquer an army.

How long we talked I do not know, but when I left I promised to call early in the morning, and see what she had decided to do, while I should hold myself in readiness to serve her in any way I was able.

I seemed to walk on enchanted ground as I went back to Rosecarrol that night. I had held in my arms the young girl I loved. I had rescued

her from her prison. I had seen the look of gratitude in her eyes. I would not think of Kezia Tamblin nor of my father's debts. I lived in hope, and in the light of my love for Joyce.

It was very late when I arrived at Rosecarrol, but my mother was not yet asleep.

"Come and bid me good-night, Robert," she said.

I went in and kissed her.

"Is all well with you, my boy?" she asked.

"Why, mother?"

"My boy, I know more about things than you imagine. I know more of your father's difficulties than you think."

I was silent.

"Do you love this girl Tamblin, Robert?"

"Why, mother?"

"You have seemed so strange these last two or three days when you have come to see me. Robert, my boy, if you don't love her——" She hesitated.

"What, mother?"

"Better be poor than to marry without love. I would rather be turned out of Rosecarrol, terrible as it would be, than to see you marry any one you did not want. Is it for me, Robert?"

"I'll tell you all in good time, mother," I said, "and be sure I shall love you whatever I do. Good-night, mother dear,"



“Can't you trust your mother now, Robert?” she said. “I know that we are in danger of being turned out of Rosecarrol; can't you tell me anything else?”

“Where's father?” I asked.

“He's asleep in the next room.”

I drew a chair to her side, and told her everything.

“Now, mother, you know all,” I said, when we had finished; “what would you advise me to do?”

She waited a few seconds before replying, then she said, “I can trust you, Robert. Do what you think is right.”

The next morning I rode to Penliddle while it was yet dark. Nick had left the house for Rosecarrol. He had some cattle to take to the butcher that day, and so had gone early. I found Sarah eagerly awaiting me.

“She caan't go weth 'ee, Robert, my dear,” she said.

“Why?”

“She've took a bad cowl'd, my dear, and edn't fit to travel. Don't bother, Robert, I'll nuss 'er so that she'll be all right to-morrow. Here's a letter she've write for 'ee, Robert, my dear, and 'ere's another for her uncle.”

I took them both, and then eagerly read mine. In addition to the name of the station nearest

Grassdale, and directions as to how I might get there, it contained further expressions of her thankfulness to me.

“If she only knew the joy she is giving me,” I said to myself as I rode toward Launceston.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE JOURNEY FROM CORNWALL TO DEVON- SHIRE AND BACK.

I HAD no definite knowledge of the time a train would start from Launceston for the station which Joyce had mentioned in her letter, but I had an idea there was one something before eight in the morning. It was half-past six when I left Penliddle, and I calculated that my horse would take me to Launceston in an hour. It was twelve miles, but I felt sure that Starlight could do it. It was a stiff ride, however; the roads were very heavy, and it was dark the greater part of the way. It was twenty minutes past seven when, in the first grey of the morning, I saw Launceston Castle, and as I got nearer to the town, the people who were astir looked curiously at me as Starlight, covered with sweat, dashed along the streets. Launceston Station, as everybody who has been there knows, is in a valley half a mile from the town, with St. Stephen's on the one side and Launceston on the other, but

I got there as the clock pointed to half-past seven. I quickly found a public-house, and telling the ostler to feed the horse with the best corn and to groom him well, I rushed to the station, and found that the train was just going out.

"I want to get to Ilfracombe," I said to the booking-clerk.

"Jist in time," he replied. "Go straight to Tavistock and change. Then git in the train for Yeoford, and change again. The train'll be waitin' an' you'll git to Ilfracombe by 'bout twelve o'clock."

"Can I get back to-night?" I asked.

"B'lieve you can," he replied, "but ax at Ilfracombe, there edn' time for me to vind out now."

The train was five minutes late in starting, so I had time to look around, and about a minute before we left I saw Peter Sleeman ride in.

"Ah," thought I, "is he getting in this train?" But I soon saw that this was not his intention.

I called a porter to me. "See that man?" I said, pointing to Sleeman.

"Wot, that ugly beggar?"

"Yes. Well, I want you to watch him, and see what he does. Look out and see if he meets any one here; if he does, try and hear what they say to each other."

"What for?" grinned the porter stupidly.

“Never mind. Don’t say a word about what I’ve said to you, and if you tell me all about what he does, I’ll give you half a crown when I come back. I expect to be here by the last train.”

