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IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA.

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A Tale of the Cornish Coast

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"MEHALAH," "URITH," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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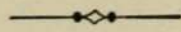
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IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA.



CHAPTER XX.

BOUGHT AND SOLD.

CRUEL COPPINGER remained brooding in the place where he had been standing, and as he stood there his face darkened. He was a man of imperious will and violent passions; a man unwont to curb himself; accustomed to sweep out of his path whoever or whatever stood between him and the accomplishment of his purpose; a man who never asked himself whether that purpose were good or bad. He had succumbed, in a manner strange and surprising to himself, to the influence of Judith—a sort of witchery over him that subdued his violence and awed him into gentleness and modesty. But when her presence was withdrawn the revolt of the man's lawless nature began. Who was this who had dared to oppose her

will to his? a mere child of eighteen. Women were ever said to be a perverse generation, and loved to domineer over men; and man was weak to suffer it. So thinking, chafing, he had worked himself into a immersing rage when Miss Trevisa entered the hall, believing it to be empty. Seeing him, she was about to withdraw, when he shouted to her to stay.

“ I beg your pardon for intruding, sir; I am in quest of my niece. Those children keep me in a whirl like a teetotum.”

“ Your niece is gone.”

“ Gone! where to?”

“ Back—I suppose to that old fool Menaida. He is meet to be a companion for her and that idiot, her brother; not I—I am to be spurned from her presence.”

Miss Trevisa was surprised, but she said nothing. She knew his moods.

“ Stand there, Mother Dunes!” said Coppinger, in his anger and humiliation, glad to have some one on whom he could pour out the lava that boiled up in his burning breast. “ Listen to me. She has told me that we belong to different worlds—she and I—and to different races, kinds of being, and that there can be

no fellowship betwixt us. Where I am she will not be. Between me and you there is a great gulf fixed—see you? and I am as Dives tormented in my flame, and she stands yonder, serene, in cold and complacent blessedness, and will not cross to me with her finger dipped in cold water to cool my tongue; and as for my coming near to her”—he laughed fiercely—“that can never be.”

“Did she say all that?” asked Miss Trevisa.

“She looked it; she implied it, if she did not say it in these naked words. And, what is more,” shouted he, coming before Aunt Dionysia threateningly, so that she recoiled, “it is true. When she sat there in yonder chair, and I stood here by this hearthstone, and she spoke, I knew it was true; I saw it all—the great gulf unspanned by any bridge. I knew that none could ever bridge it, and there we were, apart for ever, I in my fire burning, she in Blessedness—indifferent.”

“I am very sorry,” said Miss Trevisa, “that Judith should so have misconducted herself. My brother brought her up in a manner, to my mind, most improper for a young girl. He made her read Rollin’s ‘Ancient History’ and Blair’s ‘Chronological Tables,’

and really, upon my word, I cannot say what else."

"I do not care how it was," said Coppinger. "But here stands the gulf."

"Rollin is in sixteen octavo volumes," said Aunt Dionysia; "and they are thick also."

Coppinger strode about the room, with his hands in his deep coat pockets, his head down.

"My dear brother," continued Miss Trevisa, apologetically, "made of Judith his daily companion, told her all he thought, asked her opinion, as though she were a full-grown woman, and one whose opinion was worth having, whereas he never consulted me, never cared to talk to me about anything, and the consequence is the child has grown up without that respect for her elders and betters, and that deference for the male sex which the male sex expects. I am sure when I was a girl, and of her age, I was very different, very different indeed."

"Of that I have not the smallest doubt," sneered Coppinger. "But never mind about yourself. It is of her I am speaking. She is gone, has left me, and I cannot endure it. I cannot endure it," he repeated.

“I beg your pardon,” said Aunt Dionysia, “you must excuse me saying it, Captain Coppinger, but you place me in a difficult position. I am the guardian of my niece, though, goodness knows, I never desired it, and I don’t know what to think. It is very flattering and kind, and I esteem it great goodness in you to speak of Judith with such warmth, but——”

“Goodness! kindness!” exclaimed Coppinger. “I am good and kind to her! She forces me to it. I can be nothing else, and she throws me at her feet and tramples on me.”

“I am sure your sentiments, sir, are—are estimable; but, feeling as you seem to imply towards Judith, I hardly know what to say. Bless me! what a scourge to my shoulders these children are; nettles stinging and blistering my skin, and not allowing me a moment’s peace!”

“I imply nothing,” said Coppinger. “I speak out direct and plain what I mean. I love her. She has taken me, she turns me about, she gets my heart between her little hands and tortures it.”

“Then, surely, Captain, you cannot ask me to let her be here. You are most kind to express yourself in this manner about the pert hussy, but, as she is my

niece, and I am responsible for her, I must do my duty by her, and not expose her to be—talked about. Bless me!” gasped Aunt Dunes, “when I was her age I never would have put myself into such a position as to worry my aunt out of her seven senses, and bring her nigh to distraction.”

“I will marry her, and make her mistress of my house and all I have,” said Coppinger.

Miss Trevisa slightly curtsied, then said, “I am sure you are over-indulgent, but what is to become of me? I have no doubt it will be very comfortable and acceptable to Judith to hear this, but—what is to become of me? It would not be very delightful for me to be housekeeper here under my own niece, a pert, insolent, capricious hussy. You can see at once, Captain Coppinger, that I cannot consent to that.”

The woman had the shrewdness to know that she could be useful to Coppinger, and the selfishness that induced her to make terms with him to secure her own future, and to show him that she could stand in his way till he yielded to them.

“I never asked to have these children thrust down my throat, like the fish-bone that strangled Lady

Godiva—no, who was it? Earl Godiva; but I thank my stars I never waded through Rollin, and most certainly kept my hands off Blair. Of course, Captain Coppinger, it is right and proper of you to address yourself to me, as the guardian of my niece, before speaking to her.”

“I have spoken to her, and she spurns me.”

“Naturally, because you spoke to her before addressing me on the subject. My dear brother—I will do him this justice—was very emphatic on this point. But you see, sir, my consent can never be given.”

“I do not ask your consent.”

“Judith will never take you without it.”

“Consent or no consent,” said Coppinger, “that is a secondary matter. The first is, she does not like me, whereas I—I love her. I never loved a woman before. I knew not what love was. I laughed at the fools, as I took them to be, who sold themselves into the hands of women; but now, I cannot live without her. I can think of nothing but her all day. I am in a fever, and cannot sleep at night—all because she is tormenting me.”

All at once, exhausted by his passion, desperate at seeing no chance of success, angry at being flouted

by a child, he threw himself into the chair, and settled his chin on his breast, and folded his arms.

“Go on,” said he. “Tell me what is my way out of this?”

“You cannot expect my help or my advice, Captain, so as to forward what would be most unsatisfactory to me.”

“What! do you grudge her to me?”

“Not that; but, if she were here, what would become of me? Should I be turned out into the cold at my age by this red-headed hussy, to find a home for myself with strangers? Here I never would abide with her as mistress, never.”

“I care naught about you.”

“No, of that I am aware, to my regret, sir; but that makes it all the more necessary for me to take care for myself.”

“I see,” said Coppinger, “I must buy you. Is your aid worth it? Will she listen to you?”

“I can make her listen to me,” said Aunt Dunes, “if it be worth my while. At my age, having roughed it, having no friends, I must think of myself and provide for the future, when I shall be too old to work.”

“Name your price.”

Miss Trevisa did not answer for a while; she was considering the terms she would make. To her coarse and soured mind there was nothing to scruple at in aiding Coppinger in his suit. The Trevisas were of a fine old Cornish stock, but then Judith took after her mother, the poor Scottish governess, and Aunt Dunes did not feel towards her as though she were of her own kin. The girl looked like her mother. She had no right, in Miss Trevisa's eyes, to bear the name of her father, for her father ought to have known better than stoop to marry a beggarly, outlandish governess. Not very logical reasoning, but what woman, where her feelings are engaged, does reason logically? Aunt Dunes had never loved her niece; she felt an inner repulsion such as sprang from encountering a nature superior, purer, more refined than her own, and the mortification of being forced to admit to herself that it was so. Judith, moreover, was costing her money, and Miss Trevisa parted with her hard-earned savings as reluctantly as with her heart's blood. She begrudged the girl and her brother every penny she was forced, or believed she would be forced, to expend upon them.

And was she doing the girl an injury in helping her to a marriage that would assure her a home and a comfortable income?

Aunt Dionysia knew well enough that things went on in Pentyre Glaze that were not to be justified, that Coppinger's mode of life was not one calculated to make a girl of Judith's temperament happy, but—"Hoity-toity!" said Miss Trevisa to herself, "if girls marry, they must take men as they find them. Beggars must not be choosers. You must not look a gift horse in the mouth. No trout can be eaten apart from its bones, nor a rose plucked that is free from thorns." She herself had accommodated herself to the ways of the house, to the moods and manners of Coppinger; and if she could do that, so could a mongrel Trevisa. What was good enough for herself was over-good for Judith.

She had been saddled with these children, much against her wishes, and if she shifted the saddle to the shoulders of one willing to bear it, why not? She had duties to perform to her own self as well as to those thrust on her by the dead hand of that weak, that inconsiderate brother of hers, Peter Trevisa.

Would her brother have approved of her forwarding this union? That was a question that did not trouble her much. Peter did what he thought best for his daughter when he was alive, stuffing her head with Rollin and Blair, and now that he was gone, she must do the best she could for her, and here was a chance offered that she would be a fool not to snap at.

Nor did she concern herself greatly whether Judith's happiness were at stake. Hoity-toity! girls' happiness! They are bound to make themselves happy when they find themselves. The world was not made to fit them, but they to accommodate themselves to the places in which they found themselves in the world.

Miss Trevisa had for some days seen the direction matters were taking, she had seen clearly enough the infatuation—yes, infatuation she said it was—that had possessed Coppinger. What he could see in the girl passed her wits to discover. To her, Judith was an odious little minx—very like her mother. Miss Trevisa, therefore, had had time to weigh the advantages and the disadvantages that might spring to her, should Coppinger persist in his suit and succeed; and she had

considered whether it would be worth her while to help or to hinder his suit.

“You put things,” said Aunt Dionysia, “in a blunt and a discourteous manner, such as might offend a lady of delicacy, like myself, who am in delicacy a perfect guava jelly—but, Captain, I know your ways, as I ought to, having been an inmate of this house for many years. It is no case of buying and selling, as you insinuate, but the case is plainly this: I know the advantage it will be to my niece to be comfortably provided for. She and Jamie have between them but about a thousand pounds, a sum to starve, and not to live, upon. They have no home and no relative in the world but myself, who am incapable of giving them a home and of doing anything for them except at an excruciating sacrifice. If Judith be found, through your offer, a home, then Jamie also is provided for.”

He said nothing to this, but moved his feet impatiently. She went on—“The boy *must* be provided for. And if Judith become your wife, not only will it be proper for you to see that he is so, but Judith will give neither you nor me our natural rest until the boy is comfortable and happy.”

“ Confound the boy ! ”

“ It is all very well to say that, but he who would have anything to say to Judith must reckon to have to consider Jamie also. They are inseparable. Now, I assume that by Judith’s marriage Jamie is cared for. But how about myself? Is every one to lie in clover and I in stubble? Am I to rack my brains to find a home for my nephew and niece, only that I may be thrust out myself? To find for them places at your table, that I may be deprived of a crust and a bone under it? If no one else will consider me, I must consider myself. I am the last representative of an ancient and honourable family——” She saw Coppinger move his hand, and thought he expressed dissent. She added hastily, “ As to Judith and Jamie, they take after their Scotch mother. I do not reckon them as Trevisas.”

“ Come—tell me what you want,” said Coppinger, impatiently.

“ I want to be secure for my old age, that I do not spend it in the poor-house.”

“ What do you ask ? ”

“ Give me an annuity of fifty pounds for my life, and Othello Cottage that is on your land.”

“ You ask enough.”

“ You will never get Judith without granting me that.”

“ Well—get Judith to be mine, and you shall have it.”

“ Will you swear to it ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And give me—I desire that—the promise in writing.”

“ You shall have it.”

“ Then I will help you.”

“ How ? ”

“ Leave that to me. I am her guardian.”

“ But not of her heart ? ”

“ Leave her to me. You shall win her.”

“ How ? ”

“ Through Jamie.”

CHAPTER XXI.

OTHELLO COTTAGE.

To revert to the old life as far as possible under changed circumstances, to pass a sponge over a terrible succession of pictures, to brush out the vision of horrors from her eyes, and shake the burden of the past off her head—if for a while only—was a joy to Judith. She had been oppressed with nightmare, and now the night was over, her brain clear, and should forget its dreams.

She and Jamie were together, and were children once more; her anxiety for her brother was allayed, and she had broken finally with Cruel Coppinger. Her heart bounded with relief. Jamie was simple and docile as of old; and she rambled with him through the lanes, along the shore, upon the downs, avoiding only one tract of common and one cove.

A child's heart is elastic; eternal droopings it cannot

bear. Beaten down, bruised and draggled by the storm, it springs up when the sun shines, and laughs into flower. It is no eucalyptus that ever hangs its leaves; it is a sensitive plant, wincing, closing, at a trifle, feeling acutely, but not for long.

And now Judith had got an idea into her head, that she communicated to Jamie, and her sanguine anticipations kindled his torpid mind. She had resolved to make little shell baskets and other chimney ornaments, not out of the marine shells cast up by the sea, for on that coast none came ashore whole, but out of the myriad snail-shells that strew the downs. They were of all sizes, from a pin's head to a gooseberry, and of various colours—salmon-pink, sulphur-yellow, rich brown and pure white. By judicious arrangement of sizes and of colours, with a little gum on cardboard, what wonderful erections might be made, certain to charm the money out of the pocket, and bring in a little fortune to the twins.

“And then,” said Jamie, “I can build a linney, and rent a paddock, and keep my Neddy at Polzeath.”

“And,” said Judith, “we need be no longer a burden to auntie.”

The climax of constructive genius would be exhibited in the formation of a shepherd and shepherdess, for which Judith was to paint faces and hands ; but their hats, their garments, their shoes, were to be made of shells. The shepherdess was to have a basket on her arm, and in this basket were to be flowers, not made out of complete shells, but out of particles of sea-shells of rainbow colours.

What laughter, what exultation there was over the shepherd and shepherdess ! How in imagination they surpassed the fascinations of Dresden china figures. And the price at which they were to be sold was settled. Nothing under a pound would be accepted, and that would be inadequate to represent the value of such a monument of skill and patience ! The shepherd and shepherdess would have to be kept under glass bells, on a drawing-room mantel-shelf.

Judith's life had hitherto been passed between her thoughtful, cultured father and her thoughtless, infantile brother. In some particulars she was old for her age, but in others she was younger than her years. As the companion of her father, she had gained powers of reasoning, a calmness in judging, and a shrewdness of

sense which is unusual in a girl of eighteen. But as also the associate of Jamie in his play, she had a childish delight in the simplest amusements, and a readiness to shake off all serious thought and fretting care in an instant, and to accommodate herself to the simplicity of her brother.

Thus—a child with a child—Judith and Jamie were on the common one windy, showery day, collecting shells, laughing, chattering, rejoicing over choice snailshells, as though neither had passed through a wave of trouble, as though life lay serene before them.

Judith had no experience of the world. With her natural wit and feminine instinct she had discovered that Cruel Coppinger loved her. She had also no hesitation in deciding that he must be repulsed. Should he seek her, she must avoid him. They could not possibly unite their lives. She had told him this, and there the matter ended. He must swallow his disappointment, and think no more about her. No one could have everything he wanted. Other people had to put up with rejection, why not Coppinger? It might be salutary to him to find that he could not have his way in all things. So she argued, and then she put

aside from her all thought of the Captain, and gave herself up to consideration of snail-shell boxes, baskets, and shepherds and shepherdesses.

Jamie was developing a marvellous aptitude for bird-stuffing. Mr. Menaida had told Judith repeatedly that if the boy would stick to it, he might become as skilful as himself. He would be most happy, thankful, to be able to pass over to him some of the work that accumulated, and which he could not execute. "I am not a professional; I am an amateur. I only stuff birds to amuse my leisure moments. Provokingly enough, gentlemen do not believe this. They write to me as if I were a tradesman, laying their commands upon me, and I resent it. I have a small income of my own, and am not forced to slave for my bread and 'baccy. Now, if Jamie will work with me and help me, I will cheerfully share profits with him. I must be director—that is understood."

But it was very doubtful whether poor Jamie could be taught to apply himself regularly to the work, and that under a desultory master, who could not himself remain at a task many minutes without becoming exhausted and abandoning it. Jamie could be induced

to work only by being humoured. He loved praise. He must be coaxed and flattered to undertake any task that gave trouble. Fortunately, taxidermy did not require any mental effort, and it was the straining of his imperfect mental powers that irritated and exhausted the boy.

With a little cajolery he might be got to do as much as did Uncle Zachie, and if Mr. Menaida were as good as his word—and there could be little doubt that so kind, amiable, and honourable a man would be that—Jamie would really earn a good deal of money. Judith also hoped to earn more with her shell-work, and together she trusted they would be able to support themselves without further tax on Miss Trevisa.

And what a childish pleasure they found in scheming their future, what they would do with their money, where they would take a house, how furnish it! They laughed over their schemes, and their pulses fluttered at the delightful pictures they conjured up. And all their rosy paradise was to rise out of the proceeds of stuffed birds and snail-shell chimney ornaments.

“Ju! come here, Ju!” cried Jamie.

Then again, impatiently, “Ju! come here, Ju!”

“ What is it, dear ? ”

“ Here is the very house for us. Do come and see.”

On the down, nestled against a wall that had once enclosed a garden, but was now ruinous, stood a cottage. It was built of wreck-timber, thatched with heather and bracken, and with stones laid on the thatching, which was bound with ropes, as protection against the wind. A quaint, small house, with little windows under the low eaves ; one storey high, the window-frames painted white ; the glass frosted with salt blown from the sea, so that it was impossible to look through the small panes, and discover what was within. The door had a gable over it, and the centre of the gable was occupied by a figure-head of Othello. The Moor of Venice was black and well battered by storm, so that the paint was washed and bitten off him. There was a strong brick chimney in the midst of the roof, but no smoke issued from it, nor had the house the appearance of being inhabited. There were no blinds to the windows, there were no crocks, no drying linen about the house ; it had a deserted look, and yet was in good repair.

“ Oh, Ju ! ” said Jamie, “ we will live here. Will it

not be fun? And I shall have a gun and shoot birds."

"Whose house can it be?" asked Judith.

"I don't know. Ju, the door is open; shall we go in?"

"No, Jamie, we have no right there."

A little gate was in the wall, and Judith looked through. There had at one time certainly been a garden there, but it had been neglected, and allowed to be over-run with weeds. Roses, escallonica, lavender had grown in untrimmed luxuriance. Marigolds rioted over the space like a weed. Pinks flourished, loving the sandy soil, but here and there the rude blue thistle had intruded and asserted its right to the sea-border land as its indigenous home.

Down came the rain, so lashing that Judith was constrained to seek shelter, and, in spite of her protest that she had no right to enter Othello Cottage, she passed the threshold.

No one was within but Jamie, who had not attended to her objection; led by curiosity, and excusing himself by the rain, he had opened the door and gone inside.

The house was unoccupied, and yet was not in

a condition of neglect and decay. If no one lived there, yet certainly some one visited it, for it had not that mouldy atmosphere that pervades a house long shut up, nor were dust and sand deep on floor and table. There was furniture, though scanty. The hearth showed traces of having had a fire in it at no very distant period. There were benches. There were even tinder-box and candle on the mantel-shelf.

Jamie was in high excitement and delight. This was the ogre's cottage to which Jack had climbed up the bean-stalk. He was sure to find somewhere the hen that laid golden eggs, and the harp that played of itself.

Judith seated herself on one of the benches and sorted her shells, leaving Jamie to amuse himself. As the house was uninhabited, it did not seem to her that any gross impropriety existed in allowing him to run in and out and peep round the rooms, and into the corners.

“Judith,” he exclaimed, coming to her from an adjoining room, “there is a bed in here, and there are crooks in the wall!”

“What are the crooks for, dear?”

“For climbing, I think.”

Then he ran back, and she saw no more of him for a while, but heard him scrambling.

She rose and went to the door into the adjoining apartment to see that he was after no mischief. She found that this apartment was intended for sleeping in. There was a bedstead with a mattress on it, but no clothes. Jamie had found some crooks in the wall, and was scrambling up these, with hands and feet, towards the ceiling, where she perceived an opening, apparently into the attic.

“Oh Jamie! what are you doing there?”

“Ju, I want to see whether there is anything between the roof and the ceiling. There may be the harp there, or the hen that lays golden eggs.”

“The shower is nearly over; I shall not wait for you.”

She seated herself on the bed and watched him. He thrust open a sliding board, and crawled through into the attic. He would soon tire of exploring among the rafters, and would return dirty, and have to be cleared of cobwebs and dust. But it amused the boy. He was ever restless, and she would find it difficult to keep him occupied sitting by her below till the rain

ceased, so she allowed him to scramble and search as he pleased. Very few minutes had passed before Judith heard a short cough in the main room, and she at once rose and stepped back into it to apologize for her intrusion. To her great surprise she found her aunt there, at the little window, measuring it.

“A couple of yards will do—double width,” said Miss Trevisa.

“Auntie!” exclaimed Judith. “Who ever would have thought of seeing you here?”

Miss Trevisa turned sharply round, and her lips tightened.

“And who would have thought of seeing *you* here,” she answered, curtly.

“Auntie, the rain came on; I ran in here so as not to be wet through. To whom does this house belong?”

“To the master—to whom else? Captain Coppinger.”

“Are you measuring the window for blinds for him?”

“I am measuring for blinds, but not for him.”

“But—who lives here?”

“No one as yet.”

“Is any one coming to live here?”

“Yes—I am.”

“Oh auntie! and are we to come here with you?”

Miss Trevisa snorted, and stiffened her back.

“Are you out of your senses, like Jamie, to ask such a question? What is the accommodation here? Two little bedrooms, one large kitchen, and a lean-to for scullery—that is all—a fine roomy mansion for three people indeed!”

“But, auntie, are you leaving the Glaze?”

“Yes, I am. Have you any objection to that?”

“No, aunt, only I am surprised. And Captain Cruel lets you have this dear little cottage.”

“As to its being dear, I don’t know, I am to have it; and that is how you have found it open to poke and pry into. I came up to look round and about me, and then found I had not brought my measuring tape with me, so I returned home for that, and you found the door open and thrust yourself in.”

“I am very sorry if I have given you annoyance.”

“Oh, it’s no annoyance to me. The place is not mine yet.”

“ But when do you come here, Aunt Dunes ? ”

“ When ? ” Miss Trevisa looked at her niece with a peculiar expression in her hard face that Judith noticed, but could not interpret. “ That,” said Miss Trevisa, “ I do not know yet.”

“ I suppose you will do up that dear little garden,” said Judith.

Miss Trevisa did not vouchsafe an answer ; she grunted, and resumed her measuring.

“ Has this cottage been vacant for long, auntie ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But, auntie, some one comes here. It is not quite deserted.”

Miss Trevisa said to herself, “ Four times two and one breadth torn in half to allow for folds will do it. Four times two is eight, and one breadth more is ten.”

Just then Jamie appeared, shyly peeping through the door. He had heard his aunt's voice, and was afraid to show himself. Her eye, however, observed him, and in a peremptory tone she ordered him to come forward.

But Jamie would not obey her willingly, and he deemed it best for him to make a dash through the kitchen to the open front door.

“That boy!” growled Miss Trevisa, “I’ll be bound he has been at mischief.”

“Auntie, I think the rain has ceased, I will say good-bye.”

Then Judith left the cottage.

“Ju,” said Jamie, when he was with his sister beyond earshot of the aunt, “such fun—I have something to tell you.”

“What is it, Jamie?”

“I won’t tell you till we get home.”

“Oh, Jamie, not till we get back to Polzeath?”

“Well, not till we get half-way home—to the white gate. Then I will tell you.”

CHAPTER XXII.

JAMIE'S RIDE.

“ Now, Jamie ! the white gate.”

“ The white gate !—what about that ? ” He had forgotten his promise.

“ You have a secret to tell me.”

Then the boy began to laugh and to tap his pockets.

“ What do you think Ju ! look what I have found. Do you know what is in the loft of the cottage we were in ? There are piles of tobacco, all up hidden away in the dark under the rafters. I have got my pockets stuffed as full as they will hold. It is for Uncle Zachie. Won't he be pleased ? ”

“ Oh Jamie ! you should not have done that.”

“ Why not ? Don't scold, Ju ! ”

“ It is stealing.”

“No, it is not. No one lives there.”

“Nevertheless it belongs to some one, by whatever means it was got, and for whatever purpose stowed away there. You had no right to touch it.”

“Then why do you take snail-shells?”

“They belong to no one, no one values them. It is other with this tobacco. Give it up. Take it back again.”

“What—to Aunt Dunes? I daren’t, she’s so cross.”

“Well, give it to me, and I will take it to her. She is now at the cottage, and the tobacco can be replaced.”

“Oh, Ju, I should like to see her scramble up the wall!”

“I do not think she will do that; but she will contrive somehow to have the tobacco restored. It is not yours, and I believe it belongs to Captain Cruel. If it be not given back now he may hear of it, and be very angry.”

“He would beat me,” said the boy, hastily emptying his pockets. “I’d rather have Aunt Dunes’ jaw than Captain Cruel’s stick.” He gave the

tobacco to his sister, but he was not in a good humour. He did not see the necessity for restoring it. But Jamie never disobeyed his sister, when they were alone, and she was determined with him. Before others he tried to display his independence, by feeble defiances never long maintained, and ending in a reconciliation with tears and kisses, and promises of submission without demur for the future. With all, even the most docile children, there occur epochs when they try their wings, strut and ruffle their plumes, and crow very loud—epochs of petulance or boisterous outbreak of self-assertion in the face of their guides and teachers. If the latter be firm, the trouble passes away to be renewed at a future period till manhood or womanhood is reached, and then guide and teacher who is wise falls back, lays down control, and lets the pupils have their own way. But if at the first attempts at mastery, those in authority, through indifference or feebleness or folly, give way, then the fate of the children is sealed, they are spoiled for ever.

Jamie had his rebellious fits, and they were distressing to Judith, but she never allowed herself to be conquered. She evaded provoking them whenever

possible; and as much as possible led him by his affection. He had a very tender heart, was devotedly attached to his sister, and appeals to his better nature were usually successful, not always immediately, but in the long run.

Her association with Jamie had been of benefit to Judith; it had strengthened her character. She had been forced from earliest childhood to be strong where he was weak, to rule because he was incapable of ruling himself. This had nurtured in her a decision of mind, a coolness of judgment, and an inflexibility of purpose unusual in a girl of her years.

Judith walked to Othello Cottage, carrying the tobacco in her skirt, held up by both hands; and Jamie sauntered back to Polzeath, carrying his sister's basket of shells, stopping at intervals to add to the collection, then ensconcing himself in a nook of the hedge to watch a finch, a goldhammer, or a blackbird, then stopped to observe and follow a beetle of gorgeous metallic hues that was running across the path.

Presently he emerged into the highway, the parish road; there was no main road in those parts maintained

by toll-gates, and then observed a gig approach in which sat two men, one long and narrow-faced, the other tall, but stout and round-faced. He recognized the former at once as Mr. Scantlebray, the appraiser. Mr. Scantlebray, who was driving, nudged his companion, and with the butt-end of the whip pointed to the boy.

“Heigh! hi-up! Gaffer!” called Mr. Scantlebray, flapping his arms against his sides, much as does a cock with his wings. “Come along; I have something of urgent importance to say to you—something so good that it will make you squeak; something so delicious that it will make your mouth water.”

This was addressed to Jamie, as the white mare leisurely trotted up to where the boy stood. Then Scantlebray drew up, with his elbows at right angles to his trunk.

“Here’s my brother thirsting, ravening to make your acquaintance—and by George! you are in luck’s way, young hopeful, to make his. Obadiah! this here infant is an orphing. Orphing! this is Obadiah Scantlebray, whom I call Scanty because he is fat. Jump up, will y’, into the gig.”

Jamie looked vacantly about him. He had an idea

that he ought to wait for Judith or go directly home. But she had not forbidden him to have a ride, and a ride was what he dearly loved.

“Are you coming?” asked Scantlebray; “or do you need a more ceremonious introduction to Mr. Obadiah, eh?”

“I’ve got a basket of shells,” said Jamie. “They belong to Ju.”

“Well, put Ju’s basket in—the shells won’t hurt—and then in with you. There’s a nice little portmanteau in front, on which you can sit and look us in the face, and if you don’t tumble off with laughing, it will be because I strap you in. My brother is the very comicallest fellow in Cornwall. It’s a wonder I haven’t died of laughter. I should have, but our paths diverged; he took up the medical line, and I the valuation and all that, so my life was saved. Are you comfortable there?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jamie, seating himself where advised.

“Now for the strap round ye,” said Scantlebray. “Don’t be alarmed; it’s to hold you together, lest you split your sides with merriment, and to hold you in, lest you tumble overboard convulsed with laughter.

That brother of mine is the killingest man in Great Britain. Look at his face. Bless me! in church I should explode when I saw him, but that I am engrossed in my devotions. On with you, Juno!"

That to the grey mare, and a whip applied to make the grey mare trot along, which she did, with her head down lost in thought, or as if smelling the road, to make sure that she was on the right track.

"'Tisn't what he says," remarked Mr. Scantlebray, seeing a questioning expression on Jamie's innocent face, "it's the looks of him. And when he speaks—well, it's the way he says it more than what he says. I was at a Charity Trust dinner, and Obadiah said to the waiter, 'Cutlets, please!' The fellow dropped the dish, and I stuffed my napkin into my mouth, ran out, and went into a fit. Now, Scanty, show the young gentleman how to make a rabbit."

Then Mr. Scantlebray tickled up the mare with the lash of his whip, cast some objurgations at a horse-fly that was hovering and then darting at Juno.

Mr. Obadiah drew forth a white but very crumpled kerchief from his pocket, and proceeded to fold it on his lap.

“Just look at him,” said the agent, “doing it in spite of the motion of the gig. It’s wonderful. But his face is the butchery. I can’t look at it for fear of letting go the reins.”

The roads were unfrequented; not a person was passed as the party jogged along. Mr. Scantlebray hissed to the mare between his front teeth, which were wide apart; then, turning his eye sideways, observed what his brother was about.

“That’s his carcass,” said he, in reference to the immature rabbit.

Then a man was sighted coming along the road, humming a tune. It was Mr. Menaida.

“How are you? Compliments to the young lady orphing, and say we’re jolly—all three,” shouted Scantlebray, urging his mare to a faster pace, and keeping her up to it till they had turned a corner, and Menaida was no more in sight.

“Just look at his face, as he’s a-folding of that there pockyhandkercher,” said the appraiser. “It’s exploding work.”

Jamie looked into the stolid features of Mr. Obadiah, and laughed—laughed heartily, laughed till the tears

ran down his cheeks. Not that he saw aught humorous there, but that he was told it was there, he ought to see it, and would be a fool if he were not convulsed by it.

Precisely the same thing happens with us. We look at and go into raptures over a picture, because it is by a Royal Academician who has been knighted on account of his brilliant successes. We are charmed at a cantata, stifling our yawns, because we are told by the art critics who are paid to puff it that we are fools, and have no ears if we do not feel charmed by it. We rush to read a new novel, and find it vastly clever, because an eminent statesman has said on a postcard it has pleased him.

We laugh when told to laugh, condemn when told to condemn, and would stand on our heads if informed that it was bad for us to walk on our feet.

“There!” said Mr. Scantlebray, the valuer. “Them’s ears.”

“Crrrh!” went Mr. Obadiah, and the handkerchief, converted into a white bunny, shot from his hand up his left sleeve.

“I can’t drive, ’pon my honour; I’m too ill. You

have done for me to-day," said Scantlebray the elder, the valuer. "Now, young hopeful, what say you? Will you make a rabbit also? I'll give you a shilling if you will."

Thereupon Jamie took the kerchief and spread it out and began to fold it. Whenever he went wrong Mr. Obadiah made signs, either by elevation of his brows and a little shake of his head, or by pointing, and his elder brother caught him at it and protested. Obadiah was the drollest fellow, he was incorrigible, as full of mischief as an egg is full of meat. There was no trusting him for a minute when the eye was off him.

"Come, Scanty! I'll put you on your honour. Look the other way." But a moment after—"Ah, for shame! there you are at it again. Young hopeful, you see what a vicious brother I have; perfectly untrustworthy, but such a comical dog. Full of tricks up to the ears. You should see him make shadows on the wall. He can represent a pig eating out of a trough. You see the ears flap, the jaws move, the eye twinkle in appreciation of the barley-meal. It is to the life, and all done by the two hands—by one, I may say, for the other serves as trough. What! Done the rabbit?"

First rate! Splendid! Here is the shilling. But, honour bright, you don't deserve it; that naughty Scanty helped you."

"Please," said Jamie, timidly, "may I get out now and go home?"

"Go home! What for?"

"I want to show Ju my shilling."

"By ginger! that is too rich. Not a bit of it. Do you know Mistress Polgrean's sweetie shop?"

"But that's at Wadebridge."

"At Wadebridge; and why not? You will spend your shilling there. But look at my brother. It is distressing; his eyes are alight at the thoughts of the tartlets, and the sticks of peppermint sugar, and the almond rock. Are you partial to almond rock, or phing?"

Jamie's mind was at once engaged.

"Which is it to be? Gingerbreads or tartlets, almond rock or barley-sugar?"

"I think I'll have the peppermint," said Jamie.

"Then peppermint it shall be. And you will give me a little bit, and Scanty a bit, and take a little bit home to Ju, eh?"

“ Yes, sir.”

“ He’ll take a little bit home to Ju, Obadiah, old man.”

The funny brother nodded.

“ And the basket of shells ? ” asked the elder.

“ Yes, she is making little boxes with them to sell,” said Jamie.

“ I suppose I may have the privilege of buying some,” said Mr. Scantlebray senior. “ Oh, look at that brother of mine ! How he is screwing his nose about ! I say, old man, are you ill ? Upon my life, I believe he is laughing.”

Presently Jamie got restless.

“ Please, Mr. Scantlebray, may I get out ? Ju will be frightened at my being away so long.”

“ Poor Ju ! ” said Scantlebray the elder. “ But no—don’t you worry your mind about that. We passed Uncle Zachie, and he will tell her where you are, in good hands, or rather, nipped between most reliable knees—my brother’s and mine. Sit still. I can’t stop Juno ; we’re going down-hill now, and if I stopped Juno she would fall. You must wait—wait till we get to Mrs. Polgrean’s.” Then, after chuckling to himself,

Scantlebray senior said, "Obadiah, old man, I wonder what Missie Ju is thinking? I wonder what she will say, eh?" Again he chuckled. "No place in your establishment for that party, eh?"

The outskirts of Wadebridge were reached.

"Now may I get out?" said Jamie.

"Bless my heart! Not yet. Wait for Mrs. Polgrean's."

But presently Mrs. Polgrean's shop-window was passed.

"Oh, stop! stop!" cried Jamie. "We have gone by the sweetie shop."

"Of course we have," answered Scantlebray, senior. "I daren't trust that brother of mine in there; he has such a terrible sweet tooth. Besides, I want you to see the pig eating out of the trough. It will kill you. If it don't, I'll give you another shilling."

Presently he drew up at the door of a stiff, square-built house, with a rambling wing thrown out on one side. It was stuccoed and painted drab—drab walls, drab windows, and drab door.

"Now, then, young man," said Scantlebray, cheerily, "I'll unbuckle the strap and let you out. You come

in with me. This is my brother's mansion, roomy, pleasant, and comprehensive. You shall have a dish of tea."

"And then I may go home?"

"And then—we shall see; shan't we, Obadiah, old man?"

They entered the hall, and the door was shut and fastened behind them; then into a somewhat dreary room, with red flock paper on the walls, no pictures, leather-covered old mahogany chairs, and a book or two on the table—one of these a Bible.

Jamie looked wonderingly about him, a little disposed to cry. He was a long way from Polzeath, and Judith would be waiting for him and anxious, and the place into which he was ushered was not cheery, not inviting.

"Now then," said Mr. Scantlebray, "young hopeful, give me my shilling."

"Please, I'm going to buy some peppermint and burnt almonds for Ju and me as I go back."

"Oh, indeed! But suppose you do not have the chance?"

Jamie looked vacantly in his face, then into that of the stolid brother, who was not preparing to show him

the pig feeding out of a trough, nor was he calling for tea.

“Come,” said Scantlebray the elder; “suppose I take charge of that shilling till you have the chance of spending it, young man.”

“Please, I’ll spend it now.”

“Not a bit. You won’t have the chance. Do you know where you are?”

Jamie looked round in distress. He was becoming frightened at the altered tone of the valuer.

“My dear,” said Mr. Scantlebray, “you’re now an honourable inmate of my brother’s Establishment for Idiots, which you don’t leave till cured of imbecility. That shilling, if you please?”

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALL IS FOR THE BEST IN THE BEST OF WORLDS.

JUDITH returned to the cottage of Mr. Menaida, troubled in mind, for Aunt Dunes had been greatly incensed at the taking of the tobacco by Jamie, and not correspondingly gratified by the return of it so promptly by Judith. Miss Trevisa was a woman who magnified and resented any wrong done, but minimized and passed over as unworthy of notice whatever was generous, and every attempt made to repay an evil. Such attempts not only met with no favour from her, but were perverted in her crabbed mind into fresh affronts or injuries. That the theft of Jamie would not have been discovered, had not Judith spoken of it, and brought back what had been taken, was made of no account by Aunt Dionysia; she attacked Judith with

sharp reproach for allowing the boy to be mischievous, for indulging him and suffering him to run into danger through his inquisitiveness and thoughtlessness. "For," said Aunt Dionysia, "had the master or any of his men found out what Jamie had done, there is no telling how he might have been served." Then she had muttered, "If you will not take precautions, other folk must, and the boy must be put where he can be properly looked after and kept from interfering with the affairs of others."

On reaching Mr. Menaida's cottage, Judith called her brother, but as she did not receive an answer, she went in quest of him, and was met by the servant, Jump. "If you please, miss," said Jump, "there's been two gen'lemen here, as said they was come from Mrs. Trevisa, and said they was to pack and take off Master Jamie's clothes. And please, miss, I didn't know what to do—they was gen'lemen, and the master—he was out, and you was out, miss—and Master Jamie, he wasn't to home n'other."

"Taken Jamie's clothes!" repeated Judith, in amazement.

"Yes, miss, they brought a portmantle a-purpose;

and they'd a gig at the door; and they spoke uncommon pleasant, leastwise one o' them did."

"And where is Jamie? Has he not come home?"

"No, miss."

At that moment Mr. Menaida came in.

"What is it, Judith? Jamie? Where Jamie is?—why, having a ride, seated between the two Scantlebrays, in their gig. That is where he is."

"Oh, Mr. Menaida, but they have taken his clothes!"

"Whose clothes?"

"Jamie's."

"I do not understand."

"The two gentlemen came to this house when you and I were out, and told Jump that they were empowered by my aunt to pack up and carry off all Jamie's clothing, which they put into a portmanteau they had brought with them."

"And then picked up Jamie. He was sitting on the portmanteau," said Uncle Zachie; then his face became grave. "They said that they acted under authority from Mrs. Trevisa?"

"So Jump says."

“It can surely not be that he has been moved to the asylum.”

“Asylum, Mr. Menaida?”

“The idiot asylum.”

Judith uttered a cry, and staggered back against the wall.

“Jamie! my brother Jamie!”

“Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray has such a place at Wadebridge.”

“But Jamie is not an idiot.”

“Your aunt authorized them ——” mused Uncle Zachie. “Humph! you should see her about it. That is the first step, and ascertain whether she has done it, or whether they are acting with a high hand for themselves. I’ll look at my law-books—if the latter it would be actionable.”

Judith did not hesitate for a moment. She hastened to Pentyre. That her aunt had left Othello Cottage she was pretty sure, as she was preparing to leave it when Judith returned with the tobacco. Accordingly she took the road to Pentyre at once. Tears of shame and pain welled up in her eyes at the thought of her darling brother being beguiled away to be locked up

among the imbecile in a private establishment for the insane. Then her heart was contracted with anger and resentment at the scurvy trick played on her and him. She did not know that the Scantlebrays had been favoured by pure accident. She conceived that men base enough to carry off her brother would watch and wait for the opportunity when to do it unobserved and unopposed. She hardly walked. She ran till her breath failed her, and the rapid throbbing of her heart would no longer allow her to run. Her dread of approaching the Glaze after the declaration made by Captain Cruel was overwhelmed in her immediate desire to know something about Jamie, in her anguish of fear for him. On Coppinger she did not cast a thought — her mind was so fully engrossed in her brother.

She saw nothing of the Captain. She entered the house, and proceeded at once to her aunt's apartment. She found Miss Trevisa there, seated near the window, engaged on some chintz that she thought would do for the window at Othello Cottage, when she took possession of it. She had measured the piece, found that it was suitable, and was turning down a hem and tacking

it. It was a pretty chintz, covered with sprigs of nondescript pink and blue flowers.

Judith burst in on her, breathless, her brow covered with dew, her bosom heaving, her face white with distress, and tears standing on her eyelashes. She threw herself on her knees before Miss Trevisa, half crying out and half sobbing—

“ Oh, aunt ! they have taken him ! ”

“ Who have taken whom ? ” asked the elderly lady, coldly.

She raised her eyes and cast a look full of malevolence at Judith. She never had, did not, never would feel towards that girl as a niece. She hated her for her mother's sake, and now she felt an unreasonable bitterness against her, because she had fascinated Coppinger—perhaps, also, because in a dim fashion she was aware that she herself was acting towards the child in an unworthy, unmerciful manner, and we all hate those whom we wrong.

“ Auntie ! tell me it is not so. Mr. Scantlebray and his brother have carried my darling Jamie away.”

“ Well, and what of that ? ”

“ But—will they let me have him back ? ”

Miss Trevisa pulled at the chintz. "I will trouble you not to crumple this," she said.

"Aunt! dear aunt! you did not tell Mr. Scantlebray to take Jamie away from me?"

The old lady did not answer, she proceeded to release the material at which she was engaged from under the knees of Judith. The girl, in her vehemence, put her hands to her aunt's arms, between the elbows and shoulders, and held and pressed them back, and with imploring eyes looked into her hard face.

"Oh, auntie! you never sent Jamie to an asylum?"

"I must beg you to let go my arms," said Miss Trevisa. "This conduct strikes me as most indecorous towards one of my age and relationship."

She avoided Judith's eye, her brow wrinkled, and her lips contracted. The gall in her heart rose and overflowed.

"I am not ashamed of what I have done."

"Auntie!" with a cry of pain. Then Judith let go the old lady's arms, and clasped her hands over her eyes.

"Really," said Miss Trevisa, with asperity, "you are a most exasperating person. I shall do with the

boy what I see fit. You know very well that he is a thief."

"He never took anything before to-day—never—and you had settled this before you knew about the tobacco!" burst from Judith, in anger and with floods of tears.

"I knew that he has always been troublesome and mischievous, and he must be placed where he can be properly managed by those accustomed to such cases."

"There is nothing the matter with Jamie."

"You have humoured and spoiled him. If he is such a plague to all who know him, it is because he has been treated injudiciously. He is now with men who are experienced, and able to deal with the like of Jamie."

"Aunt, he must not be there. I promised my papa to be ever with him, and to look after him."

"Then it is a pity your father did not set this down in writing. Please to remember that I, and not you, am constituted his guardian, by the terms of the will."

"Oh, aunt! aunt! let him come back to me!"

Miss Trevisa shook her head.

"Then let me go to him!"

“Hoity-toity! here’s airs and nonsense. Really, Judith, you are almost imbecile enough to qualify for the asylum. But I cannot afford the cost of you both. Jamie’s cost in that establishment will be £70 in the year, and how much do you suppose that you possess?”

Judith remained kneeling upright, with her hands clasped, looking earnestly through her tears at her aunt.

“You have in all, between you, but £45 or £50. When the dilapidations are paid, and the expenses of the funeral, and the will-proving, and all that, I do not suppose you will be found to have a thousand pounds between you, and that put out to interest will not bring you more than I have said; so I shall have to make up the deficiency. That is not pleasing to me, you may well suppose. But I had rather pay £25 out of my poor income, than have the name of the family disgraced by Jamie.”

“Jamie will never, never disgrace the name. He is too good. And—it is wicked, it is cruel to put him where you have. He is not an idiot.”

“I am perhaps a better judge than you; so also is Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray, who has devoted his life to

the care and study of the imbecile. Your brother has weak intellects."

"He is not clever, that is all. With application——"

"He cannot apply his mind. He has no mind that can be got to be applied."

"Aunt, he's no idiot. He must not be kept in that place."

"You had best go back to Polzeath. I have decided on what I considered right. I have done my duty."

"It cannot be just. I will see what Mr. Menaida says. He must be released; if you will not let him out, I will."

Miss Trevisa looked up at her quickly between her half-closed lids; a bitter, cruel smile quivered about her lips. "If any one can deliver him, it will be you."

Judith did not understand her meaning, and Aunt Dionysia did not care at that time to further enlighten her thereon. Finding her aunt inflexible, the unhappy girl left Pentyre Glaze and hurried back to Polzeath, where she implored Mr. Menaida to accompany her to Wadebridge. Go there she would—she must—that same evening. If he would not attend her, she would go alone. She could not rest, she could not remain in

the house, till she had been to the place where Jamie was, and seen whether she could not release him thence by her entreaties, her urgency.

Mr. Menaida shook his head. But he was a kind-hearted old man, and was distressed at the misery of the girl, and would not hear of her making the expedition alone, as she could not well return before dark. So he assumed his rough and shabby beaver hat, put on his best cravat, and sallied forth with Judith upon her journey to Wadebridge, one that he assured her must be fruitless, and had better be postponed till the morrow.

“I cannot! I cannot!” she cried. “I cannot sleep, thinking of my darling brother in that dreadful place, with such people about him—he crying, frightened, driven mad by the strangeness of it all, and being away from me. I must go. If I cannot save him and bring him back with me, I can see him and console him, and bid him wait in patience and hope.”

Mr. Menaida, with a soft heart and a weak will, was hung about with scraps of old-world polish, scraps only. In him nothing was complete—here and there a bare place of rustic uncouthness, there patches of velvet

courtesy of the Queen Anne age; so, also, was he made up of fine culture, of classic learning alternating with boorish ignorance—here high principle, there none at all—a picture worked to a miniature in points, and in others rudely roughed in and neglected. Now he was moved as he had not been moved for years by the manifest unhappiness of the girl, and he was willing to do his utmost to assist her, but that utmost consisted in little more than accompanying her to Wadebridge and ringing at the house-bell of Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray's establishment. When it came to the interview that ensued with the proprietor of the establishment and gaoler of Jamie, he failed altogether. Judith and Uncle Zachie were shown into the dreary parlour, without ornaments, and presently to them entered Mr. Obadiah.

“Oh, sir! is he here? — have you got Jamie here?”

Mr. Scantlebray nodded his head, then went to the door and knocked with his fists against the wall. A servant maid appeared. “Send missus,” said he, and returned to the parlour.

Again Judith entreated to be told if her brother were

there with all the vehemence and fervour of her tattered heart.