“Oal right, sur.”

The train crept out of the station, and I was left to my thoughts. I will not describe my journey ; enough for me to say that I got to the station Joyce had mentioned about twelve o’clock.

“What is the last train by which I can get to Launceston to-night ?” I asked the station-master.

“Twenty-six minutes past three,” he said, after looking at the time-table a long while.

“And at what time shall I get to Launceston ?”

“’Bout half-past eight.”

“I can do it, then,” I thought joyfully. At the same time I could hardly realise why I was there, neither could I understand the strange mission I had undertaken.

And yet I felt that what I was doing was for the best. All that interested Joyce interested me ; moreover, I knew that she could not return home until I had made it safe for her.

I went to an inn and although I could ill afford it I hired a horse. I remembered how little time I had, however, and so made myself five shillings the poorer. I easily found my way to Grassdale. The house was well known and

the road was good. Close to the gateway leading to the house was a small cottage, and I thought a few judicious questions might do good.

“This place belongs to Squire Patmore?” I asked.

“It doth, but you caan’t zee un, he’s fine and poorly.”

“Perhaps the young masters are at home,” I ventured.

“No. Maaster George es dead, and Maaster Arthur got called away to-day. He went away in the middle ov the vorenoon weth Maaster Trelaske.”

“Ah,” I thought, “I’m not too late, then.”

“Well, I’ll ride up to the house. I daresay I can leave a message with the squire.”

“Iss, I expect you can.”

Anxious as I was, I could not help admiring the rich loamy land, which stretched miles away on every hand. It was so different from the Altarnun Moors. There Nature was scanty, scrimping in her gifts. Here she was bounteous, generous. Huge oaks grew everywhere, while the woods which dotted the country side were of great forest trees.

The servant who answered my ring eyed me suspiciously, and seemed to wish to know much about me before admitting me into the house.

I managed to pass the ordeal, however, and soon stood within the room which Joyce had described to me.

“Can I see Squire Patmore?” I asked.

“No; he sees no visitors, he is too ill.”

“Is he too ill to receive a message?”

“No; he has been stronger these last few days. I will take any message you please.”

“Can I have a pen and paper?”

She laid them before me and left the room.

I hastily scribbled a few lines as follows:—

“I wish to see you very much, I know where the one you have lost is staying. I have come from her, and have a letter from her in my possession. This is very urgent. I am a farmer’s son. My father farms one thousand acres of his own land. My name is Robert Tremain.”

Then I wrote as a postscript, “Your son George is not dead; I know something about him.”

This I placed in an envelope, and then hesitated. Was the servant trustworthy? Would she be primed by Arthur? I rang the bell, and she came in.

“I heard that there was a young lady living here,” I said to her, “Miss Joyce Patmore. Can I see her?”

Instantly tears started to the girl’s eyes. “No, sir; you can’t see her,” she said with a sob.

"Is she ill?" I asked.

"No, sir; she's gone. I do not know where. No one knows; we've searched night and day."

I saw I could trust her. "Give this to your master immediately," I said. "Place it in no hands but his, and wait for his answer."

She looked eagerly at me. "Very well, sir," she said, and left the room.

In three minutes she came rushing into the room, breathless. "Please, sir, Mr. Patmore will see you immediately." A minute later I was in the squire's bedroom.

I could see that he was greatly excited when I entered. His hand trembled, and the perspiration stood on his forehead. He eyed me keenly, as though he would look into my very soul.

"You tell me strange things in this note," he said. "How do I know you are speaking the truth?"

I looked around the room. A nurse was there, listening eagerly.

"I want to be alone with this gentleman. I'll excuse you." He said this sharply.

"But, sir——" she began.

"I wish to be alone—that is sufficient," he repeated. The nurse left the room.

"This letter which your niece gave me may tell you if I am to be trusted," I said.



He read it partly through, and then closed his eyes. "I am so weak. Can you lift me up in bed and prop me with pillows?"

I did as he asked me, and then he read the letter through.

"Thank God," he said, when he had finished; then he added, "and thank you, young man.

"My niece tells me that you will tell me everything," he continued after a few seconds; "will you kindly do so?"

I told him what I have written in these pages—that is, I told him in bare outline, not hinting at my love for Joyce. God knows I wanted to badly, but I dared not then.

"You have given me new life," he said, when I had finished my story; "new life. I shall get well, now. George alive—my eldest boy! Why, he may be here any day; but oh, Arthur, I did not think this of you!"