Mr. Obadiah listened with stolid face and vacant eyes that turned from her to Mr. Menaida, and then back to her again. Presently an idea occurred to him, and his face brightened. He went to a sideboard, opened a long drawer, brought out a large book, thrust it before Judith, and said, "Pictures." Then, as she took no notice of the book, he opened it.

"Oh, please, sir," pleaded Judith, "I don't want that. I want to know about Jamie. I want to see him."

Then in at the door came a lady in black silk, with small curls about her brow. She was stout, but not florid.

"What!" said she, "my dear, are you the young lady whose brother is here? Don't you fret yourself. He is as comfortable as a chick in a feathered nest. Don't you worry your little self about him now. Now your good days have begun. He will not be a trouble and anxiety to you any more. He is well cared for. I dare be sworn he has given you many an hour of anxiety. Now, O be joyful! that is over, and you can

dance and play with a light heart. I have lifted the load off you, I and Mr. Scantlebray. Here he will be very comfortable and perfectly happy. I spare no pains to make my pets snug, and Scantlebray is inexhaustible in his ability to amuse them. He has a way with these innocents that is quite marvellous. Wait a while—give him and me a trial, and see what the result is. You may believe me as one of long and tried experience. It never does for amateurs—for relations—to undertake these cases; they don't know when to be firm, or when to yield. We do—it is our profession. We have studied the half-witted."

"But my brother is *not* half-witted."

"So you say, and so it becomes you to say. Never admit that there is imbecility or insanity in the family. You are quite right, my dear; you look forward to being married some day, and you know very well it might stand in the way of an engagement, were it supposed that you had idiocy in the family blood. It is quite right. I understand all that sort of thing. We call it nervous debility, and insanity we term nervous excitement. Scantlebray, my poppet, isn't it so?"

Mr. Obadiah nodded.

“You leave all care to us; thrust it upon our shoulders. They will bear it; and never doubt that your brother will be cared for in body and in soul. In body—always something nice and light for supper, tapioca, rice-pudding, batter; to-night, roly-poly. After that, prayers. We don’t feed high, but we feed suitably. If you like to pay a little extra, we will feed higher. Now, my dear, you take all as for the best, and rely on it everything is right.”

“But Jamie ought not to be locked up.”

“My dear, he is at school under the wisest and most experienced of teachers. You have mismanaged him. Now he will be treated professionally; and Mr. Scantlebray superintends not the studies only, but the amusements of the pupils. He has such a fund of humour in him.” Obadiah at once produced his pocket-handkerchief and began to fold it. “No, dear, no, ducky, no rabbit now! You fond thing, you! always thinking of giving entertainment to some one. No, nor the parson preaching either.” He was rolling his hands together and thrusting up his thumb as the representative of a sacred orator in his pulpit. “No, ducky darling! another time. My husband is quite a

godsend to the nervously prostrate. He can amuse them by the hour; he never wearies of it; he is never so happy as when he is entertaining them. You cannot doubt that your brother will be content in the house of such a man. Take my word for it, there is nothing like believing that all is for the best as it is. Our pupils will soon be going to bed. Rolly-poly and prayers, and then to bed—that is the order.”

“Oh, let me see Jamie now.”

“No, my dear. It would be injudicious. He is settling in; he is becoming reconciled, and it would disturb him, and undo what has already been done. Don't you say so, poppet?”

The poppet nodded his head.

“You see, this great authority agrees with me. Now, this evening Jamie and the others shall have an extra treat. They shall have the pig eating out of the trough. There—what more can you desire? As soon as lights are brought in, then roolly-poly, prayers, and the pig and the trough. Another time you shall see him. Not to-night. It is inadvisable. Take my word for it, your brother is as happy as a boy can be. He has found plenty of companions of the same condition as himself.”

“But he is *not* an idiot.”

“My dear, we know all about that; very nice and sweet for you to say so—isn't it, duckie?”

The duckie agreed it was so.

“There is the bell. My dear, another time. You will promise to come and see me again? I have had such a delightful talk with you. Good-night, good-night. ‘All is for the best in the best of worlds.’ Put that maxim under your head and sleep upon it.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NIGHT EXCURSION.

SOME people are ever satisfied with what is certain to give themselves least trouble, especially if that something concerns other persons.

Mr. Menaida was won over by the volubility of Mrs. Scantlebray and the placidity of Mr. Scantlebray to the conviction that Jamie was in the very best place he could possibly be in. A lady who called Judith "my dear" and her husband "duckie" must have a kindly heart, and a gentleman like Mr. Obadiah, so full of resources, could not fail to divert and gratify the minds of those under his charge, and banish care and sorrow. And as Mr. Menaida perceived that it would be a difficult matter to liberate Jamie from the establishment where he was, and as it was an easy matter to conclude that the establishment was admirably adapted to Jamie,

he was content that Aunt Dionysia had chosen the wisest course in putting him there, and that it would be to the general advantage to cherish this opinion. For, in the first place, it would pacify Judith, and then, by pacifying her, would give himself none of that inconvenience, that running to and fro between Polzeath and Wadebridge, that consultation of law-books, that correspondence, that getting of toes and fingers into hot water, likely to result from the impatience, the unflagging eagerness of Judith to liberate her brother.

Accordingly Uncle Zachie used his best endeavours to assure Judith that Jamie certainly was happy, had never been so happy in his life before, and that, under the treatment of so kind and experienced a man as Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray, there was reason to believe that in a short time Jamie would issue from under his tuition a light so brilliant as to outshine the beacon on Trevoise Head.

Judith was unconvinced. Love is jealous and timorous. She feared lest all should not be as was represented. There was an indefinable something in Mrs. Scantlebray that roused her suspicion. She could not endure that others should step into the place of

responsibility towards Jamie she had occupied so long, and which she had so solemnly assured her father she would never abandon. Supposing that Scantlebray and his wife were amiable and considerate persons, might they not so influence the fickle Jamie as to displace her from his affections and insinuate themselves in her room?

But it was not this mainly that troubled her. She was tormented with the thought of the lonely, nervous child in the strange house, among strange people, in desolation of heart and deadly fear.

Whenever he had become excited during the day he was sleepless at night, and had to be soothed and coaxed into slumber. On such occasions she had been wont, with the infinite, inexhaustible patience of true love, to sit by his bed, pacifying his alarms, allaying his agitation, singing to him, stroking his hair, holding his hand, till his eyes closed. And how often, just as he seemed about to drop asleep, had he become again suddenly awake, through some terror, or some imagined discomfort? then all the soothing process had to be gone through again, and it had always been gone through without a murmur or an impatient word.

Now Jamie was alone—or perhaps worse than alone—in a dormitory of idiots, whose strange ways filled him with terror, and his dull mind would be working to discover how he came to be there, how it was that his Ju was not with him. Who would lull his fears, who sing to him old familiar strains? Would any other hand rest on the hot brow and hold it down on the pillow?

Judith looked up to heaven, to the stars already glimmering there. She was not hearkening to the talk of Uncle Zachie: she was thinking her own thoughts. She was indeed walking back to Polzeath; but her mind was nailed to that dull drab house in the suburbs of Wadebridge with the brass plate on the door, inscribed, “Mr. Scantlebray, Surgeon.” As her eyes were raised to the stars, she thought of her father. He was above, looking down on her, and it seemed to her that in the flicker of the stars she saw the trouble in her father’s face at the knowledge that his children were parted, and his poor little half-bright boy was fallen among those who had no love for him, might have no patience with his waywardness, would not make allowance for his infirmities.

She sobbed, and would not be comforted by Mr. Menaida's assurances. Tired, foot-weary, but more tired and weary in heart and mind, she reached the cottage. She could not sleep; she was restless. She sought Jamie's room, and seated herself on the chair by his little bed, and sobbed far on into the night. Her head ached, as did her burning and blistered feet; and as she sat she dozed off, then awoke with a start, so distinctly did she seem to hear Jamie's voice—his familiar tone when in distress—crying, "Ju! Come to me, Ju!" So vividly did the voice sound to her that she could not for a moment or two shake off the conviction that she had in reality heard him. She thought that he must have called her. He must be unhappy. What were those people doing to him? Were they tormenting the poor little frightened creature? Were they putting him into a dark room by himself, and was he nearly mad with terror? Were they beating him, because he cried out in the night and disturbed the house?

She imagined him sitting up on a hard bed, shivering with fear, looking round him in the dark, and screaming for her—and she could not help him.

“ Oh, Jamie ! ” she cried, and threw herself on her knees and put her hands over her eyes to shut out the horrible sight, over her ears to close them to the piercing cry. “ They will drive him mad ! Oh, papa ! my papa ! what will you say to me ? Oh, my Jamie ! what can I do for you ? ”

She was half mad herself, mad with fancies, conjured up by the fever of distress into which she had worked herself. What could she do ? She could not breathe in that room. She could not breathe in the house. She could not remain so far from Jamie—and he crying for her. His voice rang still in her ears. It sounded in her heart, it drew her irresistibly away. If she could but be outside that drab establishment in the still night, to listen, and hear if all were quiet within, or whether Jamie were calling, shrieking for her. He would cry himself into fits. He would become really deranged, unless he were pacified. Oh ! those people !—she imagined they were up, not knowing what to do with the boy, unable to soothe him, and were now wishing that she were there, wishing they had not sent her away.

Judith was in that condition which is one of half craze

through brooding on her fears, through intense sympathy with the unhappy boy so ruthlessly spirited away, through fever of the blood, caused by long-protracted nervous strain, through over-weariness of mind and body. Jamie's distress, his need for her became an idea that laid hold of her, that could not be dispelled, that tortured her into recklessness. She could not lie on her bed, she could not rest her head for one moment. She ran to the window, panting, and smoked the glass with her burning breath, so that she could not see through it.

The night was still, the sky clear, and there were stars in it. Who would be abroad at that time? What danger would ensue to her if she went out and ran back to Wadebridge? If any foot were to be heard on the road, she could hide. She had gone out at night in storm to save Cruel Coppinger—should she not go out in still starlight to aid her own twin-brother, if he needed her? Providence had shielded her before—it would shield her now.

The house was quiet. Mr. Menaida had long ago gone to bed, and was asleep. His snores were usually audible at night through the cottage. Jump was asleep, sound

in sleep as any hard-worked sewing-wench. Judith had not undressed, had not taken off her shoes ; she had wandered, consumed by restlessness, between her own room and that of her brother.

It was impossible for her to remain there. She felt that she would die of imaginings of evil unless she were near Jamie, unless there were naught but a wall between him and her.

Judith descended the stairs and once again went forth alone into the night, not now to set her face seaward, but landward ; before she had gone with a defined aim in view, to warn Coppinger of his danger, now she was moved by a vague suspicion of evil.

The night was calm, but there was summer lightning on the horizon, attended by no thunder, a constant flicker, sometimes a flare, as though some bonfire were kindled beyond the margin of the world, that was being stirred and added to. The air was close.

Judith had no one to look to in the world to help her and Jamie—not her aunt, her sole relative, it was she who had sent her brother to this place of restraint ; not Mr. Menaida, he had not the moral courage and energy of purpose to succour her in her effort to release Jamie ;

not Captain Coppinger—him she dare not ask, lest he should expect too much in return. The hand of misfortune was heavy on the girl; if anything was to be done to relieve the pressure, she must do it herself.

As she was going hastily along the lane she suddenly halted. She heard some one a little way before her. There was no gate near by which she could escape. The lane was narrow, and the hedges low, so as not to afford sufficient shadow to conceal her. By the red summer flashes she saw a man reeling towards her round the corner. His hat was on one side of his head, and he lurched first to one side of the lane, then to the other.

“There went three trav’lers over the moor—

Ri-tiddle-riddle-rol, huph ! said he.

Three trav’lers over the moor so green,

The one sang high, the third sang low,

Ri-tiddle-riddle-rol, huph ! said he,

And the second he trolled between.”

Then he stood still.

“Huph ! huph !” he shouted. “Some one else go on, I’m done for—‘Ri-tiddle-de.’”

He saw Judith by the starlight and by the flicker of

the lightning, and put his head on one side and capered towards her with arms extended, chirping—" 'Ri-tiddle-riddle-rol, huph! said he.' "

Judith started on one side, and the drunken man pursued her, but in so doing, stumbled, and fell sprawling on the ground. He scrambled to his feet again, and began to swear at her and send after her a volley of foul and profane words. Had he contented himself with this it would have been bad enough, but he also picked up a stone and threw it. Judith felt a blow on her head, and the lightning flashes seemed to be on all sides of her, and then great black clouds to be rising like smoke out of the earth about her. She staggered into the hedge, and sank on her knees.

But fear lest the tipsy ruffian should pursue her nerved her to make an effort to escape. She quickly rose and ran along the lane, turned the corner, and ran on till her feet would no longer bear her, and her breath failed. Then, looking back, and seeing that she was not followed, she seated herself, breathless, and feeling sick, in the hedge, where a glow-worm was shining, with a calm, steady light, very different from the flicker of the stars above.

As she there sat, she was conscious of something warm on her neck, and putting her hand up, felt that it was moist. She held her fingers to the faint glow of the worm in the grass; there was a dark stain on her hand, and she was sure that it was blood.

She felt her head swim, and knew that in another moment she would lose consciousness, unless she made an effort to resist. Hastily she bound a white handkerchief about her head where wounded by the stone, to stay the flow, and walked resolutely forward.

There was now a shadow stealing up the sky to the south, and obscuring the stars, a shadow behind which danced and wavered the electrical light, but Judith heard no thunder, she had not the leisure to listen for it; all her anxiety was to reach Wadebridge. But the air, the oppressively sultry air, was charged with sound, the mutter and growl of the Atlantic. The ocean, never at rest, ever gives forth a voice, but the volume of its tone varies. Now it was loud and threatening, loud and threatening as it had been on that afternoon when Judith sat with her father in the rectory garden, tossing guelder-roses. Then, the air had been still, but burdened with the menace of the sea. So was it

now at midnight; the ocean felt the influence of the distant storm that was playing far away to the south.

Judith could not run now. Her feet were too sore, her strength had given way. Resolute though her will might be, it could not inspire with masculine strength the fragile little body, recently recovered from sickness. But it carried her into the suburbs of Wadebridge, and in the starlight she reached the house of Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray, and stood before it, looking up at it despairingly. It was not drab in colour now, it was lampblack against a sky that flashed in the russet-light. The kerchief she had tied about her head had become loose. Still looking at the ugly, gloomy house, she put up her arms and rebound it, knotting the ends more tightly, using care not to cover her ears, as she was intent to hear the least sound that issued from the asylum. But for some time she could hear nothing save the rush of her blood in her ears, foaming, hissing, like the tide entering a bay over reefs. With this was mingled the mutter of the Atlantic, beyond the hills—and now—yes, certainly now—the rumble of remote thunder.

Judith had stood on the opposite side of the street looking up at Scantlebray's establishment ; she saw no light anywhere. Now she drew near and crept along the walls. There was a long wing, with its back to the street, without a window in the wall, and she thought it probable that the inmates of the asylum were accommodated therein, a dormitory upstairs, play- or school-rooms below. There Jamie must be. The only windows to this wing opened into the garden ; and consequently Judith stole along the garden wall, turned the angle, down a little lane, and stood listening. The wall was high, and the summit encrusted with broken glass. She could see the glass prongs by the flicker of the lightning. She could not possibly see over the wall ; the lane was too narrow for her to go back far, and the wall on the further side too high to climb. Not a sound from within reached her ears.

In the still night she stood holding her breath.

Then a scream startled her. It was the cry of a gull flying inland.

If a gull's cry could be heard, then surely that of her brother, were he awake and unhappy, and wanting her.

She went further down the wall, and came on a small garden gate in it, fastened, locked from within. It had a stone step. On that she sank, and laid her head in her hands.

CHAPTER XXV.

FOUND.

STRANGE mystery of human sympathy ! inexplicable, yet very real. Irrational, yet very potent. The young mother has accepted an invitation to a garden-party. She knows that she never looked better than at present, with a shade of delicacy about her. She has got a new bonnet that is particularly becoming, and which she desires to wear in public. She has been secluded from society for several months, and she longs to meet her friends again. She knows that she is interesting, and believes herself to be more interesting than she really is. So she goes. She is talking, laughing, a little flushed with pleasure, when suddenly she becomes grave, the hand that holds the plate of raspberries and cream trembles. All her pleasure is gone.

She knows that baby is crying. Her eye wanders in quest of her husband, she runs to him, touches his arm, says—

“Do order the carriage; baby is crying.”

It is all fiddle-de-dee. Baby has the best of nurses, the snuggest, daintiest little cot; has a fresh-opened tin of condensed Swiss milk. Reason tells her that; but no! and nurse cannot do anything to pacify the child, baby is crying, nurse is in despair.

In like manner now did Judith argue with herself, without being able to convince her heart. Her reason spoke and said to her—

No sound of cries comes from the asylum. There is no light in any window. Every inmate is asleep, Jamie among them. He does not need you. He is travelling in dreamland. The Scantlebrays have been kind to him. The lady is a good, motherly body; the gentleman's whole soul is devoted to finding amusement and entertainment for the afflicted creatures under his care. He has played tricks before Jamie, made shadow-pictures on the wall, told funny stories, made jacks-in-the-box with his hands, and Jamie has laughed till he was tired, and his heavy eyes closed

with a laugh not fully laughed out on his lips. The Scantlebrays are paid £70 for taking care of Jamie, and £70 in Judith's estimation was a very princely sum. For £70 per annum Mr. Scantlebray would corruscate into his richest fun, and Mrs. Scantlebray's heart overflow with warmest maternal affection.

But it was in vain that Judith thus reasoned, her heart would not be convinced. An indescribable unrest was in her, and would not be laid. She knew by instinct that Jamie wanted her, was crying for her, was stretching out his hands in the dark for her.

As she sat on the step not only did reason speak, but judgment also. She could do nothing there. She had acted a foolish part in coming all that way in the dark, and without a chance of effecting any deliverance to Jamie now she had reached her destination. She had committed an egregious error in going such a distance from home, from any one who might serve as protector to her in the event of danger, and there were other dangers she might encounter than having stones thrown at her by drunken men. If the watch were to find her there, what explanation of her presence could she give? Would they take her away and lock her up for

the rest of the night? They could not leave her there. Large, warm drops, like tears from angels' eyes, fell out of heaven upon her folded hands, and on her bowed neck.

She began to feel chilled after having been heated by her walk, so she rose, and found that she had become stiff. She must move about, however sore and weary her feet might be.

She had explored the lane as far as was needful. She could not see from it into the house, the garden, and playground. Was it possible that there was a lane on the further side of the house which would give her the desired opportunity?

Judith resolved to return by the way she had come, down the lane into the main street, then to walk along the front of the house, and explore the other side. As she was descending the lane she noticed about twenty paces from the door, on the further side, a dense mass of Portugal laurel that hung over the opposite wall, casting a shadow of inky blackness into the lane. This she considered might serve her as shelter when the threatening storm broke and the rain poured down. She walked through this shadow, and would have

entered the street, but that she perceived certain dark objects passing noiselessly along it. By the flashes of lightning she could distinguish men with laden asses, and one she saw turn to enter the lane where she was. She drew back hastily into the blot cast by the bush that swung its luxuriance over the wall, and drew as closely back to the wall as was possible. Thus she could not be seen, for the reflection of the lightning would not fall on her; every glare made the shadow seem the deeper. Though concealed herself, and wholly invisible, she was able to distinguish a man with an ass passing by, and then halting at the door in the wall that surrounded Mr. Obediah's tenement. There the man knocked, and uttered a peculiar whistle. As there ensued no immediate answer he knocked and whistled again, whereupon the door was opened, and a word or two was passed.

“How many do you want, sir?”

“Four.”

“Any to help to carry the half-ankers?”

“No.”

“Well, no odds. I'll carry one and you the t'other. We'll make two journeys, that's all. I can't leave

Neddy for long, but I'll go with you to your house door."

Probably the person addressed nodded a reply in the darkness, he made no audible answer.

"Which is it, Mr. Obadiah. Rum or brandy?"

"Brandy."

"Right you are, then. These are brandy. You won't take three brandies and one rum?"

"Yes."

"All right, sir; lead the way. It's deuced dark."

Judith knew what this signified. Some of the householders of Wadebridge were taking in their supplies of spirits from the smugglers. Owing to the inconvenience of it being unlawful to deal with these men for such goods, they had to receive their purchases at night, and with much secrecy. There were watchmen at Wadebridge, but on such nights they judiciously patrolled another quarter of the town than that which received its supplies. The watchmen were municipal officials, and were not connected with the excise, had no particular regard for the Inland Revenue, anyhow, owed no duties to the officers of the coast-

guard. Their superior was the mayor, and the mayor was fond of buying his spirits at the cheapest market.

Both men disappeared. The door was left open behind them. The opportunity Judith had desired had come. Dare she seize it? For a moment she questioned her heart, then she resolutely stepped out of the shadow of the Portugal laurel, brushed past the patient ass, entered the grounds of Mr. Scantlebray's establishment through the open garden door, and drew behind a syringa bush to consider what further step she should take. In another moment both men were back.

“You are sure you don't mind one rum?”

“No.”

“Right you are, then; I'll have it for you direct. The other kegs are at t'other end of the lane. You come with me, and we'll have 'em down in a jiffy.”

Judith heard both men pass out of the door. She looked towards the house. There was a light low down in a door opening into the garden or yard where she was.

Not a moment was to be lost. As soon as the last

kegs were brought in the house door would be locked, and though she had entered the garden she would be unable to penetrate to the interior of the asylum. Without hesitation, strong in her earnest purpose to help Jamie to the utmost of her power, and grasping at every chance that offered, she hastened, cautiously indeed, but swiftly, to the door whence the light proceeded. The light was but a feeble one, and cast but a fluttering ray upon the gravel. Judith was careful to walk where it could not fall on her dress.

The whole garden front of the house was not before her. She was in a sort of gravelled yard, with some bushes against the walls. The main block of the house lay to her right, and the view of it was intercepted by a wall. Clearly the garden space was divided, one portion for the house, and another, that into which she had entered, for the wing. That long wing rose before her, with its windows all dark above, and the lower, or ground floor, also dark. Only from the door issued the light, and she saw that a guttering tallow candle was set there on the floor.

Hastily she drew back. She heard feet on the gravel. The men were returning. Mr. Obadiah

Scantlebray and the smuggler, each laden with a small cask of spirits.

“Right you are,” said the man, as he set his keg down in the passage; “that’s yours—and I could drink your health, sir.”

“You wouldn’t—prefer——?”

Mr. Scantlebray made contortions with his hands between the candle and the wall, and threw a shadow on the surface of plaster.

“No thanky, sir. I’d prefer a shilling.”

Mr. Scantlebray fumbled in his pocket, grunted—

“Umph! purse upstairs.” Felt again. “No.” Groped inside the breast of his waistcoat. “Another time—not forget.”

The man muttered something not complimentary, and turned to go through the yard.

“Must lock door,” said Mr. Obadiah, and went after him.

Now was Judith’s last chance. She took it at once; the moment the backs of the two men were turned she darted into the passage and stood back against the door out of the flare of the candle.

The passage was a sort of hall, with slated floor, the

walls plastered, and whitewashed at one time, but the wash and plaster had been picked off to about five feet from the floor wherever not strongly adhesive, giving a diseased and sore look to the wall. The slates of the floor were broken and dirty.

Judith looked along the hall for a place to which she could retreat on the return of the proprietor of the establishment. She had entered that portion of the building tenanted by the unhappy patients. The meanness of the passage, the picked walls, the situation on one side of the comfortable residence, showed her this. A door there was on the right hand, ajar, that led into the private dwelling-house, but into that Judith did not care to enter. One further down on the left probably gave access to some apartment devoted to the "pupils," as Mrs. Scantlebray called the patients.

There was, however, another door that was open, and from it descended a flight of brick steps to what Judith conjectured to be the cellars. At the bottom a second candle, in a tin candlestick, was guttering and flickering in the draught that blew in at the yard door, and descended to this underground story. It was

obvious to the girl that Mr. Scantlebray was about to carry or roll the kegs he had just acquired down the brick steps to his cellar. For that purpose he had set a candle there. It would not, therefore, do for her in her attempt to avoid him to descend to this lower region. She must pass the door that gave access to the cellars, a door usually locked, as she judged, for a large iron key stood in the lock, and enter the room the door of which opened further down the passage.

She was drawing her skirts together so as to slip past the candle on the passage floor for this purpose, when her heart stood still as though she had received a blow on it. She heard, proceeding from somewhere beneath, down those steps, a moan, then a feeble cry of, "Ju! where are you? Ju! Ju! Ju!"

She all but cried out herself. A gasp of pain and horror did escape her, and then, without a thought of how she could conceal herself, how avoid Scantlebray, she ran down the steps to the cellars.

On reaching the bottom she found that there were four doors, two of which had square holes cut in them, but with iron bars before these openings. The door of one of the others, one on the left, was open, and she

could see casks and bottles. It was a wine and spirit cellar, and the smell of wine issued from it.

She stood panting, frightened, fearing what she might discover, doubting whether she had heard her brother's voice, or whether she was a prey to fancy.

Then again she heard a cry and a moan. It issued from the nearest cell on her right hand.

“Jamie! my Jamie!” she cried.

“Ju! Ju!”

The door was hasped, with a crook let into a staple, so that it might, if necessary, be padlocked. But now it was simply shut, and a wooden peg was thrust through the eye of the crook.

She caught up the candle, and with trembling hand endeavoured to unfasten the door; but so agitated was she, so blinded with horror, that she could not do so till she had put down the candle again. Then she forced the peg from its place and raised the crook. She stooped and took up the candle once more, and then, with a short breath and a contraction of the breast, threw open the door, stepped in, and held up the light.

The candle flame irradiated what was but a cellar compartment, vaulted with brick, once whitewashed,

now dirty with cobwebs and accumulated dust and damp-stains. It had a stone shelf on one side, on which lay a broken plate and some scraps of food. Against the further wall was a low truckle bed with a mattress on it and some rags of blanket. Huddled on this lay Jamie, his eyes dilated with terror, and yet red with weeping; all his clothes had been removed, except his shirt; his long red-gold hair had lost its gloss and beauty, it was wet with sweat and knotted; the boy's face was ghastly in the flickering light.

Judith dropped the candle on the floor, and rushed with outstretched arms, and a cry, piercing, but beaten back on her by the walls and vault of the cell, and caught the frightened boy to her heart.

“Jamie; oh, my Jamie!—my Jamie!”

She swayed herself crying on the bed, holding him to her, with no thought, her whole being absorbed in a spasm of intensest, most harrowing pain.

The tallow candle was on the slate floor, fallen, melting, spluttering, flaring. And in the door, holding the brandy keg upon his shoulder, stood, with open eyes and open mouth, Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ESCAPED.

MR. OBADIAH stood open-mouthed, staring at the twins clasped in each other's arms, unable at first to understand what he saw. Then a suspicion entered his dull brain, he uttered a growl, put down the keg, his heavy brows contracted, he shut his mouth, drawing in the lips so that they disappeared, and he clenched his hands.

“Wait—I'll beat you!” he said.

The upset candle was on the floor, now half molten into a pond of tallow, burning with a lambent blue flicker, trembling on extinction, then shooting up in a yellow flare.

In that uncertain, changeful, upward light the face of the man looked threatening, remorseless, so that Judith,

in a paroxysm of fear for her brother and herself, dropped on her knee, and caught at the tin candlestick as the only weapon of defence accessible. It was hot, and burnt her fingers, but she did not let go; and as she stood up, the dissolved candle fell from it among some straw that littered the pavement. This at once kindled and blazed up into golden flame.

For a moment the cell was full of light. Mr. Obadiah immediately saw the danger. His casks of brandy were hard by, the fume of alcohol was in the air; if the fire spread and caught his stores, a volume of flame would sweep up the cellar stairs and set his house on fire. He hastily sprang in, and danced about the cell, stamping furiously at the ignited whisps. Judith, who saw him rush forward, thought he was about to strike her or Jamie, and raised the tin candlestick in self-defence; but when she saw him engaged in trampling out the fire, tearing at the bed to drag away the blankets with which to smother the embers, she drew Jamie aside beyond his reach, sidled, with him clinging to her, along the wall, and, by a sudden spring, reached the passage, slammed the door, fastened the hasp, and had the gaoler secured in his own gaol.

For a moment Mr. Scantlebray was unaware that he was a prisoner, so busily engaged was he in trampling out the fire, but the moment he did realize the fact he flung himself with all his force against the door.

“Let me out!”

Judith looked round her. There was now no light in the cellar but the feeble glimmer that descended the stairs from the candle above. The flame of that was now burning steadily, for the door opening into the yard had been shut, and the draught was excluded.

In dragging Jamie along with her Judith had drawn forth a scanty blanket that was about his shoulders; she wrapped it round the boy.

“Let me out!” roared Scantlebray. “Don’t understand. Fun—rollicking fun!”

Judith paid no attention to his bellow. She was concerned only to escape with Jamie. She was well aware that her only chance was by retaining Mr. Obadiah where he was.

“Let me out!” again shouted the prisoner, and he threw himself furiously against the door. But though it jarred on its hinges and made the hasp leap, he could not break it down. Nevertheless, so big and strong

was the man, that it was by no means improbable that his repeated efforts might start a staple, or snap a hinge band, and he and the door might come together crashing down into the passage between the cells.

Judith drew Jamie up the steps, and, on reaching the top, shut the cellar door. Below, Mr. Scantlebray roared, swore, shouted, and beat against the door; but now his voice and the sound of his blows were muffled, and would almost certainly be inaudible in the dwelling-house.

No wonder that Judith had not heard the cries of her brother. It had never occurred to her that the hapless victims of the keeper of the asylum might be chastised, imprisoned, variously maltreated in regions underground, whence no sounds of distress might reach the street, and apprise the passers-by that all was not laughter within.

Standing in the passage or hall above, Judith said—
“Oh, Jamie! where are your clothes?”

The boy looked into her face with a vacant and distressed expression. He could not answer, he did not even understand her question, so stupefied was he by his terrors and the treatment he had undergone.

Judith took the candle from the floor and searched the hall. Nothing was there save Mr. Scantlebray's coat, which he had removed and cast across one of the kegs when he prepared to convey them down to his cellar. Should she take that? She shook her head at the thought. She would not have it said that she had taken anything out of the house, except only—as that was an extreme necessity—the blanket wrapped about Jamie. She looked into the room that opened beyond the cellar door. It was a great bare apartment, containing nothing save a table and some forms.

“Jamie,” she said, “we must get away from this place as we are. There is no help for it. Do you not know where your clothes were put?”

He shook his head. He clung to her with both arms, as though afraid if he held by but one that she would slip away and vanish; he was as one drowning, clinging to the only support that sustained him from sinking.

“Come, Jamie; it cannot be otherwise!” she set down the candle, opened the door into the yard, and issued forth into the night, along with the boy. The clouds had broken, and poured down their deluge of warm thunder-rain. In the dark Judith was unable to

find her direction at once, she reached the boundary wall where was the door.

Jamie uttered a cry of pain.

“What is it, dear?”

“The stones cut my feet.”

She felt along the wall with one hand till she touched the jamb, then pressed against the door itself. It was shut. She groped for the lock. No key was in it. She could as little escape from that enclosure as she could enter into it from without. The door was very solid, and the lock big and secure. What was to be done? Judith considered for a moment, standing in the pouring rain, through which the lightning flashed obscurely, illuminating nothing. It seemed to her that there was but one course open to her—to return and obtain the key from Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray. But it would be no easy matter to induce him to surrender it.

“Jamie, will you remain at the door? Here under the wall is some shelter. I must go back.”

But the boy was frightened at the prospect of being deserted.

“Then, Jamie, will you come back with me to the house?”

No, he would not do that.

“I must go for the key, dearest,” she said, coaxingly. “I cannot open the door so that we can escape unless I have the key. Will you do something for Ju? Sit here on the step, where you are somewhat screened from the rain, and sing to me something—one of our old songs—‘A jolly goshawk, and his wings were grey’? Sing that, that I may hear your voice and find my way back to you. Oh—and here, Jamie, your feet are just the size of mine, and so you shall pull on my shoes. Then you will be able to run alongside of me and not hurt your soles.”

With a little persuasion she induced him to do as she asked. She took off her own shoes and gave them to him, then went across the yard to where was the house. She discovered the door by a little streak of light below it and above the well-trampled and deeply worn threshold stone. She opened the door, took up the candle, and again descended the steps to the cellar floor. On reaching the bottom she held up the light, and saw that the door was still sound; at the square, barred opening was the red face of Mr. Scantlebray.

“Let me out!” he roared.

“ Give me the key of the garden door.”

“ Will you let me out if I do ? ”

“ No ; but this I promise : as soon as I have escaped from your premises I will knock and ring at your front door till I have roused the house, and then you will be found and released. By that time we shall have got well away.”

“ I will not give you the key.”

“ Then here you remain,” said Judith, and began to re-ascend the steps. It had occurred to her, suddenly, that very possibly the key she desired might be in the pocket of the coat Mr. Scantlebray had cast off before descending to the cellar. She would hold no further communication with him till she had ascertained this. He yelled after her—

“ Let me out, and you shall have the key.”

But she paid no attention to his promise. On reaching the top of the stairs she again shut the door, and took up his coat. She searched the pockets. No key was in them. She must go to him once more.

He began to shout as he saw the flicker of the candle approach, “ Here is the key ; take it, and do as you said.”

His hand, a great coarse hand, was thrust through

the opening in the door, and in it was the key she required.

“Very well,” said she, “I will do as I undertook.”

She put her hand, the right hand, up to receive the key; in her left was the candlestick. Suddenly he let go the key, that clinked down on the floor outside, and made a clutch at her hand and caught her by the wrist. She grasped the bar in the little window, or he would have drawn her hand in, dragged her by the arm up against the door and broken her bones. He now held her wrist, and with his strong hand strove to wrench her fingers from their clutch.

“Unhasp the door!” he howled at her.

She did not answer otherwise than with a cry of pain, as he worked with his hand at her wrist, and verily it seemed as though the fragile bones must snap under his grasp.

“Unhasp the door!” he roared again.

With his great fingers and thick nails he began to thrust at and ploughed her knuckles. He had her by the wrist with one hand, and he was striving to loosen her hold of the bar with the other.

“Unhasp the door!” he yelled a third time, “or I’ll break every bone in your fingers!” and he brought his

fist down on the side of the door to show how he would pound them by a blow. If he did not do this at once it was because he dreaded by too heavy a blow to strike the bar, and wound himself whilst crushing her hand.

She could not hold the iron stancheon for more than another instant, and when her strength failed, then he would drag her arm in, as a lion in its cage, when it has laid hold of the incautious visitor, tears him to itself through the bars.

Then she brought the candle flame up against his hand that grasped her wrist, and it played round it. He uttered a scream of pain and let go for one moment ; but that moment sufficed. She was free. The key was on the floor, she stooped to pick it up, but her fingers were as though paralysed, she was forced to take it with the left hand, and leave the candle on the floor. Then, holding the key, she ran up the steps, ran out into the yard, and heard her brother waiting. "Ju, I want you ! Where are you, Ju ?" Guided by his cries she reached the door. The key she put into the lock, and with a little effort turned it. The door opened. She and Jamie were free.

The door shut behind them. They were in the dark

lane under a pouring rain. But Judith thought nothing of the darkness, nothing of the rain. She threw her arms round her brother, put her wet cheek against his, and burst into tears.

“ My Jamie! Oh, my Jamie ! ”

But the deliverance of her brother was not complete, she must bring him back to Polzeath. She could allow herself but a moment for the relief of her heart, and then she caught him to her side, and pushed on with him along the lane till they entered the street. Here she stood for a moment in uncertainty. Was she bound to fulfil her engagement to Mr. Obadiah? She had obtained the key, but he had behaved to her with treachery. He had not intended the key to be other than a bait to draw her within his clutch, that he might torture her into opening the door of his cell. Nevertheless, she had the key, and Judith was too honourable to take advantage of him. With Jamie still clinging to her, she went up the pair of steps to the front door, rang the night bell, and knocked long and loud. Then, all at once, her strength that had lasted gave way, and she sank on the doorstep, without indeed losing consciousness, but losing in one instant all power of doing or thinking, or striving any more for Jamie or for herself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT HER FEET.

A WINDOW overhead was thrown open, and a voice, that Judith recognized as that of Mrs. Obadiah Scantlebray, called : " Who is there ? What is wanted ? "

The girl could not answer. The power to speak was gone from her. It was as though all her faculties, exerted to the full, had at once given way. She could not rise from the step on which she had sunk : the will to make the effort was gone. Her head had fallen against the jamb of the door, and the knot of the kerchief was between her head and the wood, and it hurt her ; but even the will to lift her hands and shift the bandage one inch aside was not present.

The mill-wheel revolves briskly, throwing the foaming water out of its buckets with a lively rattle, then its movement slackens, it strains, the buckets fill and

over-spill, but the wheel seems to be reduced to stationariness. That stress-point is but for a moment, then the weight of the water overbalances the strain, and whirr! round plunges the wheel, and the bright, foaming water is whisked about, and the buckets disgorge their contents.

It is the same with the wheel of human life. It has its periods of rapid and glad revolution, and also its moments of supreme tension, when it is all but overstrung, when its movement is hardly perceptible. The strain put on Judith's faculties had been excessive, and now those faculties failed her, failed her absolutely. The prostration might not last long—it might last forever. It is so sometimes when there has been over-exertion: thought stops, will ceases to act, sensation dies into numbness, the heart beats slow—slower—then perhaps stops finally.

It was not quite come to that with Judith. She knew that she had rushed into danger again, the very danger from which she had just escaped; she knew it, but she was incapable of acting on the knowledge.

“Who is below?” was again called from an upper window.

Judith, with open eyes, heard that the rain was still falling heavily, heard the shoot of water from the roof splash down into the runnel of the street, felt the heavy drops come down on her from the architrave over the door, and she saw something in the road-way—shadows stealing along, the same as she had seen before, but passing in a reversed direction. These were again men and beasts, but their feet and hoofs were no longer inaudible: they trod in the puddles and splashed and squelched the water and mud about at each step. The smugglers had delivered the supplies agreed on at the houses of those who dealt with them, and were now returning, the asses no longer laden.

And Judith heard the door behind her unbarred and unchained and unlocked. Then it was opened, and a ray of light was cast into the street, turning the falling rain-drops into drops of liquid gold, and revealing, ghostly, a passing ass and its driver.

“Who is there? *Is any one there?*”

Then the blaze of light was turned on Judith, and her eyes shut with a spasm of pain.

In the doorway stood Mrs. Scantlebray, half garmented, that is to say, with a gown on, the folds of

which fell in very straight lines from her waist to her feet, and with a night-cap on her head, and her curls in papers. She held a lamp in her hand, and this was now directed upon the girl lying, or half sitting, in the doorway, her bandaged head leaning against the jamb, one hand in her lap, the fingers open, the other fallen at her side, hanging down the steps, the fingers in the running current of the gutter, in which also was one shoeless foot.

“Why—goodness! Mercy on us!” exclaimed Mrs. Scantlebray, inconsiderately thrusting the lamp into the girl’s face and contracting eyes. “It can never be—yet—surely it is——”

“Judith!” exclaimed a deep voice, the sound of which sent a sudden flutter through the girl’s nerves and pulses. “Judith!” and from out the darkness and falling rain plunged a man in full mantle wrapped about him and overhanging broad-brimmed hat. Without a word of excuse he snatched the light from Mrs. Scantlebray and raised it above Judith’s head.

“Merciful powers!” he cried, “what is the meaning of this? What has happened? There is blood here—blood! Judith—speak! For Heaven’s sake, speak!”

The light fell on his face, his glittering eyes, and she slightly turned her head and looked at him. She opened her mouth to speak, but could form no words; but the appeal in those dim eyes went to his heart. He thrust the lamp roughly back into Mrs. Scantlebray's hand, knelt on the steps, passed one arm under the girl, the other about her waist, lifted and carried her without a word inside the house. There was a leather covered ottoman in the hall, and he laid her on that, hastily throwing off his cloak, folding it, and placing it as a pillow beneath her head.

Then, on one knee at her side, he drew a flask from his breast pocket, and poured some drops of spirit down her throat. The strength of the brandy made her catch her breath, and brought a flash of red to her cheek. It had served its purpose, helped the wheel of life to turn beyond the stress-point at which it threatened to stay wholly. She moved her head, and looked eagerly about her for Jamie. He was not there. She drew a long breath, a sigh of relief.

“Are you better?” he asked, stooping over her: and she could read the intensity of his anxiety in his face. She tried to smile a reply, but the muscles of her lips were too stiff for more than a flutter.

“Run!” ordered Captain Coppinger, standing up. “You, woman! Are you a fool? Where is your husband? He is a doctor; fetch him. The girl might die.”

“He—Captain, he is engaged, I believe, taking in his stores.”

“Fetch him! Leave the lamp here.”

Mrs. Scantlebray groped about for a candle, and having found one proceeded to light it.

“I’m really shocked to appear before you, Captain, in this state of undress.”

“Fetch your husband!” said Coppinger, impatiently. Then she withdrew.

The draught of spirits had acted on Judith, and had revived her. Her breath came more evenly, her heart beat regularly, and the blood began to circulate again. As her bodily powers returned, her mind began to work once more, and again, anxiously, she looked about her.

“What is it you want?” asked Captain Cruel.

“Where is Jamie?”

He muttered a low oath. Always Jamie. She could think of no one but that silly boy.

Then suddenly she realized her position—in Scantlebray’s house, and the wife was on the way to the cellars,

would find him, release him ; and though she knew that Coppinger would not suffer Obadiah to injure her, she feared, in her present weakness, a violent scene. She sat up, dropped her feet on the floor, and stretched both her hands to the smuggler.

“ Oh, take me—take me from this place ! ”

“ No, Judith,” he answered ; “ you must have the doctor to see you—after that—— ”

“ No ! No ! take me before he comes. He will kill me ! ”

Coppinger laughed. He would like to see the man who would dare to lay a finger on Judith whilst he stood by.

Now they heard a noise from the wing of the house occupied by the patients, and that communicated with the dwelling by a door which Mrs. Scantlebray had left ajar. There were exclamations, oaths, a loud, angry voice, and the shrill tones of the woman mingled with the bass notes of her husband. The colour that had risen to the girl's cheeks left them, she put her hands on Coppinger's breast, and looking him entreatingly in the eyes, said—

“ I pray you ! I pray you ! ”

He snatched her up in his arms, drew her close to him, went to the door, cast it open with his foot, and bore her out into the rain. There stood his mare, Black Bess, with a lad holding him.

“Judith, can you ride?”

He lifted her into the saddle.

“Boy,” said he, “lead on gently. I will stay her lest she fall.”

Then they moved away, and saw through the sheet of falling rain the lighted door, and Scantlebray in it, in his shirt-sleeves, shaking his fists, and his wife behind him endeavouring to draw him back by the buckle and strap of his waistcoat.

“Oh, where is Jamie? I wonder where Jamie is?” said Judith, looking round her in the dark; but she could see no signs of her brother.

There were straggling houses for half a mile; a little gap of garden, or paddock; then a cottage; then a cluster of trees and an ale-house; then hedges, and no more houses. A cooler wind was blowing, dispelling the close, warm atmosphere, and the rain fell less heavily. There was a faint light among the clouds, like a watering of satin. It showed that the storm was

passing away. The lightning flashes were, moreover, at longer intervals, fainter, and the thunder rumbled distantly. With the fresher air, some strength and life came back to Judith. The wheel, though on the turn, was not yet revolving rapidly.

Coppinger walked by the horse; he had his arm up, holding Judith, for he feared lest, in her weakness, she might fall; and, indeed, by her weight upon his hand, he was aware that her power to sustain herself unassisted was not come. He looked up at her; he could hardly fail to do so, standing, striding so close to her, her wet garments brushing his face; but he could not see her, or he saw her indistinctly. He had thrust her little foot into the leather of his stirrup, as the strap was too long for her to use the steel, and he did not tarry to shorten it.

Coppinger was much puzzled to learn how Judith had come at such an hour to the door of Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray, shoeless, and with wounded head; but he asked no questions. He was aware that she was not in condition to answer them. He held her up with his right hand in the saddle, and with his left he held her foot in the leather. Were she to fall, she

might drag by the foot, and he must be on his guard against that. Pacing in the darkness, holding her, his heart beat, and his thoughts tossed and boiled within him. This girl—so feeble, so childish—he was coming across incessantly, thrown in her way, to help her, and he was bound to her by ties invisible, impalpable, and yet of such strength that he could not break through them and free himself.

He was a man of indomitable will, of iron strength, staying up this girl, who had flickered out of unconsciousness, and might slide back into it again at any moment, and yet he felt—he knew—that he was powerless before her—that if she said to him, “Lie down, that I may trample on you,” he would throw himself in the foul road without a word, to be trodden under by those shoeless feet. There was but one command she could lay on him that he would not perform, and that was, “Let me go by myself! Never come near me!” That he could not obey. The rugged moon revolves about the earth. Would the moon fly away into space were the terrestrial orb to bid it cease to be a satellite? And if it did, whither would it go? Into far-off space, into outer darkness

and deathly cold, to split and shiver into fragments in the inconceivable frost in the abyss of blackness. And Judith threw a sort of light and heat over this fierce, undisciplined man that trembled in his veins and bathed his heart, and was to him a spring of beauty, a summer of light. Could he leave her? To leave her would be to be lost to everything that was beginning to transform his existence. The thought came over him now as he walked along in silence—that she might bid him let go, and he felt that he could not obey. He must hold her; he must hold her not *from* him on the saddle, not as merely staying her up, but *to* himself, to his heart, as his own, his own for ever.

Suddenly, an exclamation from Judith—"Jamie! Jamie!" Something was visible in the darkness, something whitish, in the hedge. In another moment it came bounding up.

"Ju! oh, Ju! I ran away."

"You did well," she said. "Now I am happy. You are saved."

Coppinger looked impatiently round, and saw by the feeble light that the boy had come close to him, and that he was wrapped in a blanket.

“He has nothing on him,” said Judith; “oh, poor Jamie!”

She had revived; she was almost herself again. She held herself more firmly in the saddle, and did not lean so heavily on Coppinger’s hand.

Coppinger was vexed at the appearance of the boy Jamie. He would fain had paced along in silence by the side of Judith. If she could not speak, it mattered not so long as he held her. Now that this fool should spring out of the darkness and join company with him and her, and at once awake her interest and loosen her tongue, irritated him. But, as she was able to speak, he would address her, and not allow her to talk over his head with Jamie.

“How have you been hurt?” he asked. “Why have you tied that bandage about your head?”

“I have been cut by a stone.”

“How came that?”

“A drunken man threw it at me.”

“What was his name?”

“I do not know.”

“That is well for him.” Then, after a short pause, he asked further, “And your unshod feet?”

“ Oh ! I gave my shoes to Jamie.”

Coppinger turned sharply round on the boy. “ Take off those shoes instantly, and give them back to your sister.”

“ No—indeed, no ! ” said Judith ; “ he is running, and will cut his poor feet—and I, through your kindness, am riding.”

Coppinger did not insist. He asked, “ But how comes this boy to be without clothes ? ”

“ Because I rescued him, as he was, from the asylum.”

“ You ? Is that why you are out at night ? ”

“ Yes ; I knew he had been taken by the two Mr. Scantlebrays to Wadebridge, and I could not rest. I felt sure he was miserable, and was crying for me.”

“ So—in the night you went to him ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But how did you get him his freedom ? ”

“ I found him locked in the black hole, in the cellar.”