I thought I heard a rustling near the door, and I remembered the look on the nurse's face. So much treachery had made me suspicious. I went across the room and opened the door suddenly. The nurse was there listening.

"You have traitors in the house," I said to the squire. "I should advise you to get another nurse."

"I can act for myself now," he cried; "I feel better, I feel stronger. George alive—George

coming home! And Joyce told you that Arthur had his letter?"

"Yes."

"I must see about this; I must see about it at once," he said.

"And Miss Joyce?" I queried, "what shall I do about her?"

"Bring her home—at once—no delay!" he cried; "that is," he went on, "if you will, if I may trouble you so far."

"Trouble!" I cried, the blood rushing into my face. "Trouble! why—why, I'd——"

I checked myself, while the squire looked at me keenly.

"But I must away," I continued; "the train leaves —— Station before half-past three, and I have only just time to get there."

"You've a horse?" asked the squire.

"Yes."

"Then you've twenty minutes to spare yet. Stay; I've much to say to you."

During the next quarter of an hour he plied me with questions, which I answered as well as I could. Presently he said, "Your journey here with my niece will be expensive. Are you well primed with money, young man?"

I told him the truth. I was a bit ashamed, but I thought it best. This led to other questions, and five minutes later the squire knew something

of the position in which my father stood ; but I uttered no word about Kezia Tamblin, or of our connection with the Tamblin family.

He took a bunch of keys from under his pillow. "Do you mind unlocking that safe?" he said, pointing to one that stood close to his bedside. I did as he bade me.

"And will you please give me that cash-box?" he said.

I gave it to him, and he counted out twenty sovereigns and placed them in my hand. "There, we can square accounts when you bring Joyce," he said. "Now you must be off. But stay—have you had lunch?"

I had forgotten all about it, and told him so.

"And so had I," he said. "I'm sorry, but you are young. Thank you, Robert Tremain; you have given me new life. But I shall see you again to-morrow—with Joyce."

"If it is in my power, sir; but you'll be careful—you'll remember——"

"I'll remember everything," he said grimly, and with an energy of which I should have thought him incapable an hour before. "You needn't fear, Robert Tremain; you needn't fear."

I hurried downstairs and saw the servant who had shown me up, anxiously awaiting me.

“Be careful of your master,” I said; “and don’t trust that nurse.”

She seemed to understand. Evidently the girl had her suspicions. And then I, wondering at my temerity, and wondering, too, at the way my wits seemed to be sharpened, jumped on the horse’s back and galloped to the station.

When I arrived at Launceston that night I had formed my plans. Clearer and clearer did everything become, until I fancied I had grasped the whole situation. But all the time my heart was sad. It seemed as though Joyce would soon slip from me, while the fact of the mortgage on Rosecarrol and my engagement to Kezia Tamblin hung like a millstone around my neck. I drove all these things from my mind when I got out of the train at Launceston, however. I had my work to do, and whatever might be the result I must do it.

I looked around for the porter, and soon saw him looking eagerly for me.

“That ugly fella, sur?” he began.

“Yes.”

“Well, he send a telegram, he did. Then he lopped around the station.”

“Yes.”

“Well, then a telegram comed for he ’bout haalf-past ’leven.”

“Yes, go on.”

"Then at haalf-past three he wur 'ere with a carriage and pair, and when the train comed in, I seed two gents git out and spaik to 'un."

"Well, you listened to what they said?"

"Iss, you tould me to, but I cudden make much ov et out. The gents axed the ugly ould chap ef he'd sarched, and he said oal night, then they axed ef anything was bein' done, and I heerd 'im zay that his hind, and his wife, and Mrs. Foxey was a-scourin' the moors.

"And then the gents swore like troopers, and they got into the carriage and tould the coachman to drive like the wind."

I gave the man the half-a-crown I had promised him, and then I went to the stables where my horse was stabled. Three minutes later I was galloping towards my home with all the speed my Starlight was able to carry me.

Why I could not tell, but a great dread came into my heart. I was afraid of these two men. In all probability they would be Arthur Patmore and Edgar Trelaske. They would doubtless be desperate, and would move heaven and earth in order to find Joyce, and they had five hours' start of me. It was true I told myself that Sarah was faithful, and that no one could know that Joyce was at Penliggle; but all the same, it seemed easy to get her. Naturally I thought these people would go to all the houses in the

neighbourhood—and they were very few—and would inquire. Such a girl as Joyce would be noticeable in that parish. Would not Sarah's manner render Mrs. Foxwell suspicious? Besides, had any one seen me take Joyce to Penliddle? Or did Nick Truscott know of his wife's guest? I thought I remembered a creaking on the stairs as I came out of the little parlour the night before.