“ And did Scantlebray look on passively whilst you released him ? ”

“ Oh, no ; I let Jamie out, and locked Mr. Scantlebray in, in his place.”

“ You—Scantlebray in the black hole ? ”

“ Yes.”

Then Coppinger laughed, laughed long and boisterously. His hand that held Judith’s foot and the stirrup-leather shook with his laughter.

“ By Heaven! you are wonderful—very wonderful. Any one who opposes you is ill-treated, knocked down and broken, or locked in a black hole in the dead of night.”

Judith, in spite of her exhaustion, was obliged to smile.

“ You see, I must do what I can for Jamie.”

“ Always—Jamie.”

“ Yes, Captain Coppinger, always Jamie. He is helpless and must be thought for. I am mother, nurse, sister to him.”

“ His Providence,” sneered Coppinger.

“ The means under Providence of preserving him,” said Judith.

“ And me—would you do aught for me ? ”

“ Did I not go down the cliffs for you ? ” asked the girl.

“ Heaven forgive me that I forgot that for one

moment," he answered, with vehemence. "Happy—happy—happiest of any in this vile world is the man for whom you think, and scheme, and care, and dare—as you do for Jamie."

"There is none such," said Judith.

"No—I know that," he answered, gloomily, and strode forward with his head down.

Ten minutes had elapsed in silence, and Polzeath was approached. Then suddenly Coppinger let go his hold of Judith, caught the rein of Black Bess, and arrested her. Standing beside Judith, he said in a peevish, low tone, "I touched your hand, and said I was subject to a queen." He bent, took her foot, and kissed it. "You repulsed me as subject; you are my mistress—accept me as your slave."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN EXAMINATION.

SOME days had elapsed. Judith had not suffered from her second night expedition as she had from the first; but the intellectual abilities of Jamie had deteriorated. The fright he had undergone had shaken his nerves, and had made him more restless, timid, and helpless than heretofore, exacting more of Judith's attention, and more trying her endurance. But she trusted that these ill effects would pass away in time. From his rambling talk she had been able to gather some particulars which to a degree modified her opinion relative to the behaviour of Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray. It appeared from the boy's own account that he had been very troublesome. After he had been taken into the wing of the establishment that was occupied by the imbecile,

his alarm and bewilderment had grown. He had begun to cry and to clamour for his release, or for the presence of his sister. As night came on, paroxysms of impotent rage had alternated with fits of whining. The appearance of his companions in confinement, some of them complete idiots, with half-human gestures and faces, had enhanced his terrors. He would eat no supper, and when put to bed in the common dormitory had thrown off his clothes, torn his sheets, and refused to lie down—had sat up and screamed at the top of his voice. Nothing that could be done, no representations, would pacify him. He prevented his fellow inmates of the asylum from sleeping, and he made it not at all improbable that his cries would be overheard by passers-by in the street, or those occupying neighbouring houses, and thus give rise to unpleasant surmises, and perhaps inquiry. Finally, Scantlebray had removed the boy to the place of punishment—the black hole—a compartment of the cellars, there to keep him till his lungs were exhausted, or his reason had gained the upper hand. And Judith supposed, with some justice, that Scantlebray had done this only, or chiefly, because he himself

would be up and about the cellars, engaged in housing his supplies of brandy, and that he had no intention of locking the unhappy boy up for the entire night in solitude in the cellars. He had not left him in complete darkness, for a candle had been placed on the ground outside the black-hole door.

As Judith saw the matter now, it seemed to her that though Scantlebray had acted with harshness and lack of judgment, there was some palliation for his conduct. That Jamie could be most exasperating, that she knew full well by experience. When he went into one of his fits of temper and crying, it took many hours and much patience to pacify him. She had now and again spent long time and exhausted her efforts in striving to bring him to a subdued frame of mind on occasions when the most irrational and trifling matters had angered him. Nothing answered with him then, save infinite forbearance and exuberant love. On this occasion there was good excuse for Jamie's fit: he had been frightened, and frightened out of his few wits. As Judith said to herself, had she been treated in the same manner—spirited off, without preparation, to a strange house, confined among afflicted beings, deprived

of every familiar companion—she would have been filled with terror, and reasonably so. She would not have exhibited it, however, in the same manner as Jamie.

Scantlebray had not acted with gentleness; but he had not, on the other hand, exhibited wanton cruelty. That he was a man of coarse nature, likely on provocation to break through the superficial veneer of amiability, she concluded from her own experience, and she did not doubt that those of the unfortunate inmates of the asylum who overtaxed his forbearance met with very rough handling. But that he took a malignant pleasure in harassing and torturing them, that she did not believe.

On the day following the escape from the asylum, Judith sent Mr. Menaida to Wadebridge with the blanket that had been carried off round the shoulders of her brother, and with a request to have Jamie's clothes surrendered. Uncle Zachie returned with the garments, that were not refused him; and Judith and her brother settled down into the routine of employment and amusement as before. The lad assisted Mr. Menaida with his bird skins, talking a little more childishly than before, and sticking less assiduously to

his task; and Judith did her needlework, and occasionally played on the piano the pieces of music at which Uncle Zachie had hammered ineffectually for many years, and she played them to the old man's satisfaction.

At last the girl ventured to induce Jamie to recommence his lessons. He resisted at first, and when she did, on a rainy day, persuade him to set to his school tasks, she was careful not to hold him to them for more than a few minutes, and to select those lessons which made him least impatient.

There was a Goldsmith's Geography, illustrated with copper-plates of Indians attacking Captain Cook, the Geysers, Esquimaux fishery, &c., that always amused the boy. Accordingly more geography was done during these first days of resumption of work than history, arithmetic, or reading. Latin had not yet been attempted, as that was Jamie's particular aversion. However, the Eton Latin Grammar was produced, and placed on the table, to familiarise his mind with the idea that it had to be tackled some day.

Judith had one morning spread the table with lesson-books, with slate and writing-copies, when she was

surprised at the entry of four gentlemen, two of whom she recognized immediately as the brothers Scantlebray. The other two she did not know. One was thin-faced, with red hair, a high forehead extending to the crown, with the hair drawn over it and well pomatumed to keep it in place and conceal the baldness; the other a short man, in knee-breeches and top-boots, with a red face, and with breath that perfumed the whole room with spirits. Mr. Scantlebray senior came up with both hands extended.

“This is splendid! How are you? Never more charmed in my life—and ready to impart knowledge as the sun diffuses light. Obadiah, old man, look at your pupil; better already for having passed through your hands. I can see it at a glance; there’s a brightness, a *je ne sais quoi* about him that was not there before. Old man, I congratulate you. You have a gift—shake hands.”

The gentlemen seated themselves without invitation. Surprise and alarm made Judith forget her usual courtesy. She feared lest the sight of his gaoler might excite Jamie. But it was not so. Whether in his confused mind he did not associate Mr. Obadiah

with his troubles on that night of distress, or whether his attention was distracted by the sight of so many, was doubtful, but Jamie did not seem to be disconcerted—rather, on the contrary, glad of some excuse for escape from lessons.

“We are come,” said the red-headed man, “at Mrs. Trevisa’s desire—but really, Mr. Scantlebray, for shame of you. Where are your manners? Introduce me.”

“Mr. Vokes,” said Scantlebray, “and the accomplished and charming Miss Judith Trevisa, orphing.”

“And now, dear young lady,” said the red-headed man. “Now, positively, it is my turn. My friend, Mr. Jukes. Jukes, man! Miss Judith Trevisa.”

Then Mr. Vokes coughed into his thin, white hand, and said, “We are come, naturally—and I am sure you wish what Mrs. Trevisa wishes—to just look at your brother, and give an opinion on his health.”

“Oh, he is quite well,” said Judith.

“Ah! you think so, naturally; but we would decide for ourselves, dearest young lady, though not for the world would we willingly differ from you. But, you know, these are questions on which varieties of opinion

are allowable, and yet do not disturb the most heartfelt friendship. It is so, is it not, Jukes?"

The rubicund man in knee-breeches nodded.

"Shall I begin, Jukes? Why, my fine little man! what an array of books! What scholarship! And at your age, too—astounding! What age did you say you were?" This to Jamie in an insinuating tone. Jamie stared, looked appealingly to Judith, and said nothing.

"We are the same age; we are twins," said Judith.

"Ah! it is not the right thing to appear anxious to know a lady's age. We will put it another way, eh, Jukes?"

The red-faced man leaned his hands on his stick, his chin on his hands, and winked, as in that position he could not nod.

"Now, my fine little man, when is your birthday? when you have your cake—raisin cake, eh?"

Jamie looked questioningly at his sister.

"Ah! come, not the day of the month, but the month, eh?"

Jamie could not answer.

"Come now," said the red-headed, long man, stretch-

ing his legs before him, legs vested in white trousers, strapped down tight. "Come now, my splendid specimen of humanity, in which quarter of the year? between sickle and scythe, eh?" He waited, and, receiving no answer, pulled out a pocket-book and made a note, after having first wetted the end of his pencil. "Don't know when he was born! What do you say to that, Jukes? Will you take your turn?"

The man with an inflamed face, now gradually becoming purple, as he leaned forward on his stick, said, "Humph! a Latin Grammar, *Propria quæ maribus*—I remember it, but it was a long time ago I learnt it. Now, whipper-snapper! how do you go on? *Propria quæ maribus*—go on." He waited. Jamie looked at him in astonishment. "Come! *Tribu*—" Again he waited. "Come. *Tribuuntur mascula dicas*—go on." Again a pause. Then with an impatient growl, "*Ut sunt Divorum, Mars, Bacchus, Apollo.* This will never do. Go on with the scaramouch, Vokes. I'll make my annotation."

"He's too hard on my little chap, ain't he?" asked the thin man in ducks. "We won't be done. We are not old enough."

“He is but eighteen,” said Judith.

“He is but eighteen,” repeated the red-headed man. “Of course he has not got so far as that, but *musa, musæ*——”

Jamie turned sulky.

“Not *musa, musæ*—and eighteen years! Jukes, this is serious, Jukes, eh, Jukes?”

“Now look here, you fellows,” said Scantlebray, senior, “you are too exacting. It’s holiday time, ain’t it, orphing? We won’t be put upon, not we. We’ll sport and frolic and be joyful. Look here, Scanty, old man, take the slate and draw a pictur’ to my describing. Now then, Jamie, look at him and hearken to me. He’s the funniest old man that ever was, and he’ll surprise you. Are you ready, Scanty?”

Mr. Obadiah drew the slate before him, and signed with the pencil to Jamie to observe him. The boy was quite ready to see him draw.

“There was once upon a time,” began Mr. Scantlebray senior, “a man that lived in a round tower. Look at him draw it. There you are; that is the tower. Go on. And in the tower was a round winder. Do you see the winder, orphing? This man every

morning put his hand out of the winder to ascertain which way the wind blew. He put it out thus, and drew it in thus. No! don't look at me; look at the slate, and there you'll see it all. Now this man had a large pond, preserved full of fish." Scratch, scratch went the pencil on the slate. "Them's the fish," said Scantlebray, senior. "Now below the situation of that pond, in two huts, lived a pair of thieves. You see them poky things my brother has drawn? Them's the huts. When night set in, these wicked thieves came walking up to the pond—see my brother drawing their respective courses—and, on reaching the pond, they opened the sluice, and whish! whish! out poured the water." Scratch, scratch, squeak, squeak, went the pencil on the slate. "There now! the naughty robbers went after fish and got a goose. Look! a goo-oose."

"Where's the goose?" asked Jamie.

"Where? Before your eyes—under your nose. That brilliant brother of mine has drawn one. Hold the slate up, Scanty?"

"That's not a goose," said Jamie.

"Not a goose! You don't know what geese are."

"Yes I do," retorted the boy, resentfully. "I

know the wild goose and the tame one—which do you call that?”

“Oh, wild goose, of course.”

“It’s not one. A goose hasn’t a tail like that, nor such legs,” said Jamie, contemptuously.

Mr. Scantlebray senior looked at Messrs. Vokes and Jukes and shook his head.

“A bad case. Don’t know a goose when he sees it—and he is eighteen.”

Both Vokes and Jukes made an entry in their pocket-books.

“Now, Jukes,” said Vokes, “will you take a turn, or shall I?”

“Oh, you, Vokes,” answered Jukes; “I haven’t recovered *Propria quæ maribus* yet.”

“Very well, my interesting young friend. Suppose now we change the subject and try arithmetic.”

“I don’t want any arithmetic,” said Jamie, sulkily.

“No, come now, we won’t call it by that name. Suppose some one were to give you a shilling.’

Jamie looked up, interested.

“And suppose he were to say, ‘There, go and buy

sweeties with this shilling.' Tartlets at three for twopence, and barley-sugar at three farthings a stick, and——"

"I want my shilling back," said Jamie, looking straight into the face of Mr. Scantlebray senior.

"And that there were burnt almonds at twopence an ounce——"

"I want my shilling," exclaimed the boy, angrily.

"Your shilling, puff! puff!" said the red-headed man. "This is ideal. An ideal shilling and ideal jam tarts, almond-rock, burnt almonds, or what you like."

"Give me back my shilling? I won it fair," persisted Jamie.

Then Judith, distressed, interfered. "Jamie, dear, what do you mean? You have no shilling owing you."

"I have! I have!" screamed the boy. "I won it fair of that man there, because I made a rabbit, and he took it from me again."

"Hallucinations," said Jukes.

"Quite so," said Vokes.

"Give me my shilling? It is a cheat!" cried Jamie, now suddenly roused into one of his fits of passion.

Judith caught him by the arm, and endeavoured to pacify him.

“Let go, Ju! I will have my shilling. That man took it away. He is a cheat, a thief! Give me my shilling?”

“I am afraid he is excitable,” said Vokes.

“Like all irrational beings,” answered Jukes. “I’ll make a note: ‘Rising out of hallucination.’”

“I will have my shilling,” persisted Jamie. “Give me my shilling, or I’ll throw the ink at you!”

He caught up the ink-pot, and, before Judith had time to interfere, had flung it across the table, intending to hit Mr. Scantlebray senior; but the pot missed him; the black fluid was, however, scattered over Mr. Vokes’ white trousers.

“Bless my life!” exclaimed this gentleman, springing to his feet, pulling out his handkerchief to wipe away the ink, and only smearing it the more over his “ducks,” and discolouring as well his handkerchief. “Bless my life, Jukes! a dangerous lunatic. Note at once. Clearly comes within the Act—clearly.”

In a few minutes all had left, and Judith was endeavouring to pacify her irritated brother. His fingers

were blackened, and finally she persuaded him to go upstairs and wash his hands clear of the ink. Then she ran into the adjoining room to Mr. Menaida.

“Oh! dear Mr. Menaida,” she said, “what does this mean? Why have they been here?”

Uncle Zachie looked grave and discomposed.

“My dear,” said he, “those were doctors, and they have been here, sent by your aunt, to examine into the condition of Jamie’s intellects, and to report on what they have observed. There was a little going beyond the law, perhaps, at first. That is why they took it so easily when you carried Jamie off. They knew you were with an old lawyer; they knew that you or I could sue for a writ of *habeas corpus*.”

“But do you really think that Aunt Dionysia is going to have Jamie sent back to that man at Wadebridge?”

“I am certain of it. That is why they came here to-day.”

“Can I not prevent it?”

“I do not think so. If you go to law——”

“But, if they once get him, they will make an idiot or a madman of him.”

“Then you must see your aunt, and persuade her not to send him there.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON A PEACOCK'S FEATHER.

As Mr. Menaida spoke, Miss Dionysia Trevisa entered, stiff, hard, and when her eyes fell on Judith they contracted with an expression of antipathy. In the eyes alone was this observable, for her face was immovable.

“Auntie!” exclaimed Judith, drawing her into the sitting-room, and pressing her to take the armchair. “Oh, auntie! I have so longed to see you. There have been some dreadful men here—doctors, I think—and they have been teasing Jamie till they had worked him into one of his temper fits.”

“I sent them here, and for good reasons; Jamie is to go back to Wadebridge.”

“No—indeed no, auntie; do not say that. You would not say it if you knew all.”

“I know quite enough—more than is pleasing to me. I have heard of your outrageous and unbecoming conduct. Hoity-toity! To think that a Trevisa—but there, you are one only in name—should go out at night about the streets and lanes like a common thing. Bless me! you might have knocked me down with a touch when I was told of it.”

“I did nothing outrageous and unbecoming, aunt. You may be sure of that. I am quite aware that I am a Trevisa, and a gentlewoman, and something higher than that, aunt—a Christian. My father never let me forget that.”

“Your conduct was—well, I will give it no epithetive.”

“Aunt, I did what was right. I was sure that Jamie was unhappy and wanted me. I cannot tell you how I knew it, but I was certain of it, and I had no peace till I went; and as I found the garden door open I went in, and, when I went in, I found Jamie locked up in the cellar, and I freed him. Had you found him there you would have done the same.”

“I have heard all about it. I want no repetition of a very scandalous story. Against my will I am burdened

with an intolerable obligation to look after an idiot nephew, and a niece that is a self-willed and perverse miss."

"Jamie is no idiot," answered Judith, firmly.

"Jamie is what those pronounce him to be who by their age, their profession, and their experience are calculated to judge, better than an ignorant girl not out of her teens."

"Auntie, I believe you have been misinformed. Listen to me, and I will tell you what happened. As for those men——"

"Those men were doctors. Perhaps they were misinformed when they went through the College of Surgeons, were misinstructed by all the medical books they have read, were misdirected by all the study of the mental and bodily maladies of men they have made, in their professional course."

"I wish, dear Aunt Dionysia, you would take Jamie to be with you a few weeks, talk to him, play with him, go walks with him, and you will never say that he is an idiot. He needs careful management, and also a little application——"

"Enough on that theme," interrupted Miss Trevisa ;

“ I have not come here to be drawn into an argument, or to listen to your ideas on the condition of that unhappy, troublesome, that provoking boy. I wish to Heaven I had not the responsibility for him, that has been thrust on me: but as I have to exercise it, and there is no one to relieve me of it, I must do my best, though it is a great expense to me. Seventy pounds is not seventy shillings, nor is it seventy pence.”

“ Aunt, he is not to go back to the asylum! He *must not go.*”

“ Hoity-toity! must not, indeed! You, a minx of eighteen, to dictate to me! Must not, indeed! You seem to think that you, and not I, are Jamie’s guardian.’

“ Papa entrusted him to me with his last words.”

“ I know nothing about last words. In his will I am constituted his guardian and yours, and as such I shall act as my convenience—conscience, I mean—dictates.”

“ But, aunt, Jamie is not to go back to Wadebridge. Aunt! I entreat you! I know what that place is. I have been inside it, you have not. I have seen the horrible black hole. You have not. And just think of Jamie on the very first night being locked up there.”

“ He richly deserved it, I will be bound.”

“ Oh, aunt! How could he? How could he? ”

“ Of that Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray was the best judge. Why he had to be punished you do not know.”

“ Indeed, I do. He cried because the place was strange, and he was among strange faces. Aunt, if you were whipped off to Timbuctoo, and suddenly found yourself among savages, and in a rush apron, as the squaw of a black chief, or whatever they call them in Timbuctooland, would not you scream? ”

“ Judith,” said Miss Trevisa, bridling up. “ You forget yourself.”

“ No, aunt. I am only pleading for Jamie; trying to make you feel for him when he was locked up in an asylum. How would you like it, aunt, if you were snatched away to Bartholomew Fair, and suddenly found yourself among tight-rope dancers, and Jack Puddings? ”

“ Judith! I insist on you holding your tongue. I object to be associated, even in fancy, with such creatures.”

“ Well—but Jamie was associated, not in fancy, but in horrible reality, with idiots.”

“ Jamie goes to Scantlebray’s Asylum to-day.”

“ Auntie ! ”

“ He is already in the hands of the Brothers Scantlebray.”

Oh, auntie—no—no ! ”

“ It is no pleasure to me to have to find the money, you may well believe. Seventy pounds is not, as I said, seventy pence, it is not seventy farthings. But duty is duty, and however painful and unpleasant and costly, it must be performed.”

Then from the adjoining room, “ the shop,” came Mr. Menaida.

“ I beg pardon for an interruption and for interference,” said he. “ I happen to have overheard what has passed, as I was engaged in the next room, and I believe that I can make a proposal which will perhaps be acceptable to you, Mrs. Trevisa, and grateful to Miss Judith.”

“ I am ready to listen to you,” said Aunt Dionysia, haughtily.

“ It is this,” said Uncle Zachie. “ I understand that pecuniary matters concerning Jamie are a little irksome. Now, the boy, if he puts his mind to it, can

be useful to me. He has a remarkable aptitude for taxidermy. I have more orders on my hands than I can attend to. I am a gentleman, not a tradesman, and I object to be oppressed—flattened out—with the orders piled on top of me. But if the boy will help, he can earn sufficient to pay for his living here, with me.”

“ Oh, Mr. Menaida! dear Mr. Menaida! thank you so much! ” exclaimed Judith.

“ Perhaps you will allow me to speak,” said Miss Trevisa, with asperity. “ I am guardian, and not you: whatever you may think from certain vague expressions dropped casually from my poor brother’s lips, and to which you have attached an importance he never gave to them——”

“ Aunt, I assure you, my dear papa——”

“ That question is closed. We will not reopen it. I am a Trevisa; I can’t for a moment imagine where you got those ideas. Not from your father’s family, I am sure. Tight-rope dancers and Timbuctoo indeed! ” Then she turned to Mr. Menaida, and said, in her hard, constrained voice, as though she were exercising great moral control to prevent herself from snapping at him

with her teeth: "Your proposal is kind and well intentioned, but I cannot accept it."

"Oh, aunt! why not?"

"That you shall hear. I must beg you not to interrupt me. You are so familiar with the manners of Timbuctoo and of Bartelmy Fair, that you forget those pertaining to England and to polished society." Then, turning to Mr. Menaida, she said, "I thank you for your well-intentioned proposal, which, however, it is not possible for me to close with. I must consider the boy's ulterior advantage, not the immediate relief to my sorely-tasked purse. I have thought proper to place James with a person, a gentleman of experience, and highly qualified to deal with those mentally afflicted. However much I may value you, Mr. Menaida, you must excuse me for saying that firmness is not a quality you have cultivated with assiduity. Judith, my niece, has almost ruined the boy by humouring him. You cannot stiffen a jelly by setting it in the sun, or in a chair before the fire, and that is what my niece has been doing. The boy must be isinglassed into solidity by those who know how to treat him. Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray is the man——"

“To manufacture idiots, madam, out of simple innocents; it is worth his while at seventy pounds a year,” said Uncle Zachie, petulantly.

Miss Trevisa looked at him sternly, and said —

“Sir! I suppose you know best. But it strikes me that such a statement relative to Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray is actionable; but you know best, being a solicitor.”

Mr. Menaida winced, and drew back.

Judith leaned against the mantel-shelf, trembling with anxiety, and some anger. She thought that her aunt was acting in a heartless manner towards Jamie; that there was no good reason for refusing the generous offer of Uncle Zachie. In her agitation, unable to keep her fingers at rest, the girl played with the little chimney ornaments. She must occupy her nervous, twitching hands about something; tears of distress and mortification were swelling in her heart, and a fire was burning in two flames in her cheeks. What could she do to save Jamie? What would become of the boy at the asylum? It seemed to her that he would be driven out of his few wits by terror and ill-treatment, with distress at leaving her, and at losing his liberty to

ramble about the cliffs where he liked. In a vase on the chimney-piece was a bunch of peacocks' feathers, and in her agitation, not thinking what she was about, desirous only of having something to pick at and play with in her hands, to disguise the trembling of the fingers, she took out one of the plumes, and trifled with it, waving it, and letting the light undulate over its wondrous surface of gold and green and blue.

“As long as I have responsibility for the urchin——” said Miss Dionysia.

“Urchin!” muttered Judith.