All this passed through my mind as I galloped homeward. I gave Starlight a loose rein, for I knew he would not fall, and I wanted him to know that I was in a hurry. Never did I feel so thankful for my horse as I did that night, and never did Starlight show his speed so grandly.

It was just half-past nine as I galloped through Five Lanes, a village just above Altarnun, and my heart felt like lead as I looked away towards the moors. Try as I would to drive away dark thoughts, I was sure something was wrong; everything told me that an evil thing had happened.

I had passed through Trewint, and was nearing Bolventor when I saw a woman's form in the road, while a woman's voice screamed "Stop!"

I did stop, and then I recognised the woman as Kezia Tamblin.

"Git off, Robert Tremain; I've got summin' to tell 'ee," she said.

Her voice was trembling, and the light was sufficiently good for me to see how excited she was. Almost without a thought I dismounted.

"I've found 'ee out," she said; "iss, I've found 'ee out!"

"What do you mean, Kezia?" I said, my heart becoming like lead.

"What do I mane? I know now why you've bin so funny thaise laast three days. I know oal 'bout it; you came after me for my money, you ded, and all the time you was loppin' 'bout after a mazed maid over to Dreardowns, and you know you was."

She seemed to be in a frenzy of passion, and was utterly incapable of reason.

"You thought yerself very clever," she went on. "You thought I should never know nothin' 'bout it; you done it oal on the sly, dedn' 'ee? Well, I've found 'ee out, Robert Tremain, and now you shall laive Rosecarrol, and you'll see who'll be missus there."

I did not speak; indeed, at that minute I was too much taken aback to utter a word.

"Iss, you thought Nick Truscott dedn't know, dedn' 'ee, and ef he ded know you dedn' think he wud tell, ded 'ee?"

"Nick Truscott," I said excitedly; "surely he didn't find out—he didn't tell you, did he?"

"You do own it, then, do 'ee?" she shrieked

in passion. "Iss, Nick tould me. He heerd 'ee laast night in the parlour. He heard all you said, and when Sarah went to bed she tould 'im that you was in love with thickey maazed maid, and that you dedn' want me."

"How dared Nick tell you this?" I gasped.

"Why, he'd bin to the cattle market, and I'd heerd people say that Nick ud tell everything he knawed if you gave him a drop of drink and so I jist tried for fun. Then he told me everything, Robert Tremain."

I had no doubt she told the truth. Wild—mad as she was, I knew that this was the truth. Sarah, never dreaming that he would utter a word, after his hearing our conversation in the parlour, had doubtless told him my story, and he, true to his reputation, had, after taking some drink, blurted everything out.

"You know what I tould 'ee the other night, Robert Tremain. I zed that ef another maid ded come between you and me, I'd kill her. Well——"

"You have not dared to go near her?" I shouted; "if you have——"

"Kip quiet," she said. "No, I ain't a-bin nist her, but I-wud, iss, and I was jist agoin' to 'er, when Peter Sleeman and two gents come up in a carriage and pair."

"You didn't tell them?" I gasped.



“Yes, I ded,” she cried triumphantly, “and by this time your mazed maid es in the hands of her keepers again.”

I lifted my hand to strike her—at that moment I should have felt a joy in doing so; but I remembered that she was a woman, and my hand dropped powerless.

Without waiting a second or listening to the torrent of abuse that she poured on me, I sprang on Starlight’s back and rode madly towards Penliggle.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE STRANGE MEETING ON THE MOORS.

**D**URING my ride I had time to think again. I wondered whether Sleeman had been to Dreardowns before calling at "The Queen's Head," and I wished I had asked Kezia how long since they had left her. However, no time was to be lost, and it was for me to act, and act quickly. If they had been to Penliggle, and had taken Joyce, then I must ride after them. They had not started for Launceston or I should have met them. But would they go there? Did they know what steps I was taking in the matter?

Hark! what was that?

It sounded like a woman's cry; it echoed across the moor and died in the moaning of the wind. I dug my heels into Starlight's sides—I clenched my fists nervously. And yet the cry gave me hope. Evidently, they were at their work. Not knowing that his father knew his secret, and was acquainted with his treachery, Arthur Patmore would devise some other means to save himself from being practically disinherited,

while Trelaske, having compromised himself in the matter, would fight like grim death.