“As long as I have the charge I shall do my duty according to my lights, though they may not be those of a rush-aproned squaw in Timbuctoo, nor of a Jack Pudding balancing a feather on his nose.” There was here a spiteful glance at Judith. “When my niece has a home of her own, is settled into a position of security and comfort, then I wash my hands of the responsibility; she may do what she likes then—bring her brother to live with her, if she chooses and her husband consents—that will be naught to me.”

“And in the meantime,” said Judith, holding the peacock's feather very still before her—“In the mean-

time Jamie's mind is withered and stunted—his whole life is to be spoiled. Now—now alone can he be given a turn aright and towards growth.”

“That entirely depends on you,” said Miss Trevisa, coldly. “You know best what opportunities have offered——”

“Aunt, what do you mean?”

“Wait,” said Uncle Zachie, rubbing his hands. “My boy Oliver is coming home. He has written; his situation is a good one now.”

Miss Trevisa turned on him with a face of marble.

“I entirely fail to see what your son Oliver has to do with the matter, more than the man in the moon. May I trouble you, as you so deeply interest yourself in our concerns, to step outside to Messrs. Scantlebray and that boy, and ask them to bring him in here. I have told them what the circumstances are, and they are prepared.”

Mr. Menaida left the room, not altogether unwilling to escape.

“Now,” said Aunt Dionysia, “I am relieved to find that for a minute we are by ourselves, not subjected to the prying and eavesdropping of the impertinent and the

meddlesome. Mr. Menaida is a man who in his life never did good to himself or to any one else, though a man with the best intentions under the sun. Now Judith, I am a plain woman—that is to say, not plain, but straightforward—and I like to have everything above board. The case stands thus: I, in my capacity as guardian of that boy, am resolved to consign him immediately to the asylum, and to retain him there as long as my authority lasts, though it will cost me a pretty sum. You do not desire that he should go there. Well and good. There is but one way, but that is effectual, by means of which you can free Jamie from restraint. Let me tell you he is now in the hands of Mr. Obadiah, and gagged that he may not arouse the neighbourhood with his screams.” Miss Trevisa fixed her hard eyes on Judith. “As soon as you take the responsibility off me, and on to yourself, you do with the boy what you like.”

“I will relieve you at once.”

“You are not in a condition to do so. As soon as I am satisfied that your future is secure, that you will have a house to call your own, and a certainty of subsistence for you both, then I will lay down my charge.”

“And you mean——”

“I mean that you must first accept Captain Coppinger, who has been good enough to find you not intolerable. He is—in this one particular—unreasonable; however, he is what he is, in this matter. He makes you the offer, gives you the chance. Take it, and you provide Jamie and yourself with a home; the boy gets his freedom, and you can manage or mismanage him as you list. Refuse the chance, and Jamie is lodged in Mr. Scantlebray's establishment within an hour.”

“I cannot decide this on the spur of the moment.”

“Very well. You can let Jamie go, provisionally, to the asylum, and stay there till you have made up your mind.”

“No--no--no—aunt! Never! never!”

“As you will.” Miss Trevisa shrugged her shoulders, and cast a glance at her niece like a dagger-stab.

“Auntie, I am but a child.”

“That may be. But there are times when even children must decide momentous questions. A boy, as a child, decides on his profession; a girl, may be, on her marriage.”

“Oh, dear auntie! Do leave Jamie here for, say, a

fortnight, and in a fortnight from to-day you shall have my answer."

"No," answered Miss Trevisa; "I also must decide on my future, for your decision affects not Jamie only, but me also."

Judith had listened in great self-restraint, holding the feather before her. She held it between thumb and forefinger of both hands, not concerning herself about it, and yet with her eyes watching the undulations from the end of the quill to the deep blue eye set in a halo of gold at the further end, and the feather undulated with every rise and fall of her bosom.

"Surely, auntie, you cannot wish me to marry Cruel Coppinger?"

"I have no wishes one way or the other. Please yourself."

"But, auntie——"

"You profess to be ready to do all you can for Jamie, and yet hesitate about relieving me of an irksome charge, and Jamie of what you consider barbarous treatment."

"You cannot be serious—I to marry Captain Cruel!"

"It is a serious offer."

“ But papa ! what would he say ? ”

“ I never was in a position to tell his thoughts and guess what his words would be.”

“ But—auntie, he is such a bad man.”

“ You know a great deal more about him than do I, of course.”

“ But—he is a smuggler, I do know that.”

“ Well—and what of that. There is no crime in that.”

“ It is not an honest profession. They say, too, that he is a wrecker.”

“ They say ! Who say ? What do you know ? ”

“ Nothing ; but I am not likely to trust my future to a man of whom such tales are told, auntie. Would you, supposing that you were——”

“ I will have none of your suppositions. I never did wear a rush apron, nor act as Juck Pudding.”

“ I cannot—Captain Cruel of all men.”

“ Is he so hateful to you ? ”

“ Hateful—no ; but I cannot like him. He has been kind ; but somehow I can't think of him as—as—as a man of our class and thoughts and ways, as one worthy of my own, own papa. No—it is impossible ; I am still a child.”

She took the end of the peacock's feather; the splendid eye lustrous with metallic beauty, and bowed the plume, without breaking it, and, unconscious of what she was doing, stroked her lips with it. What a fragile, fine quill that was on which hung so much beauty! and how worthless the feather would be when that quill was broken! And so with her—her fine, elastic, strong spirit, that when bowed sprang to its uprightness the moment the pressure was withdrawn: that strong spirit on which all her charm, her beauty, hung.

“ Captain Coppinger has, surely, never asked you to put this alternative to me? ”

“ No—I do it myself. As you are a child you are unfit to take the charge of your brother. When you are engaged to be married you are a woman; I shift my load on you then.”

“ And you wish it? ”

“ I repeat I have no wishes in the matter.”

“ Give me time to consider.”

“ No; it must be decided now—that is to say, if you do not wish Jamie to be taken away. Don't fancy I want to persuade you; but I want to be satisfied

about my own future. I shall not remain in Pentyre with you. As you enter by the front door, I leave by the back."

"Where will you go?"

"That is my affair."

Then in at the door came the two Scantlebrays, having Jamie between them, gagged, and with his hands bound behind his back. The boy had run out directly his examination was over, and had been secured almost without resistance, so taken by surprise was he, and reduced to a condition of helplessness.

Judith leaned against the mantel-shelf, with every tinge of colour gone out of her cheeks. Jamie's frightened eyes met hers, and he made a slight struggle to speak, and to escape to her.

"You have a close conveyance ready for your patient?" asked Aunt Dionysia of the brothers.

"Oh, yes, a very snug little box on wheels. Scanty and I will sit with our young man, to prevent his feeling dull, you know."

"You understand, gentlemen, what I told you, that in the decision whether the boy is to go with you or not, I am not the only one to be considered? If

I have my will, go he shall, as I am convinced that your establishment is the very place for him; but my niece, Miss Judith, has at her option the chance of taking the responsibility for the boy off my shoulders, and if she chooses to do that, why then I fear she will continue to spoil him, as she has done heretofore."

"It has cost us time and money," said Scantlebray senior.

"And you shall be paid, whichever way is decided," said Miss Trevisa. "Everything now rests with my niece."

Judith seemed as one petrified. One hand was on her bosom, staying her heart, the other held the peacock's feather before her, horizontally. Every particle of colour had deserted, not her face only, but her hands as well. Her eyes were sunken, her lips contracted and livid. She was motionless as a marble statue; she hardly seemed to breathe. She perfectly understood what her aunt had laid before her, and her bodily sensations were dead, whilst a conflict of ideas raged in her brain. She was the arbiter of Jamie's fate. She did not disguise from herself that if consigned to the keeper of the asylum, though only for a week or

two, he would not leave his charge the same as he entered. And what would it avail her or him to postpone the decision for a week or for a fortnight?

The brothers Scantlebray knew nothing of the question agitating her, but they saw that the determination which she was resolving to arrive at was one that cost her all her powers. Mr. Obadiah's heavy mind did not exert itself to probe the secret, but the more eager intellect of his elder brother was alert, and wondering what might be the matter that so affected the girl, and made it difficult for her to pronounce her decision. The hard eyes of Miss Trevisa were fixed on her. Judith's answer would decide her future; on it depended Othello Cottage, and an annuity of fifty pounds. Jamie looked through a veil of tears at his sister, and never for a moment turned his eyes from her from the moment of his entry into the room. Instinctively the boy felt that his freedom and happiness depended on her.

One or the other must be sacrificed, that Judith saw. Jamie was dull of mind, but there were possibilities of development in it. And, even if he remained where he was, he was happy, happy and

really harmless, if a little mischievous; an offer had been made which was likely to lead him on into industrious ways, and to teach him application. He loved his liberty, loved it as does the gull. In an asylum he would pine, his mind become more enfeebled, and he would die. But then—what a price must be paid to save him? Oh, if she could have put the question to her father! But she had none to appeal to for advice. If she gave to Jamie liberty and happiness, it was at the certain sacrifice of her own. But there was no evading the decision, one or the other must be sacrificed.

She stretched forth the peacock's feather, laid the great indigo blue eye on the bands that held Jamie, on his gagged lips, and said, "Let him go."

"You agree," exclaimed Miss Trevisa.

Judith doubled the peacock's feather and broke it.

CHAPTER XXX.

THROUGH THE TAMARISKS.

FOR some days after Judith had given her consent, and had released Jamie from the hands of the Scantlebrays, she remained silent and white. Uncle Zachie missed the music to which he had become used, and complained. She then seated herself at the piano, but was distraught, played badly, and the old bird-stuffer went away, grumbling, to his shop.

Jamie was happy, delighted not to be afflicted with lessons, and forgot past troubles in present pleasures. That the recovery of his liberty had been bought at a heavy price, he did not know, and would not have appreciated it had he been told the sacrifice Judith had been ready to make for his sake.

In the garden behind the cottage was an arbour

composed of half a boat set up, that is to say, an old boat sawn in half, and erected, so that it served as a shelter to a seat, which was fixed into the earth on posts. From one side of this boat a trellice had been drawn, and covered with *escallonia*, and a seat placed here as well, so that in this rude arbour it was possible for more than one person to find accommodation. Here Judith and Jamie often sat; the back of the boat was set against the prevailing wind from the sea, and on this coast the air is usually soft at the same time that it is bracing, enjoyable wherever a little shelter is provided against its violence. For violent it can be, and can buffet severely, yet its blows are those of a pillow.

Here Judith was sitting one afternoon alone, lost in a dream, when Uncle Zachie came into the garden with his pipe in his mouth, to stretch his legs, after a few minutes' work at stuffing a cormorant.

In her lap lay a stocking Judith was knitting for her brother, but she had made few stitches, and yet had been an hour in the summer-house. The garden of Mr. Menaida was hedged off from a neighbour's grounds by a low wall of stone and clay and sand,

in and out of which grew rankly strong tamarisks, now in their full pale pink blossom. The eyes of Judith had been on these tamarisks waving like plumes in the sea air, when she was startled from her reverie by the voice of Uncle Zachie.

“Why, Miss Judith! What is the matter with you? Dull, eh? Ah, wait a bit, when Oliver comes home we shall have mirth. He is full of merriment. A bright boy and a good son; altogether a fellow to be proud of, though I say it. He will return at the fall.”

“I am glad to hear it, Mr. Menaida. You have not seen him for many years?”

“Not for ten.”

“It will be a veritable feast to you. Does he remain long in England?”

“I cannot say. If his employers find work for him at home, then at home he will tarry; but if they consider themselves best served by him at Oporto, then to Portugal must he return.”

“Will you honour me by taking a seat near me—under the trellis?” asked Judith. “It will, indeed, be a pleasure to me to have a talk with you; and I do

need it very sore. My heart is so full, that I feel I must spill some of it before a friend."

"Then, indeed, I will hold out both hands to catch the sweetness."

"Nay—it is bitter, not sweet, bitter as gall, and briny as the ocean."

"Not possible, a little salt gives savour."

She shook her head, took up the stocking, did a couple of stitches, and put it down again. The sea-breeze that tossed the pink branches of tamarisk waved stray tresses of her red-gold hair, but somehow the brilliancy, the burnish, seemed gone from it. Her eyes were sunken, and there was a greenish tinge about the ivory white surrounding her mouth.

"I cannot work, dear Mr. Menaida; I am so sorry that I should have played badly that sonata last night; I know it fretted you, but I could not help myself, my mind is so selfishly directed, that I cannot attend to anything even of Beethoven's in music, nor to stocking knitting even for Jamie."

"And what are the bitter, briny thoughts?"

Judith did not answer at once, she looked down into her lap, and Mr. Menaida, whose pipe was choked,

went to the tamarisks and plucked a little piece, stripped off the flower, and proceeded to clear the tube with it.

Presently, whilst Uncle Zachie's eyes were engaged on the pipe, Judith looked up, and said hastily, "I am very young, Mr. Menaida."

"A fault in process of rectification every day," said he, blowing through the stem of his pipe. "I think it is clear now."

"I mean—young to be married."

"To be married—zounds!" He turned his eyes on her in surprise, holding the tamarisk spill in one hand, and the pipe in the other, poised in the air.

"You have not understood that I got Jamie off the other day only by taking full charge of him upon myself, and relieving my aunt."

"But, good gracious, you are not going to marry your brother."

"My aunt would not transfer the guardianship to me unless I were qualified to undertake and exercise it properly, according to her ideas, and that could be only by my becoming engaged to be married to a man of substance."

“ Goodness help me ! what a startlement ! And who is the happy man to be ? Not Scantlebray, senior, I trust, whose wife is dying ? ”

“ No—Captain Coppinger.”

“ Cruel Coppinger ! ” Uncle Zachie put down his pipe so suddenly on the bench by him that he broke it. “ Cruel Coppinger ! Never ! ”

She said nothing to this, but rose and walked, with her head down, along under the bank, and put her hands among the waving pink branches of tamarisk bloom, sweeping the heads with her own delicate hand as she passed. Then she came back to the boat-arbour and reseated herself.

“ Dear me ! Bless my heart ! I could not have credited it,” gasped Mr. Menaida ; “ and I had such different plans in my head—but there, no more about them.”

“ I had to make my election whether to take him and qualify to become Jamie’s guardian, or refrain, and then he would have been snatched away and imprisoned in that odious place again.”

“ But my dear Miss Judith—— ” The old man was so agitated that he did not know what he was about ;

he put the stick of tamarisk into his mouth in place of his pipe, and took it out to speak, put down his hand, picked up the bowl of his pipe, and tapped the end of the tamarisk spill with that. "Mercy save me! What a world we do live in! And I had been building for you a castle—not in Spain, but in a contiguous country. Who'd have thought it? And Cruel Coppinger too! Upon my soul, I don't want to say I am sorry for it, and I can't find in my heart to say I'm glad."

"I do not expect that you will be glad—not if you have any love for me."

The old man turned round; his eyes were watering and his face twitching.

"I have. Heaven knows I have, Ju—I mean Miss Judith!"

"Mr. Menaida," said the girl, "you have been so kind, so considerate, that I should like to call you what every one else does when speaking of you to one another—not to your face—Uncle Zachie."

He put out his hand—it was shaking—and caught hers. He put the ends of the fingers to his lips, but he kept his face averted, and the water that had

formed in his eyes ran down his cheeks. He did not venture to speak. He had lost command over his voice.

“You see, uncle, I have no one of whom to ask counsel. I have only aunt, and she—somehow I feel that I cannot go to her and get from her the advice best suited to me. Now papa is dead I am entirely alone, and I have to decide on matters most affecting my own life and that of Jamie. I do so crave for a friend who could give me an opinion, but I have no one if you refuse.”

He pressed her hand.

“Not that now I can go back from my word. I have passed that to Aunt Dionysia, and draw back I may not; but somehow, as I sit and think and think, and try to screw myself up to the resolution that must be reached of giving up my hand and my whole life into the power of—of that man, I cannot attain to it. I feel like one who is condemned to cast himself down a precipice and shrinks from it, cannot make up his mind to spring, but draws back after every run made to the edge. Tell me—uncle—tell me truly, what do you think about Captain Coppinger? What do you know about him? Is he a very wicked man?”

“You ask me what I think, and also what I know,” said Mr. Menaida, releasing her hand. “I know nothing, but I have my thoughts.”

“Then tell me what you think.”

“As I have said, I know nothing. I do not know whence he comes. Some say he is a Dane, some that he is a Frenchman. I cannot tell, I know nothing, but I think his intonation is Irish, and I have heard that there is a family of that name in Ireland. But this is all guess-work. One thing I do know—he speaks French like a native. Then, as to his character. I believe him to be a man of ungovernable temper, who, when his blood is roused, will stick at nothing. I think him a man of very few scruples. But he has done liberal things; he is open-handed—that all say. A hard liver, and with a rough tongue, and yet with some of the polish of a gentleman; a man with the passions of a devil, but not without in him some sparks of divine light. That is what I think him to be. And, if you ask me further, whether I think him a man calculated to make you happy, I say decidedly that he is not.”

Barely ever before in his life had Mr. Menaida spoken with such decision.

“He has been kind to me,” said Judith, “very kind.”

“Because he is in love with you.”

“And gentle——”

“Have you ever done aught to anger him?”

“Yes; I threw him down and broke his arm and collar-bone.”

“And won his heart by so doing.”

“Uncle Zachie, he is a smuggler.”

“Yes; there is no doubt about that.”

“Do you suppose, if I were to entreat him, that he would abandon smuggling? I have already had it in my heart to ask him this, but I could not bring the request over my lips.”

“I have no doubt if you asked him to throw up his smuggling that he would promise to do so. Whether he would keep his promise is another matter. Many a girl has made her lover swear to give up gambling, and on that understanding has married him, but I reckon none have been able to keep their husbands to the engagement. Gambling, smuggling, and poaching, my dear, are in the blood. A man brings the love of adventure, the love of running a risk, into the world

with him. If I had been made by my wife to swear when I married never to touch a musical instrument, I might, out of love for her, have sworn, but I could not have kept my oath. And you, if you vowed to keep your fingers from needle and thread, and you saw your gown in rags, or your husband's linen frayed, would find an irresistible itch in the fingers' ends to mend and hem, and you would do it in spite of your vow. So with a gambler, a poacher, and a smuggler—the instinct, the passion is in them, and is irresistible. Don't impose any promise on Captain Cruel; it will not tie him."

"They tell me he is a wrecker."

"What do you mean by a wrecker? We are all wreckers, after a storm, when a merchantman has gone to pieces on the rocks, and the shore is strewn with prizes. I have taken what I could, and I see no harm in it. When the sea throws treasures here and there, it is a sin not to take them up and use them, and be thankful."

"I do not mean that. I mean that he has been the means of luring ships to their destruction."

"Of that I know nothing. Stories circulate when-

ever there is a wreck not in foul weather or with a wind on shore. But who can say whether they be true or false?"

"And what about that man Wyvill? Did he kill him?"

"There, also, I can say nothing, because I know nothing. All that can be said about the matter is that the Preventive man Wyvill was found at sea, or washed ashore without his head. A shark may have done it, and sharks have been found off our coast. I cannot tell. There is not a shadow of evidence that could justify an indictment. All that can be stated that makes against Coppinger is that the one is a smuggler, the other was a Preventive man, and that the latter was found dead, and with his head off, an unusual circumstance, but not sufficient to show that he had been decapitated by any man, nor that the man who decapitated him was Coppinger."

Then Mr. Menaida started up. "And—you sell yourself to this man for Jamie?"

"Yes, uncle, to make a man of Jamie."

"On the chance, Judith, on the very doubtful chance, of making a man of Jamie you rush on the certainty of

making a ruin of yourself. That man—that Coppinger to be trusted with you! A fair little vessel, richly laden, with silken sail and cedar sides, comes skimming over the sea, and—Heaven forgive me if I judge wrongly—but I think he is a wrecker, enticing, constraining you on to the reefs where you will break up, and all your treasures will—not fall to him—but sink; and all that will remain of you will be a battered and broken hull and a draggled, discoloured sail. I cannot—I cannot endure the thought.”

“Yet it must be endured, faced and endured by me,” said Judith. “You are a cruel comforter, Uncle Zachie. I called you to encourage me, and you cast me down, to lighten my load, and you heap more on.”

“I can do no other,” gasped Mr. Menaida. Then he sprang back, with open mouth, aghast. He saw Cruel Coppinger on the other side of the hedge; he had put his hands to the tamarisk bushes, and had thrust them apart, and was looking through.

“Goldfish!” called Captain Coppinger—“Goldfish, come!”

Judith knew the voice, and looked in the direction whence it came, and saw the large hands of Coppinger

holding back the boughs of tamarisk, his dark face in the gap. She rose at once, and stepped towards him.

“You are ill,” he said, fixing his sombre eyes on her.

“I am not ill in body. I have had much to harass my mind.”

“Yes, that Wadebridge business.”

“Much that has sprung out of it.”

“Shall I come to you, or will you to me?—through the tamarisks?”

“As you will, Captain Coppinger.”

“Come, then—up on to the hedge and jump. I will catch you in my arms. I have held you there ere this.”

“Yes, you have taken me up; now must I throw——”

She did not finish the sentence; she meant must she voluntarily throw herself into his arms. She caught hold of the bushes, and raised herself to the top of the hedge.

“By Heaven!” said he, “the tamarisk flowers have more colour in them than your face.”

She stood on the summit of the bank, the tamarisks rising to her knees, waving in the wind about her.

Must she resign herself to that man of whom she knew so little, whom she feared so greatly? There was no help for it. She must. He held out his arms. She sprang, and he caught her.

“I have you now,” he said, with a laugh of triumph. “You have come to me, and I will never give you up.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

AMONG THE SAND-HEAPS.

COPPINGER held her in his arms, shook her hair out so that it streamed over his arm ; and thus he looked into her upturned face.

“Indeed you are light—lighter than when I bare you in my arms before ; and you are thin and white, and the eyes, how red ! You have been crying. What ! this spirit, strong as a steel spring, is so subdued that it gives way to weeping ! ”

Judith's eyes were closed against the strong light from the sky above, and against the sight of his face bent over hers, and the fire-glint of his eyes, dark as a thundercloud, and as full charged with lightnings. And now there was a flashing of fire from them, of love, and pride, and admiration. The strong man trembled

beneath his burden in the vehemence of his emotion, with the boiling and foaming of his heart within him, as he held the frail child in his arms, and knew that in a short space she was to be his own, his own wholly. It was for the moment to him as though all earth and sea and heaven were dissolved into nebulous chaos, and the only life, the only pulses, in the universe were in him and the little creature he held to his breast. He looked into her face, down on her as Vesuvius must have looked down on lovely, marble-white Pompeii, with its gilded roofs and incense-scented temples, and restrained itself so long as it could restrain its molten heart, before it poured forth its fires and consumed the pearly city lying in its arms.

He looked at her closed eyelids, with the long golden lashes resting on the dark sunken dip beneath, at the delicate mouth drawn as with pain, at the white temples in which slowly throbbed the blue veins, at the profusion of red-gold hair streaming over his arm and almost touching the ground.

She knew that his eyes—on fire—were on her, and she dared not meet them, for there would be a shrinking from him, no responsive leap of flame from hers.

“ Shall I carry you about like this ? ” he asked. “ I could, and I would, to the world’s end, and leap with you thence into the unfathomed abyss.”

Her head, leaning back on his arm, with the gold rain from it falling, exposed her long and delicate throat of exquisite purity of tint and beauty of modelling, and on it lay a little tuft of pink tamarisk blossom, brushed off in her leap into his arms, and then caught in the light edging of her gown at the neck.

“ And you came to me of your own will ! ” he said.

Then Judith slightly turned her head to avoid his eyes, and said, “ I have come—it was unavoidable. Let me down that we may speak together.”

He obeyed with reluctance. Then, standing before him, she bound up and fastened her hair.

“ Look ! ” said he, and threw open his collar. A ribbon was tied about his throat. “ Do you see this ? ” He loosed the band and held it to her. One delicate line of gold ran along the silk, fastened to it by threads at intervals. “ Your one hair—the one left with me when you first heard me speak my heart’s wish, and you disdained me and went your way. You left me

that one hair, and that one hair I have kept wound round my neck ever since, and it has seemed to me that I might still hope so long as I retained that hair. And see—I have caught my goldfish, my saucy goldfish that at first swam away from my hook.”

Judith said, calmly, “Let us walk together somewhere—to S. Enodoc, to my father’s grave, and then, over that sand-heap, we will settle what must be settled.”

“I will go with you where you will. You are my queen—I your subject; it is my place to obey.”

“The subject has sometimes risen and destroyed the queen. It has been so in France.”

“Yes, when the subject has been too hardly treated, too downtrodden, not allowed to look on and adore the queen.”

“And,” said Judith, further, “let us walk in silence. Allow me the little space between here and my father’s grave to collect my thoughts. Bear with me for that short distance.”

“As you will. I am your slave, as I have told you, and you, my mistress, have but to command.”

“Yes, but the slave sometimes becomes the master,

and then is all the more tyrannous because of his former servitude."

So they walked together, yet apart, from Polzeath, to S. Enodoc, neither speaking, and it might have been a mourner's walk at a funeral. She held her head down, and did not raise her eyes from the ground, but he continued to gaze on her with a glow of triumph and exultation in his face.

They reached at length the deserted church, sunken in the sands; it had a hole broken in the wall under the eaves on the south, rudely barricaded, through which the sacred building might be entered for such functions as a marriage, or the first part of the funeral office, that must be performed in a church.

The roof was of pale grey slate, small, much broken, folding over the rafters, like the skin on the ribs of an old horse past work. The churchyard was covered with blown sand, gravestones were in process of being buried, like those whom they commemorated. Some stood a little above the sand, with a fat cherub's head peering above the surface, others stood high on the land side, but were banked up by sand towards the sea. Here the churchyard surface was smooth, there it was

tossed into undulations, according as the sand had been swept over portions tenanted by the poor who were uncommemorated with headstones, or over those where lay the well-to-do with their titles and virtues registered above them.

There was as yet no monument erected over the grave of the Reverend Peter Trevisa, sometime rector of S. Enodoc. The mound had been turfed over and bound down with withies. The loving hands of his daughter had planted above where he lay some of the old favourite flowers from the long walk at the rectory, but they had not as yet taken to the soil; the sand ill-agreed with them, and the season of the year when their translation had taken place dissatisfied them; they looked forlorn, drooping, and doubted whether they would make the struggle to live.

Below the church lay the mouth of the Camel, blue between sand-hills, with the Doom Bar, a long and treacherous bank of shifting sands, in the midst.

On reaching the churchyard Judith signed to Captain Coppinger to seat himself on a flat tombstone on the south side of her father's grave, and she herself leaned against the headstone that marked her mother's tomb.

“I think we should come to a thorough understanding,” she said, with composure, “that you may not expect of me what I cannot give, and may know the reason why I give you anything. You call me goldfish. Why?”

“Because of your golden hair.”

“No, that was not what sprung the idea in your brain; it was something I said to you—that you and I stood to each other in the relation of bird of prey to fish, belonging to distinct modes of life and manner of thinking, and that we could never be to one another in any other relation than that, the falcon and his prey, the flame and its fuel, the wrecker and the wrecked.”

Coppinger started up and became red as blood.

“These are strange words,” he said.

“It is the same that I said before.”

“Then why have you given yourself to me?”

“I have resigned myself to you as I cannot help myself, any more than can the fish that is pounced on by the sea bird, or the fuel that is enveloped by the flame, or the ship that is boarded by the wreckers.”

She looked up at him steadily; he was quivering with excitement, anger, and disappointment.

“It is quite right that you should know what to expect, and make no more demands on me than I am capable of answering. You cannot ask of me that I should become like you, and I do not entertain the foolish thought that you could be brought to be like me—to see through my eyes, feel with my heart. My dead father lies between us now, and he will ever be between us—he a man of pure life, noble aspirations, a man of books, of high principle, fearing God and loving men. What he was, that he tried to make me. Imperfectly, faultily, I follow him, but, though unable to be like him, I strive after what he showed me should be my ideal.”

“You are a child. You will be a woman, and new thoughts will come to you.”

“Will they be good and honourable and contented thoughts? Shall I find these in your house?”

Coppinger did not reply; his brows were drawn together, and his face became dark.

“Why, then, have you promised to come to me?”

“Because of Jamie.”

He uttered an oath, and with his hands clenched the upper stone of the tomb.

“ I have promised my aunt that I will accept you if you will suffer my poor brother to live where I live, and permit me to be his protector. He is helpless, and must have some one to think and watch for him. My aunt would have sent him to Mr. Obadiah Scantlebray’s asylum, and that would have been fatal to him. To save him from that I said that I would be yours, on the condition that my home should be his home. I have passed my word to my aunt, and I will not go from it, but that does not mean that I have changed my belief that we are unfitted for each other, because we belong to different orders of being.”

“ This is cold comfort.”

“ It is cold as ice, but it is all that I have to give to you. I wish to put everything plainly before you now, that there may be no misapprehension later, and you may be asking of me what I cannot give, and be angry at not receiving what I never promised to surrender.”

“ So! I am only accepted for the sake of that boy James.”

“ It is painful for me to say what I do—as painful as it must be for you to hear it, but I cannot help myself.

I wish to put all coldly and hardly before you before an irrevocable step is taken, such as might make us both wretched. I take you for Jamie's sake. Were his happiness, his well-being, not in the scale, I would not take you. I would remain free."

"That is plain enough," exclaimed Coppinger, setting his teeth, and he broke off a piece of the tombstone on which he was half sitting.

"You will ask of me love, honour, and obedience. I will do my best to love you—like you I do now, for you have been kind and good to me, and I can never forget what you have done for me. But it is a long leap from liking to loving. Still I will try my best, and if I fail it will not be for lack of effort. Honour is another matter. That lies in your own power to give. If you behave as a good and worthy man to your fellows, and justly towards me, of course I shall honour you. I must honour what is deserving of honour, and where I honour there I may come to love. I cannot love where I do not honour, so perhaps I may say that my heart is in your hands, and that if those hands are clean and righteous in their dealings, it may become yours some time. As to obedience—that you shall

command. That I will render to you frankly and fully in all things lawful."

"You offer me an orange from which all the juice has been squeezed, a nut without a kernel."

"I offer you all I have to offer. Is it worth your while having this?"

"Yes!" said he, angrily, starting up; "I will have what I can, and wring the rest out of you when once you are mine."

"You never will wring anything out of me. I give what I may, but nothing will I yield to force."

He looked at her sullenly and said, "A child in years, with an old head and a stony heart."

"I have always lived with my father, and so have come to think like one that is old," said Judith. "And now, alone in the world, I must think with ripened wits."

"I do not want that precocious, wise soul, if that be the kernel. I will have the shell—the glorious shell. Keep your wisdom and righteousness and piety for yourself. I do not value them a rush; but your love I will have."

"I have told you there is but one way by which that

may be won. But, indeed, Captain Coppinger, you have made a great mistake in thinking of me. I am not suited to you to make you happy and content, any more than you are suited to me. Look out for some girl more fit to be your mate."

"Of what sort? Come, tell me!" said Coppinger, scornfully.

"A fine, well-built girl, dark-haired, dark-eyed, with cheeks as apricots, lively in mood, with nimble tongue, good-natured, not bookish, not caring for brush or piano; one who can take a rough word and return it; who will not wince at an oath, and shrink away at coarse words flung about where she is. All these things you know very well must be encountered by your wife in your house. Did you ever read 'Hamlet,' Captain Coppinger?"

He made no answer; he was plucking at the slab-cover of the tomb, and grinding his heels into the sand.

"In 'Hamlet' we read of a king poisoned by his queen, who dipped the juice of cursed hebenon into his ears, and it curdled all his blood. It is the same with the sort of language that is found in your house when

your seamen are there. I cannot endure it, it curdles my heart. Choose a girl who is indifferent."

"You shall not be subjected to it," said Coppinger; "and, as to the girl you have sketched, I care not for her. Such as you describe are to be found thick as whortleberries on a moor. Do you not know that man seeks in marriage not his counterpart but his contrast? It is because you are in all things different from me that I love you."

"Then, will naught that I have said make you desist?"

"Naught."

"I have told you that I take you only so as to be able to make a home for Jamie."

"Yes."

"And that I do not love you, and hardly think I ever can."

"Yes."

"And still—you will have me?"

"Yes."

"And that by taking me you wreck my life, spoil my happiness."

He raised his head, then dropped it again, and said—

“ Yes.”

She remained silent, also looking on the ground. Presently she raised her head and said—

“ I gave you a chance, and you have cast it from you. I am sorry.”

“ A chance ? What chance ? ”

“ The chance of taking a first step up the ladder in my esteem.”

“ I do not understand you.”

“ Therefore I am sorry.”

“ What is your meaning ? ”

“ Captain Coppinger,” said Judith, firmly, looking straight into his dark face and flickering eyes, “ I am very, very sorry. When I told you that I accepted your offer only because I could not help myself, because I was a poor, feeble orphan, with a great responsibility laid on me, the charge of my unfortunate brother—that I only accepted you for his sake ; when I told you that I did not love you ; that our characters, our feelings, were so different, that it would be misery to me to become your wife, that it would be the ruin of my life—then, had you been a man of generous soul, you would have said : ‘ I will not force myself upon you,

but I will do one thing for you, assist you in protecting Jamie from the evil that menaces him.' Had you said that, I would have honoured you, and, as I said just now, where I honour there I may love. But you could not think such a thought, no such generous feeling stirred you. You hold me to my bond."

"I hold you to your bond!" exclaimed Coppinger, in livid rage; "I hold you, indeed. Even though you can neither love nor honour me, you shall be mine. You likened me to a bird of prey that must have its prey or die; to a fire, and that must have its fuel; to a wrecker, and he must have his wreck. I care not. I will have you as mine whether you love me or not."

"So be it, then," said Judith, sadly. "You had your opportunity, and have put it from you. We understand each other. The slave is master—and a tyrant."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DANGEROUS GIFT.

“I DU love a proper muddle cruel bad, I du,” said Jump; and had what she loved, for the preparations for Judith’s marriage threw Mr. Menaida’s twin cottage into a “proper muddle.” There were the cakes to be baked, and for a while the interior of the house was pervaded by that most delicious aroma of baking bread, superior to Frangipanni, Jockey Club, and Wood Violet. Then came the dusting, and after that the shaking and beating of rugs, and sofa and chairs. Then it was discovered that the ceiling and walls would be the better for white and colour-wash. This entailed the turning out of everything previously dusted and tidied and arranged. Neither Mr. Menaida nor Jump had any other idea of getting things into order than that of

throwing all into a muddle in the hopes that out of chaos creation and order might spring.

A dressmaker had been engaged, and material purchased for the fabrication of a trousseau. This naturally interested Jump vastly, and Jump paid repeated visits to the dressmaker whilst engaged on her work. On one such occasion she neglected the kitchen, and allowed some jam to become burnt. On another she so interested the needlewoman, and diverted her attention from her work whilst cutting out, that the latter cut out two right arms to the wedding-gown. This involved a difficulty, as it was not practicable either to turn the one sleeve, and convert it into a left arm, nor to remove Judith's left arm and attach it to the right side of her body, and so accommodate her to the gown. The mercer at Camel-ford was communicated with, from whom the material had been procured, but he was out of it. He, however, was in daily expectation of a consignment of more of the same stuff. A fortnight later he was able to supply the material, sufficient for a left sleeve, but unfortunately of a different colour. The gown had to be laid aside till some one could be found of Judith's size

and figure, with two right arms, and also who wanted a wedding-dress, and, also, would be disposed to take this particular one at half the cost of the material, or else to let the gown stand over till after the lapse of a century or thereabouts, when the fashion would prevail for ladies to wear sleeves of a different substance and colour from their bodies and skirts.

“’Taint a sort o’ a courtin’ as I’d give a thankee for,” said Jump. “There was Camelford Goose Fair, and whether he axed her to go wi’ him and pick a goose I can’t tell, but I know her never went. Then a’ Sundays they don’t walk one another out. And he don’t come arter her to the back garden, and she go to him, and no whisperings and kissings. I’ve listened a score o’ times a hoping and a wishing to see and hear the likes, and never once, as I’m a Christian and a female. There were my sister Jane, when she was going to be married, her got that hot and blazin’ red that I thought it were scarlatina, but it was naught but excitement. But the young mistress—bless ’ee! her gets whiter and colder every day, and I’d say, if such a thing were possible, that her’d rather her never was a going to be married, but you see that ain’t in natur’—

leastways wi' us females. I tell 'ee I never seed him once put his arm round her waist. If this be courtin' among gentlefolks, all I say is, preserve and deliver me from being a lady."

It was as Jump in her vulgar way put it. Judith alone in the house appeared to take no interest in the preparations. It was only after a struggle with her aunt that she had yielded to have the wedding in November. She had wished it postponed till the spring, but Cruel Coppinger and Aunt Dionysia were each for their several ends desirous to have it in the late autumn. Coppinger had the impatience of a lover, and Miss Trevisa the desire to be free from a menial position, and lodged in her own house before winter set in. She had amused herself over Othello Cottage ever since that Judith had yielded her consent, and her niece saw little of her accordingly.

It suited Coppinger's interest to have a tenant for the solitary cottage, and that a tenant who would excite no suspicion, as the house was employed as a store for various run goods, and it was understood between him and Miss Trevisa that he was still to employ the garret for the purposes that suited him.

Had Othello Cottage remained long unoccupied, it was almost certain to attract the attention of the Preventive men, awake their suspicions, and be subjected to a visit. Its position was convenient, it was on the cliff of that cove where was the cave in which the smugglers' boats were concealed.

Coppinger visited Polzeath, and saw Judith whenever he came to Mr. Menaida's house, but his wooing met with no response. She endured his attentions, shrinking from the slightest approach to familiarity, and though studiously courteous, was never affectionate. It would have taken a heavy charge of self-conceit to have made the Captain blind to the fact that she did not love him, that, in truth, she viewed her approaching marriage with repugnance. Coppinger was a proud, but not a conceited, man, and her coldness and aversion roused his anger, for it galled his pride. Had he been a man of noble impulse, he would have released her, as she had plainly told him, but he was too selfish, too bent on carrying out his own will to think of abandoning his suit.

Her lack of reciprocation did not abate his passion; it aggravated it. It enlisted his self-esteem in the

cause, and he would not give her up, because he had set his mind upon obtaining her, and to confess his defeat would have been a humiliation insufferable to his haughty spirit. But it was not merely that he would not, it was also that he could not. Coppinger was a man who had all his life long done what he willed, till his will had become in him the mainspring of his existence, and drove him to execute his purposes in disregard of reason, safety, justice. What he willed he must do. He could not brook opposition. He would eat out his own furious heart in impotent rage, if his will encountered impossibility of execution. And he was of a sanguine temperament. Hitherto every opposition had been overthrown before him, therefore he could not conceive that the heart of a young girl, a mere child, could stand out against him permanently. For a while it might resist, but ultimately it must yield, and then the surrender would be absolute, unconditional.

Every time he came to see her, he came with hopes, almost with confidence, that the icy barrier would dissolve, but when he was in her presence, the chill from it struck him, numbed his heart, silenced his tongue,

deadened his thoughts. Yet no sooner was he gone from the house, than his pulses leaped, his brain whirled, and he was consumed with mortified pride and disappointed love. He could not be rough, passionate, and imperious with her. A something he could not understand, certainly not define, streamed from her that kept him at a distance and quelled his insolence. It was to him at moments as if he hated her; but this hate was but the splutter of frustrated love. He recalled the words she had spoken to him, the terms she had employed in speaking of the relation in which they stood to each other, the only relation to her conceivable in which they could stand to each other, and each such word was a spark of fire, a drop of flaming phosphorus on his heart, torturing it with pain, and unquenchable. A word once spoken can never be recalled, and these words had been thrown red hot at him, had sunk in and continued to consume where they had fallen. He was but a rapacious bird and she the prey, he the fire and she the fuel, he the wrecker and she the wreck. There could be no reciprocity between them; the bird in the talons of the hawk, rent by his beak, could do no other than shiver and shriek, and

struggle to be free. The fuel could but expect to be consumed to ashes in the flame; and the wrecked must submit to the wrecker. He brooded over these similes, he chafed under the conviction that there was truth in them, he fought against the idea that a return of his love was impossible—and then his passion raged and roared up in a fury that was no other than hatred of the woman who could not be his in heart. Then, in another moment, he cooled down, and trusted that what he dreaded would not be. He saw before him the child, white as a lily, with hair as the anthers of the lily—so small, so fragile, so weak; and he laughed to think that one such, with no experience of life, one who had never tasted love, could prove insensible to his devouring passion. The white asbestos in the flame glows, and never loses its delicacy and its whiteness.

And Judith was, as Jump observed, becoming paler and more silent as her marriage drew on. The repugnance with which she had viewed it instead of abating, intensified with every day. She woke in the night with a start of horror, and a cold sweat poured from her. She clasped her hands over her eyes, and buried

her face in her pillow and trembled, so that the bed rattled. She lost all appetite. Her throat was contracted when she touched food. She found it impossible to turn her mind to the preparations that were being made for her wedding; she suffered her aunt to order for her what she liked; she was indifferent when told of the blunder made by the dressmaker in her wedding-gown. She could not speak at meals. When Mr. Menaida began to talk, she seemed to listen, but her mind was elsewhere. She resumed lessons with Jamie, but was too abstracted to be able to teach effectually. A restlessness took hold of her, and impelled her to be out of doors and alone. Any society was painful to her. She could endure only to be alone; and when alone, she did nothing save pluck at her dress, or rub her fingers one over the other—the tricks and convulsive movements of one on the verge of death.

But she did not yield to her aversion without an effort to accustom herself to the inevitable. She rehearsed to herself the good traits she had observed in Coppinger, his kindness, his forbearance towards herself. She took cognizance of his efforts to win her

regard, to afford her pleasure ; his avoidance of everything that he thought might displease her. And when she knew he was coming to visit her, she strove with herself and formed the resolution to break down her coldness, and to show him some of that semblance of affection which he might justly expect. But it was in vain. No sooner did she hear his step, or the first words he uttered—no sooner did she see him, than she turned to stone, and the power to even feign an affection she did not possess, left her. And when Coppinger had departed, there was stamped red hot on her brain the conviction that she could not possibly endure life with him.

She prayed long and often, sometimes by her father's grave, always in bed when lying wakeful, tossing from side to side in anguish of mind, often, very often when on the cliffs looking out to sea, to the dark, leaden, sullen sea, that had lost all the laughter and colour of summer. But prayer afforded her no consolation. The thought of marriage to such a man, whom she could not respect, whose whole nature was inferior to her own, was a thought of horror. She could have nerved herself to death by the most excruciating of

torments, but for this—not all the grace of heaven could fortify her.

To be his mate, to be capable of loving him, she must descend to his level, and that she neither could nor would do. His prey, his fuel, his wreck—that she must become, but she could be nothing else—nothing else. As the day of her marriage approached, her nervous trepidation became so acute that she could hardly endure the least noise. A strange footfall startled her and threw her into a paroxysm of trembling. The sudden opening of a door made her heart stand still.

When her father had died, poignant though her sorrow had been, she had enjoyed the full powers of her mind. She had thought about the necessary preparations for the funeral, she had given orders to the servants, she had talked over the dear father to Jamie, she had wept his loss till her eyes were red. Not so now: she could not turn her thoughts from the all-absorbing terror; she could not endure an allusion to it from any one, least of all to speak of it to her brother. And the power to weep was taken from her. Her eyes were dry—they burnt, but were unfilled by tears.

When her father was dead she could look forward, think of him in Paradise, and hope to rejoin him after having trustily executed the charge imposed on her by him. But now she could not look ahead. A shadow of horror lay before her, an impenetrable curtain. Her father was covering his face, was sunk in grief in his celestial abode ; he could not help her. She could not go to him with the same open brow and childish smile as before. She must creep to his feet, and lay her head there, sullied by association with one against whom he had warned her, one whom he had regarded as the man that had marred his sacred utility, one who stood far below the stage of virtue and culture that belonged to his family, and on which he had firmly planted his child. What was in her heart Judith could pour out before none ; certainly not before Aunt Dionysia, devoid of a particle of sympathy with her niece. Nor could she speak her trouble to Uncle Zachie, a man void of resources, kind, able for a minute or two to sympathize, but never to go deeply into any trouble, and understand more of a wound than the fester on the surface. Besides, of what avail to communicate the anguish of her heart to any one, when

nothing could be done to alter the circumstances. She could not now draw back. Indeed it never occurred to her to be possible to go back from her undertaking. To save Jamie from an idiot asylum she had passed her word to give her hand at the altar to Cruel Coppinger, and her word was sacred. Aunt Dionysia trusted her word. Coppinger held to it. Knowing that she gave it on compulsion and reluctantly, yet he showed his perfect confidence in its security.

“My dear Judith,” said Mr. Menaida, “I am so sorry about losing you, and what is more, losing Jamie, for I know very well that when he is at the Glaze, he will find plenty to amuse him without coming to see me, or, anyhow, coming to work with me.”

“I hope not, dear uncle.”

“Yes, I lose a promising pupil.” Then, turning to the boy, he said: “Jamie, I hope you will not give up stuffing birds, or—if you have not the patience to do that, that you will secure the skins and prepare them for me.”

“Yes, I will,” said Jamie.

“Yes, yes, my dear boy,” said Menaida; “but don’t you fancy I am going to trust you with arsenic for preparing the skins. I shall give that to your sister, and she will keep the supply, eh?—will you not Judith?”

“Yes, I will take charge of it.”

“And let him have it as needed, never more than is needed.”

“Why not?” asked Jamie.

“Because it is a dangerous thing to have lying about.” Menaida ran into the workshop, and came back with a small tin box of the poison. “Look here! here is a little bone spoon. Don’t get the powder over your fingers. Why—a spoonful would make a man very ill, and two would kill him. So, Judith, I trust this to you. When Jamie has a skin to prepare, he will go to you, and you will let him have only so much as he requires.”

“Yes uncle.”

She took the little tin of arsenic and put it into her work-box, under the tray that contained reels and needles.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HALF A MARRIAGE.

ONE request Judith had made, relative to her marriage, and one only, after she had given way about the time when it was to take place, and this request concerned the place. She desired to be married, not in the parish church of S. Minver, but in that of S. Enodoc, in the yard of which lay her father and mother, and in which her father had occasionally ministered.

It was true that no great display could be made in a building half filled with sand, but neither Judith nor Coppinger, nor Aunt Dionysia desired display, and Jump, the sole person who wished that the wedding should be in full gala, was not consulted in the matter.

November scowled over sea and land, perverting the former into lead, and blighting the latter to a dingy brown.

The wedding day was sad. Mist enveloped the coast, wreathed the cliffs, drifted like smoke over the glebe, and lay upon the ocean dense and motionless, like a mass of cotton wool. Not a smile of sun, not a glimmer of sky, not a trace of outline in the haze over head. The air was full of minute particles of moisture, flying aimlessly, lost to all sense of gravity, in every direction. The mist had a fringe but no seams, and looked as if it were as unrendable as felt. It trailed over the soil, here lifting a ragged flock or tag of fog a few feet above the earth, there dropping it again, and smearing water over all it touched.

Vapour condensed on every twig and leaf, but only leisurely, and slowly dripped from the ends of thorns and of leaves, but the weight of the water on some of the frosted and sickly foliage brought the leaves down with it. Every stone in every wall was lined with trickles of water like snail crawls. The vapour penetrated within doors, and made all articles damp, of whatever sort they were. Fires were reluctant to

kindle, chimneys smoked. The grates and irons broke out into eruptions of rust, mildew appeared on walls, leaks in roofs. The slate floors became dark and moist. Forks and spoons adhered to the hands of those who touched them, and on the keys of Mr. Menaida's piano drops formed.