Unmindful of every obstacle, I dashed right across the country. The hedges were not high, and Starlight cleared them easily. When I arrived at Penliggle, all was dark, all was quiet. My heart sank like lead. I burst open the door and lit a match, and then I saw that Nick Truscott and Sarah lay on the ground bound. In a minute I had unbound them and enabled them to speak.

Sarah was the first to recover herself.

“Towards Bolventor by the lower cart track, Robert, my dear,” she gasped; “quick, and you’ll catch ’em !”

I did not wait a second, for I was fearful for Joyce’s safety. What they might do I did not know, I dared not think. I had not ridden far when I heard the rumble of wheels. I knew they must go slowly, for the road was bad, and, while the night was not very dark, I was sure they must be careful if they did not overturn the carriage.

Grasping my heavy riding whip, I rode up to the carriage. At that moment I felt strong and determined. Never did I feel so thankful for my strength as I did then; never did I rejoice in the saying of the farm labourers, that “Maaster Robert was a match for two men,” more than at that moment. Unmindful of results I lifted

my riding whip. It had a heavy bone handle, and, wielded by a strong man, it was a formidable weapon. I brought the handle heavily on the rider's head, and without a sound he fell to the ground. Then I jumped from Starlight and held the horses' heads. They were evidently tired out, and seemed in no hurry to move on.

"What's the matter?" shouted a voice from the carriage.

"The matter has come to an end," was my reply.

Instantly the carriage door opened. "What do you say?" shouted a voice.

"You must give Miss Joyce Patmore her liberty," I answered.

"Mind her, Edgar!" I heard a voice say, and then another voice came from the carriage. It was Joyce's voice saying, "Robert."

I should have gone to her, if I had been able, because the sound of her voice calling me by my name seemed to take away my reason. But a man met me, a man nearly as tall as I.

A minute later and I was fighting him, hand to hand, for I had dropped my whip. It was a stiff tussle, for he was a strong man, but I mastered him, and was about to throw him heavily on the ground, when I saw that the other had come from the carriage. He held something in his hand, and I saw that he had lifted it to

strike me. He hesitated a second, doubtless for fear of striking the man with whom I was fighting, instead of me. Had he struck me I should no doubt have been disabled ; perhaps he might have killed me. That second's hesitation, however, saved me, for before he could strike the blow I heard another woman's scream, and I saw his arm gripped. Struggling as I was with the man I had practically conquered, I could see that the woman held him fast, in spite of his endeavours to free himself. She had assured my victory. I threw my opponent from me as only a wrestler could, and then rushed to the carriage. In a minute more Joyce Patmore was in my arms.

I had scarcely freed her from the bonds which bound her, when I heard Nick Truscott's voice shouting : "Maaster Robert !"

"All right, Nick ; come quickly," I answered back.

By this time the man had thrown the woman who had saved me from him, and was coming towards me.

"It is no use, Mr. Edgar Trelaske," I said ; "I have been to Grassdale to-day and have told Mr. Patmore everything. He knows that George Patmore will soon be home, he knows what you have done with his niece. I tell you it is no use."

He stopped as though he had been shot. "Did you hear that, Arthur?" he cried.

"Yes, I heard," was the reply, and I saw the man he called Arthur rise to his feet. That moment Nick Truscott and Sarah came up.

"What a fool I've been," I, heard Edgar Trelaske say. "There! let us get away from here. Where's the driver? Get up, you fellow!"

The driver got up and rubbed his head. I had only stunned him; the hard hat which he wore had broken the blow.

I still held Joyce in my arms. She seemed to feel safe there, and again my heart beat joyfully. "Where's the woman who helped me?" I asked, looking around.

There was no answer to my question, but I saw a woman slowly retreating from us.

"Who can it be?" I thought, and Nick Truscott, as if anxious to atone for the trouble he had caused, ran and caught her by the arm.

"Why, 'tes Kezia Tamblin!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, coming back, and standing before me, "'tis Kezia Tamblin." Then she burst out sobbing. "I cudden help tellin' these men what Nick Truscott told me," she continued, "and I cudden help stoppin' that man from hurtin' 'ee, Robert. I said in my heart that I wished he would kill 'ee; but when I saw him goin' to hit 'ee, I cudden help——" and then she burst out sobbing again.

Edgar Trelaske and Arthur Patmore took no

notice of us—they realised that they had been defeated and prepared to go back to Launceston.

“Good-night, Kezia,” I said, feeling ashamed of myself because of the unmanly part I had acted. “I hope the man did not hurt you?”

By this time her mood had changed, perhaps she realised that the bond between us had been broken.

“What do you care?” she cried. “You care ’bout nothin’ but the mazed maid. I’m nothin’ to ’ee. Oh, I wish I hadn’ come here; then perhaps—perhaps—oa, I wish I cud hate you, Robert Tremain, I do! I do!” Then she walked away without another word.

“Come, Miss Joyce,” I said, “you shall sleep to-night at Rosecarrol. Starlight, my horse, shall carry us both. Come here, Starlight,” and the faithful creature came up to me.

“Stop a minute, Robert Tremain,” said Arthur Patmore. “You say you have seen my father at Grassdale to-day, you say he knows all about the letter from my brother, and the meaning of my cousin’s disappearance?”

“Yes,” I replied; “and he understands the whole business. I told him what your cousin has told me, and you know what that means.”

He stood looking at me as though he would have liked to kill me, then he turned away and went towards the carriage.

“Curse you!” he said bitterly, as he slammed the carriage-door.

I did not answer, but prepared to mount Starlight, when both of them came back again.

“Look you, Robert Tremain, is there any reason why the people around Grassdale should be told of this? You are not a fellow that wants to blab, and surely Joyce does not wish to have her affairs to be the talk of the countryside.”

“Arthur,” said Joyce, “I shall say nothing unless there is a necessity for it; you know I will not. But if ever the time should come that either of you make it necessary for the truth to be told, I shall tell it.” \*

“And I repeat what your cousin says,” I answered him as quietly as I could, “though God knows you don’t deserve it.”

The two went away together then, without speaking further to us, but I heard them uttering bitter words together as they got into the carriage; even then I believe they would have attacked me again had they dared, if only out of pure revenge.

I heard afterwards that they had a desperate struggle to get Joyce away from Sarah, for Peter Sleeman had left them at the cottage door, refusing to take any further part in the business.

\* The time has come. I need not tell why, save to say that Edgar Trelaske caused lying tales to be afloat, and that is partly why I have written this story.—R. T.



I need not try and describe my feelings as I rode with Joyce to Rosecarrol, neither will I tell of the way that my mother received Joyce, when I took her to her room and told her my story. And yet, in spite of my joy, my heart was sad, for as I looked at her I dared not think that she could ever care anything for me. Besides, my father's anger was great towards me. I had driven him from his home, he said ; I had by my madness lost the land which had been in the family for generations, and added the race of Tremains to the list of paupers.

I made him no answer, save to ask him what he would have done in my place. At that he looked at me strangely, and then went away without speaking a word.

The next day I took Joyce to Grassdale, but I will not tell of the journey or of her meeting with her uncle. In spite of Mr. Patmore's joy because of the safe return of his niece, he was very weak and despondent. He had passed through a painful interview with his son Arthur a few hours before—an interview which had ended in the young man leaving his home, not to return until he had won his father's respect by an altered life.

Of the confessions which Arthur had been obliged to make I know little. I was led to understand that his career was anything but praise-

worthy, and that his relations to Edgar Trelaske were of such a nature as to necessitate his departure from the country. I may also state here that a few weeks later Bodinnick House and lands were advertised for sale.

I stayed at Grassdale one night, there being no means whereby I could return the same day. Somehow, in spite of my success in bringing Joyce back to her home, I was gloomy and sad. Everything seemed so different from what I had hoped. Besides, I was suffering from all the excitement through which I had gone. Those three eventful days seemed like years, so much thought and action and anxiety had been crowded into them. Joyce, too, looked pale and ill; doubtless she was suffering from the effects of her strange experiences.

“I am sorry I have not been able to make things more pleasant for you, Robert Tremain,” said Mr. Patmore, just before I left; “but, as you know, I have been greatly troubled—greatly troubled. I have been ill for a good while, and events have been a little too much for me. But I shall soon be better; yes, I shall soon be better. You know how I thank you, my lad; I cannot express it in words, but—but——” He hesitated a second, then he said, “You’ll come and see us again soon, won’t you? Say at Christmas.”

“Thank you, I shall be very glad,” I replied.

“That’s right. Things, I hope, will be different

then—perhaps ; but there, good-bye, thank you, and God bless you ! ”

Joyce met me in the library ; she looked very pale and ill, while her lips trembled and her eyes were filled with tears. I longed to take her in my arms, and tell her that I loved her—longed to tell her that my life would be a blank until I saw her again ; but I dared not. It would have been unmanly to say this after I had rendered her a service ; besides, I felt that she could only think of me as a friend.

When she began to speak of her thanks I stopped her : how could I let her continue, when it had been the joy of my life to serve her, when I could no more have helped trying to rescue her than a bird can help flying ?

“ I shall see you again, I hope, Mr. Tremain,” she said, as she held out her hand. She seemed to have forgotten that my name was Robert.

“ Yes, I’m coming at Christmas,” I replied. “ I have promised your uncle.”

Then my heart was gladdened again, for I saw the light of joy flash into her eyes.

I arrived at Rosecarrol just before midnight ; my heart heavy at the thought of the dark days that must come when we had to leave the old homestead ; and yet I was happy as I thought of the coming Christmas.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HOW THE MISTS WERE CLEARED AWAY.

**F**OR the next three days I roamed the moors like one demented. I felt incapable of work ; I had no interest in life. It seemed as though a blight had fallen upon me, and that all joy had gone for ever. I hated those brown lonely wastes, and yet I was attracted by them. Rosecarrol was hateful to me, and all the while I dreaded the action I was sure Tamblin would take.

The day after I returned I received a package from Kezia Tamblin ; it contained the little articles I had given her, but not a line was sent with it. Evidently she was trying to wipe me out of the pages of her life. No message came from Hezekiah, however ; perhaps he was planning a bitter revenge. The second day after I had bidden good-bye to Joyce, I met Peter Sleeman. I had been near his house, and was trying to live over again the experiences through which I had passed there. He came up to me like an angry

man, and I thought he was going to pour forth a torrent of abuse. When we stood face to face, however, he altered his mind, and, after looking at me for a few seconds, he walked away without speaking a word.

On the third day a strange man came to Rosecarrol, and had a long interview with my father.

"I expect it is Tamblin's lawyer," was my thought, and throughout the rest of the day my heart was, if possible, sadder than before. I felt that I could not meet my father, for somehow it seemed to me that I had been guilty of causing him to lose the home he loved. When I returned to the house, however, he was quite cheerful; he laughed as he had laughed years before, in the days when money difficulties did not press upon him.

"Was that Tamblin's lawyer?" I asked him.

"No, Robert lad."

"Who then?"

He looked at me steadily for a few seconds, then he said, "My luck has turned, Bob."

"How?"

"Mining is looking up, so are the clay works. I shall be able to sell my shares in Polgooth; ay, and sell them well. A new clay bed is opened up, too, of splendid quality."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do."

"But you can't realise at once, can you?"

"Well," he said, after hesitating a few seconds, "not exactly, but I've been able to transfer the mortgage on Rosecarrol, and, thank God, Bob, the old home is saved!"

"What, are you out of Tamblin's power?"

"Yes, my lad."

"But how?"

"He's got all the money he advanced, Bob, and the deeds are safe!"

"But how did you manage if you are not able to realise on the mines and clay works?"

"Never you mind, my boy. You'll know all in good time."

I ought to have rejoiced beyond measure at this, but I did not. My heart was sad in spite of everything.

A week later another piece of news astonished me. I heard that Kezia Tamblin was walking out with Tom Nicolls, of Trewint. Some of the gossips said that she had taken up with him just to spite me; and others, that she had loved him all the time, and only went with me to please her father. I could not help wondering at this, but I comforted myself that her love for me could not have been very deep, that it had only been a fancy which passed away easily. Moreover, I rejoiced with a great joy that I had not married

her, even although Joyce could never be anything to me. I thought of her mad jealousy; I remembered, too, the awful abuse she had poured upon me that night when she learnt I did not love her. And yet it was scarcely a wonder that she should be angry; besides, but for her I might have been killed.

Truly, a woman's heart is past finding out! But I feel I can say but little about this. Men's hearts are mean enough, God knows, and as I called to mind the fact that I was willing to take the marriage vow to save Rosecarrol for the Tremain family, I blushed with shame. Still I thought more of mother than of Rosecarrol.

During the weeks which intervened between the day of Joyce's return to Grassdale and Christmas Eve, I never heard from her. Not a line passed between us. For my own part, I was afraid to write, and I had great fears that she had forgotten me.

On the morning of the day before Christmas Eve, however, I received a note from Mr. Patmore. It was dated on the morning of the 22nd of December, and contained these lines:—

“We are expecting you on Wednesday. Don't fail on any account; we shall all be greatly disappointed if you do. A carriage will be sent to meet the five o'clock train.”

I need not say that I was early for the train

at Launceston. Father drove me to the station, and although Starlight trotted splendidly, he went all too slow for me. When I got into the train, my father said to me, "Bob, I may as well tell you that Mr. Patmore has got the deeds of Rosecarrol."

"What?"

"Yes, it was his lawyer you saw that day. He advanced the necessary money; but Mr. Patmore has got a letter from me this morning to say that I shall be prepared to pay him back in a fortnight. There's a fortune in Polgooth after all, and the thousand pounds which I thought were lying dead are worth six thousand now, Bob. I thought I would tell you this. You will feel more comfortable."

It was six o'clock when I arrived at Grassdale. I had fondly hoped that Joyce would meet me at the station, but the carriage was quite empty as I entered it, and it was with many forebodings and fears that I went into the house half an hour later.

The welcome to me was a right royal one. Mr. Patmore, who seemed quite recovered, shook my hand with great heartiness, and seemed to have a difficulty in expressing his feelings of kindness; and then a surprise awaited me. Two men entered the room: the one a brown-bearded man of about fifty, the other a young fellow of twenty-eight or thirty.



“This,” said Mr. Patmore, placing his hand on the shoulder of the latter, “is my eldest son George, and this is my brother Robert—he bears your name, you see.”

“Your brother?” I stammered.

“Yes, my brother, and Joyce’s father. Where is Joyce, by the way? She was here a minute ago.”

Joyce came in just then, and my heart was all of a flutter. I can’t explain my feelings. Young fellows of twenty-one who have been in love will know all about it.

I don’t know what I said, I don’t remember a single word that was spoken to me. I just feasted my eyes on Joyce. If I had thought her beautiful when, pale and fearful, she stood by the window at Dreardowns, what must I have thought of her as she stood in the bright light of the room amongst her dear ones, her eyes shining with a new light, and her cheeks flushed with health and joy?

The evening passed swiftly away. No one was there but Joyce—at least, I thought not. It is true old Mr. Patmore laughed with great heartiness, and Joyce’s father told how he had bargained for and bought Bodinnick house and lands for himself and his daughter, and George told stories of Australia, while I pretended to listen to everything they said; but all the time I saw no one but Joyce.

I was wonderfully happy and terribly sad.

At one time I loved George Patmore as a brother, and at another I hated him because I thought he seemed in love with Joyce.

By-and-by—it was close upon midnight, and the carol singers had gone—Joyce and I were together in the hall. I don't know how it came about, I am sure; I fancy I had gone out to see how beautiful the snow looked beneath the light of the moon, but it doesn't matter. Joyce and I were together.

A few minutes before I had despaired of ever plucking up courage to tell her what was in my heart, but now I felt I must speak. I determined to be honest; I would hide nothing from her. So I began to describe my father's money difficulties.

“I think I know all about it,” she said; “Sarah Truscott, your old servant, told me.”

“Did she?” I gasped; “and did she tell you all the rest?”

“I think she did,” she answered with a laugh.

“I—I was mad,” I cried; “I did not know what I was doing. I loved Rosecarrol, and I loved my mother a thousand times more, so I—oh, I'm ashamed of myself; but when I saw you, I thought of you, lived only for you! You hear, don't you?” and I caught her arm.

She did not speak, but I felt her trembling.

“Well, I needn’t tell you anything else, Joyce. I—I—oh, tell me something, give me a little hope—say, oh, Joyce—tell me! I love you with all my life!”

Then she gave a little laugh that had a sob in it.

“Won’t you answer me, Joyce? Oh, if you don’t love me I must leave to-night—I couldn’t stay if—won’t you speak?”

We were, as I said, standing in the hall, and it was decorated for Christmas.

“Must I go then?” I asked; “is there no hope for me?”

“Robert,” she said, laughing and crying at the same time, “don’t you see that we are under the mistletoe?”

That is all I am going to say about the joy that came to me that Christmas Eve, while words are too poor to tell of the happiness that has come to me since then. May God make me worthy of my Joyce—she whom I won in dark, despairing days; she for whom I found it a joy to suffer and to fight; she who is now my wife and the mother of my children.

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