What smoke did escape from a chimney trailed down the roof. Decomposed leaves exhaled the scent of decay. From every stackyard came a musty odour of wet straw and hay. Stableyards emitted their most fetid exudations, that oozed through the gates and stained the roads. The cabbages in the kailyards, touched by frost, announced that they were in decomposition, and the turnips that they were in rampant degeneration and rottenness. The very seaweed, washed ashore, impregnated the mist with the flavour of decay.

The new rector, the Reverend Desiderius Mules, had been in residence at S. Enodoc for three months. He had received but a hundred and twenty-seven pounds four and ninepence farthing for dilapidations, and was angry, declared himself cheated, and vowed he would never employ the agent Cargreen any more. And

a hundred and twenty-seven pounds four and ninepence farthing went a very little way towards repairing and altering the rectory to make it habitable to the liking of the Reverend Desiderius. The Reverend Peter Trevisa and his predecessors had been West Country men, and as such loved the sun, and chose to have the best rooms of the house with a southern aspect. But the Reverend Desiderius Mules had been reared in Barbadoes, and hated the sun, and elected to have the best rooms of the house to look north. This entailed great alterations. The kitchen had to be converted into a parlour, and the parlour into a kitchen, the dining-room into a scullery, the scullery into a study, and the library enlarged to serve as a dining-room. All the downstairs windows had to be altered. Mr. Desiderius Mules liked to have French windows opening to the ground.

In the same manner great transformations were made in the garden. Where Mr. Peter Trevisa had built up and planted a hedge, there Mr. Desiderius Mules opened a gate, and where the late rector had laid down a drive there the new rector made garden beds. In the same manner shrubberies were converted into lawns and lawns into shrubberies. The pump

was now of no service outside the drawing-room window, it had to be removed to the other side of the house, and to serve the pump with water a new well had to be dug, and the old well that had furnished limpid and wholesome water was filled up. The site of the conservatory was considered the proper one for the new well, and this entailed the destruction of the conservatory, removal was intended, with a new aspect, to the north, as a frigidarium; but when touched it fell to pieces, and in so doing furnished Mr. Desiderius Mules with much comment on the imposition to which he had been subjected, for he had taken this conservatory at a valuation, and that valuation had been for three pounds seven and fourpence half-penny, whereas the real value of the conservatory was, so he declared, three pounds seven and fourpence without the half-penny at the end or the three pounds.

When the Reverend Desiderius Mules heard that Captain Coppinger and Judith Trevisa were to be married in his church, "By Jove," said he, "they shall pay me double fees, as extra parochial. I shall get that out of them at all events. I have been choused sufficiently."

A post-chaise from Wadebridge conveyed Judith, Miss Trevisa, Uncle Zachie, and Jamie from Polzeath.

The bride was restless. At one moment she leaned back, then forward, her eyes turned resolutely through the window at the fog. Her hands plucked at her veil, or at her gloves, she spoke not a word throughout the drive; Aunt Dionysia was also silent. Opposite her sat Mr. Menaida in blue coat with brass buttons, white waistcoat outside a coloured one, and white trousers tightly strapped. Though inclined to talk, he was unable to resist the depressing influence of his *vis-à-vis*, Miss Trevisa, who sat scowling at him, with her thin lips closed. Jamie was excited, but as no one answered him when he spoke, he also lapsed into silence.

When the churchyard gate of S. Enodoc was reached, Mr. Menaida jumped out of the chaise with a sigh of relief, and muttered to himself that had he known what to expect he would have brought his pocket-flask with him, and have had a nip of cognac on the way.

A goodly number of sightseers had assembled from Polzeath and S. Enodoc, and stood in the churchyard

magnified by the mist to gigantic size. Over the graves of drowned sailors were planted the figure-heads of wrecked vessels, and these in the mist might have been taken as the dead risen and mingling with the living to view this dreary marriage.

The bride herself looked ghostlike, or as a waft of the fog but little condensed, blown through the graveyard towards the gap in the church wall, and blown through that also to the altar within.

That gap was usually blocked with planks from a wreck, supported by beams; when the church was to be put in requisition, then the beams were knocked away, whereupon down clattered the boards and they were tossed aside. It had been so done on this occasion, and the fragments were heaped untidily about among the graves under the church wall. The clerk-sexton had, indeed, considered that morning, with his hands in his pockets, whether it would be worth his while, assisted by the five bell-ringers, to take this accumulation of wreckage and pile it together out of sight, but he had thought that, owing to the fog, a veil would be drawn over the disorder, and he might be saved this extra trouble.

Within the sacred building, over his boots in sand, stamped and fumed, and paced and growled, the Reverend Desiderius Mules, in surplice, hood, and stole, very ill at ease and out of humour because the wedding party arrived unpunctually, and he feared he might catch cold from the wind and fog that drifted in through the hole in the wall serving as door.

The sand within was level with the sills of the windows, it cut the tables of Commandments in half, had blotted away the majority of inhibitions against marriage within blood relationship and marriage kinship. The altar rails were below the surface. The altar table had been fished up, and set against the east wall, not on this day for the marriage, but at some previous occasion. Then the sexton had placed two pieces of slate under the feet on one side, and not having found handy any other pieces, had thought that perhaps it did not matter. Consequently the two legs on one side had sunk in the sand, and the altar table formed an incline.

A vast number of bats occupied the church, and by day hung like little moleskin purses from the roof. Complaints had been made of the disagreeableness of

having these creatures suspended immediately over the head of the officiant, accordingly the sexton had knocked away such as dangled immediately above the altar and step—or place where the step was, beneath the sand; but he did not think it necessary to disturb those in other parts of the church. If they inconvenienced others it was the penalty of curiosity, coming to see a wedding there. Towards the west end of the church some wooden pew tops stood above the sand, and stuck into a gimlet hole in the top rail of one was a piece of holly, dry and brown as a chip. It had been put there as a Christmas decoration the last year that the church was used for divine worship at the feast of Noel; *when* that was only the oldest men could remember. The sexton had looked at it several times, with his hands in his pockets, and considered whether it were worth while pulling his hands out and removing the withered fragment, and carrying it outside the church, but had arrived at the conclusion that it injured no one, and might therefore just as well remain.

There were fragments of stained glass in the windows, in the upper lights of the perpendicular windows saints and angels in white and gold, on ruby

and blue grounds. In one window a fragment of a Christ on the cross. But all were much obscured by cobwebs. These cobwebs, after having entangled many flies, caught and retained many particles of sand, became impervious to light, and obscured the figures in the painted glass. The sexton had looked at these cobwebs occasionally, and mused whether it would be worth his while to sweep them down, but as he knew that the church was rarely used for divine offices, and never for regular divine worship, he deemed that there was no crying necessity for their destruction. Life was short, and time might be better employed—to wit: in talking to a neighbour, in smoking a pipe, in drinking a pint of ale, in larruping his wife, in reading the paper. Consequently the cobwebs remained.

Had Mr. Desiderius Mules been possessed of antiquarian tastes, he might have occupied the time he was kept waiting in studying the bosses of carved oak that adorned the waggon-roof of the church, which were in some cases quaint, in the majority beautiful, and no two the same. And he might have puzzled out the meaning of three rabbits with only three ears between them, forming a triangle, or three heads united in one

neck, a king and queen, a bishop and a monk, or of a sow suckling a dozen little pigs. But Mr. Desiderius Mules had no artistic or archæological faculty developed in him. His one object on the present occasion was to keep draught and damp from the crown of his head, where the hair was so scanty as hardly to exist at all. He did not like to assume his hat in the consecrated building, so he stamped about in the sand, holding a red banana handkerchief on the top of his head, and grumbling at the time he was kept waiting, at the Cornish climate, at the way in which he had been "choused" in the matter of dilapidations for the chancel of the church, at the unintelligible dialect of the people, and at a good many other causes of irritation, notably at a bat which had not revered his bald pate when he ventured beyond the range of the sexton's sweeping.

Presently the clerk, who was outside, thrust in his head through the gap in the wall, and in a stage-whisper announced, "They's a-coming."

The Reverend Mules growled, "There ought to be a right to charge extra when the parson is kept waiting; sixpence a minute, not a penny less. But we are

choused in this confounded corner of the world in every way. Hah! there is a mildew spot on my stole—all come of this villainous damp.”

In the tower stood five men, ready to pull the ropes and sound a merry peal when the service was over, and earn a guinea. They had a firkin of ale in a corner, with which to moisten their clay between each round. Now that they heard that the wedding party had arrived they spat on their hands and heaved their legs out of the sand.

Through the aperture in the wall entered the bridal party, a cloud of fog blowing in with them and enveloping them. They stepped laboriously through the fine sand, at this place less firm than elsewhere, having been dug into daily by the late rector in his futile efforts to clear the church.

Mr. Mules cast a suspicious look at the rafters above him to see that no profane bat was there, and opened his book.

Mr. Menaida was to act as father to the bride, and there was no other bridesmaid than Miss Trevisa. As they waded towards the altar Judith's strength failed, and she stood still. Then Uncle Zachie put his arm

round her, and half carried her over the sand towards the place where she must stand to give herself away. She turned her head and thanked him with her eyes, she could not speak. So deathly was her whiteness, so deficient in life did she seem, that Miss Trevisa looked at her with some anxiety, and a little doubt whether she would be able to go through the service.

When Judith reached her place her eyes rested on the sand. She did not look to her left side, she could hear no steps, for the sand muffled all sound of feet, but she knew by the cold shudder that thrilled through her that Captain Coppinger was at her side.

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here—now, then, order if you please, and quiet; we are twenty-five minutes after time,” said Mr. Desiderius Mules.

The first few words, seven in all, were addressed to the wedding party, the rest to a number of men and women and children who were stumbling and plunging into the church through the improvised door, thrusting each other forward, with a “Get along,” and “Out of the road,” all eager to secure a good sight of the ceremony, and none able to hurry to a suitable place because of the sand that impeded every step.

“ Now, then, I can't stay here all day ! ”

Mr. Mules sniffed, and applied the banana to his nose, as an indication that he was chilled, and that his rheum would be on the heads of the congregation were he made ill by this delay.

“ Dearly beloved, we are gathered,” he began again, and he was now able to proceed. “ Curll,” said he, in loud and emphatic tones, “ wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony ? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health ; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live ? ”

The response of Coppinger went through the heart of Judith like a knife. Then the rector addressed her. For answer she looked up at him and moved her lips. He took her hand and placed it in that of Coppinger. It was cold as ice, and quivering like an aspen leaf. As Captain Coppinger held it it seemed to drag and become heavy in his hand, whilst he pronounced the words after the rector, making oath to take Judith as his own. Then the same words were recited to her, for her to repeat in order after the priest. She began,

she moved her lips, looked him pleadingly in the face, her head swam, the fog filled the whole church and settled between her and the rector. She felt nothing save the grip of Coppinger's hand, and sank unconscious to the ground.

"Go forward," said Cruel.

Mr. Menaida and Aunt Dionysia caught Judith and held her up. She could neither speak nor stir. Her lips were unclosed; she seemed to be gasping for breath like one drowning.

"Go on," persisted Cruel; and holding her left hand he thrust the ring on her fourth finger, repeating the words of the formula.

"I cannot proceed," said the Reverend Desiderius.

"Then you will have to come again to-morrow."

"She is unconscious," objected the rector.

"It is momentary only," said Aunt Dionysia; "be quick and finish."

Mr. Mules hesitated a moment. He had no wish to return in like weather on another day; no wish again to be kept waiting five and twenty minutes. He rushed at the remainder of the office and concluded it at a hand gallop.

“Now,” said he, “the registers are at the rectory. Come there.”

Coppinger looked at Judith.

“Not to-day. It is not possible. She is ill—faint. To-morrow. Neither she nor I, nor the witnesses, will run away. We will come to you to-morrow.”

Uncle Zachie offered to assist Judith from the church.

“No,” said Cruel, peremptorily, “she is mine now.”

With assistance she was able to walk. She seemed to recover for a moment in the air outside, but again lapsed into faintness on being placed in the chaise.

“To Pentyre Glaze,” ordered Coppinger; “our home.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A BREAKFAST.

“SHE has been over exerted and over excited,” said Miss Trevisa. “Leave her to recover; in a few days she will be herself again. Remember, her father died of heart complaint, and though Judith resembles her mother rather than a Trevisa, she may have inherited from my brother just that one thing she had better have let him carry to his grave with him.”

So Judith was given the little room that adjoined her aunt's, and Miss Trevisa postponed for a week her migration to Othello Cottage.

Aunt Dionysia was uneasy about her niece; perhaps her conscience did suffer from some qualms when she saw how Judith shrank from the union she had driven

her into for her own selfish convenience. She treated her in the wisest manner now she had brought her to the Glaze, for she placed her in her old room next her own, and left her there to herself. Judith could hear her aunt walking about and muttering in the adjoining chamber, and was content to be alone to recover her composure and strength.

Uncle Zachie and Jump were, however, in sore distress. They had made the twin cottage ready, had prepared a wedding breakfast, engaged a helping hand or two, and no one had come to partake. Nor was Mr. Desiderius Mules in a cheerful mood. He had been invited to the breakfast, and was hungry and cold. He had to wait whilst Mr. Menaida ran up to Pentyre to know whether any one was going to honour his board. Whilst he was away the rector stamped about the parlour, growling that he believed he was about to be "choused out of his breakfast. There was really no knowing what these people in this out-of-the-world corner might do." Then he pulled off his boots and shook the sand out, rang for Jump, and asked at what hour precisely the breakfast was to be eaten, and whether it was put on table to be looked at only.

From Pentyre Glaze Mr. Menaida was not greatly successful in obtaining guests. He found some wild-looking men there in converse with Coppinger, men whom he knew by rumour to belong to a class that had no ostensible profession and means of living.

Mr. Menaida had ordered in clotted cream, which would not keep sweet many days. It ought to be eaten at once. He inquired whether Coppinger, the bride, Miss Trevisa, any one was coming to his house to consume the clotted cream. As Jamie was drifting about purposeless, and he alone seemed disposed to accompany Uncle Zachie, the old gentleman carried him off.

“ I s’pose I can’t on the spur of the moment go in and ask our S. Minver parson ? ” asked Menaida, dubiously, of the S. Enodoc parson. “ You see, I dare say he’s hurt not to have had the coupling of ’em himself.”

“ Most certainly not,” said Mr. Mules ; “ an appetite is likely to go into faintness unless attended to at once. I know that the coats of my stomach are honeycombed with gastric juice. Shall I say grace ? Another half-hour of delay will finish me.”

Consequently but three persons sat down to a plentiful meal, but some goose, cold, had hardly been served, when in came Mr. Scantlebray, the agent, with a cheery salutation of—

“Hulloa, Menaida, old man! What, eating and drinking? I’ll handle a knife and fork with you—unasked. Beg pardon, Mr. Mules. I’m a rough man, and an old acquaintance of our good friend here; hope I see you in the enjoyment of robust health, sir! Ah! Menaida, old man! I didn’t expect such a thing as this. Now I begin to see daylight, and understand why I was turned out of the valuership, and why my brother lost this promising young pupil. Ah, ha! my man, you have been deprived of fun, such fun, roaring fun, by not being with my brother Scanty. Well, sir” —to Mr. Mules—“what was the figure of the valuation? You had a queer man on your side. I pity you. A man I wouldn’t trust myself. I name no names. Now tell me, what did you get?”

“A hundred and twenty-seven pounds four and ninepence farthing. Monstrous—a chouse!”

“As you say, monstrous. Why, that chancel! Show me the builder who will contract to do that alone at a

hundred and twenty-seven pounds? And the repairs of the rectory, are they to be reckoned at four and nine-pence farthing? It is a swindle! I'd appeal. I'd refuse. You made a mistake, sir, let me tell you, in falling into certain hands. Yes, I'll have some goose, thank you."

Mr. Scantlebray ate heartily, so did the Reverend Desiderius, who had the honeycomb cells of his stomach coats to fill. Both, moreover, did justice to Mr. Menaida's wine, they did not spare it; why should they? Those for whom the board was spread had not troubled to come to it, and they must make amends for their neglect.

"Horrible weather!" said the rector. "I suppose this detestable sort of stuff of which the atmosphere is composed is the prevailing abomination one has to inhale throughout three-quarters of the year. One cannot see three yards before one."

"It's bad for some and good for others," answered Scantlebray. "There'll be wrecks, certainly, after this, especially if we get, as we are pretty sure to get, a wind on shore."

"Wrecks!" exclaimed the rector. "And pray who

pays the fees for drowned men I may be expected to bury?"

"The parish," answered Uncle Zachie.

"Oh, half-a-crown a head," said Mr. Mules, contemptuously.

"There are other things to be had out of a wreck besides burial fees," said Scantlebray. "But you must be down early before the coastguard are there. Have you donkies?"

"Donkies! What for?"

"I have one—a grey beauty," exclaimed Jamie. "Captain Coppinger gave her to me."

"Well, young man, then you pick up what you can, when you have the chance, and lade her with your findings. You'll pick up something better than corpses, and make something more than burial half-crowns."

"But why do you suppose there will be wrecks?" inquired the rector of S. Enodoc. "There is no storm."

"No storm, certainly; but there is fog, and in the fog vessels coming up the Channel to Bristol get lost as to their bearings, get near our cliffs without knowing it, and then—if a wind from the west springs up and blows

rough—they are done for; they can't escape to the open. That's it, old man. I beg your reverence's pardon, I mean sir. When I said that such weather was bad for some and good for others, you can understand me now—bad for the wrecked, good for the wreckers."

"But, surely, you have no wreckers here?"

Mr. Scantlebray laughed. "Go and tell the bridegroom that you think so. I'll let you into the knowledge of one thing"—he winked over his glass;—"there's a fine merchantman on her way to Bristol."

"How do you know?"

"Know! Because she was sighted off S. Ives, and the tidings has run up the coast like fire among heather. I don't doubt it that the tidings has reached Hartland by this; and, with a thick fog like to-day, there are a thousand hearts beating with expectation. Who can say? She may be laden with gold dust from Africa, or with tin from Barca, or with port from Oporto."

"My boy Oliver is coming home," said Mr. Menaida.

"Then let's hope he is not in this vessel, for, old man, she stands a bad chance in such weather as this.

There is Porth-quin, and there is Hayle Bay ready to receive her, or Doom Bar, on which she may run, all handy for our people. Are you anything of a sportsman, sir? ”

“ A little ; but I don't fancy there is much in this precious country—no cover.”

“ What is fox-hunting when you come to consider, or going after a snipe or a partridge? A fox!—it's naught, the brush stinks ; and a snipe is but a mouthful. My dear sir, if you come to live among us, you must seek your sport not on the land, but at sea. You'll find the sport worth something when you get a haul of a barrel of first-rate sherry, or a load of silver ingots. Why, that's how Penwarden bought his farm. He got the money after a storm—drew it on the shore out of the pocket of a dead man. Do you know why the bells of S. Enodoc are so sweet? Because, so folks say, melted into them are ingots of Peruvian silver, from a ship wrecked on Doom Bar.”

“ I should like to get some silver or gold,” said Jamie.

“ I daresay you would ; and so perhaps you may if you look out for it. Go to your good friend, Captain Coppinger, and tell him what you want. He has made

his pickings before now, on shore and off wrecks, and has not given up the practice."

"But," said Mr. Mules, "do you mean to tell me that you Cornish people in this benighted corner of the world live like sharks, upon whatever is cast overboard."

"No, I do not," answered Scantlebray. "We have too much energy and intelligence for that. We don't always wait till it is cast overboard; we go aboard and take what we want."

"What, steal!"

"I don't call that stealing, supposing as how Providence and a south-west wind throws a ship into our laps, when we put in our fingers and pick out the articles we want. What are Porth-quin and Hayle Bay but our laps, in which lie the wrecks heaven sends us? And Doom Bar, what is that but a counter, on which the good things are spread, and those first there get the first share?"

"And pray," said Mr. Desiderius Mules, "have the owners of the vessels, the passengers, the captains, no objections to make?"

"They are not there—don't wait for our people.

If they do—so much the worse for them.” Then Scantlebray laughed. “There’s a good story told of the *Zenobia*, lost four years ago. There was a lady on board. When she knew the vessel was on Doom Bar she put on all her jewellery, to escape with it; but some of our people got to the wreck before she went off it, and one lobe of her ears was torn off.”

“Torn off!”

“Yes, in pulling the earrings off her.”

“But who pulled the earrings off her?”

“Our people.”

“Gracious heavens! Were they not brought to justice?”

“Who did it? No one knew. What became of the jewellery? No one knew. All that was known was that Lady Knighton—that was her name—lost her diamonds and the lobe of her right ear as well.”

“And it was never recovered?”

“What! the lobe of her ear?”

“No, the jewellery.”

“Never.”

“Upon my word, I have got among a parcel of scoundrels! It was high time that I should come and

reform them. I'll set to work at once. I'll have S. Enodoc dug out and restored; and I'll soon put an end to this sort of thing."

"You think so?"

"You don't know me. I'll have a bazaar. I'll have a ball in the Assembly rooms at Wadebridge. The church shall be excavated. I'm not going in there again with the bats, and to have my boots filled with sand, I can tell you. Everything shall be renovated and put to rights. I'll see to it at once. I'll have a pigeon-shooting for the sake of my chancel—I dare say I shall raise twenty pounds by that alone—and a raffle for the font, and an Aunt Sally for the pulpit. But the ball will be the main thing. I'll send and get the county people to patronize. I'll do it, and you barbarians in this benighted corner of the world shall see there is a man of energy among you."

"You'd best try your hand on a wreck. You'll get more off that."

"And I'll have a bran pie for an altar table."

"You won't get the parishioners to do anything for the restoration of the church. They don't want to have it restored."

“The Decalogue is rotten. I run my umbrella through the Ten Commandments this morning. I’ll have a gipsy-camp and fortune-telling to furnish me with new Commandments.”

“I’ve heard tell,” said Scantlebray, “that at Poughill, near Stratton, is a four-post bed of pure gold, come off a wreck in Bude Bay.”¹

“When I was up in the north,” said the rector of S. Enodoc, “we had a savage who bit off the heads of rats, snap, and ate them raw, and charged sixpence entrance; but that was for the missionaries. I should hardly advocate that for the restoration of a church; besides, where is the savage to be got? We made twenty-seven pounds by that man; but expenses were heavy, and swallowed up twenty-five; we sent two pounds to the missionaries.”

Mr. Menaida stood up and went to the window.

“I believe the wind has shifted to the north, and we shall have a lightening of the fog after sunset.”

“Shall we not have a wreck? I hope there’ll be one,” said Jamie.

¹ An exaggeration. The bed, of 17th Century Italian work, is gilt. It is now in a small farmhouse.

“What is the law about wreckage, Menaida, old man?” asked Scantlebray, also coming to the window.

“The law is plain enough: no one has a right to goods come to land; he who finds may claim salvage—naught else; and any person taking goods cast ashore, which are not legal wreck, may be punished.”

“And,” said Scantlebray, “what if certain persons give occasion to a ship being wrecked, and then plundering the wreck?”

“There the law is also plain: the invading and robbing of a vessel, either in distress or when wrecked, and the putting forth of false lights, in order to bring a vessel into danger, are capital felonies.”

Scantlebray went to the table, took up a napkin, twisted it, and then flung it round his neck, and hung his head on one side.

“What—this, Menaida, old man?”

Uncle Zachie nodded.

“Come here, Jim, my boy. A word with you outside.” Scantlebray led Jamie into the road. “There’s been a shilling owing you for some time. We had roaring fun about it once. Here it is. Now listen to

me. Go to Pentyre. You want to find gold dust on the shore, don't you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Or bars of silver.”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, beg Captain Coppinger, if he is going to have a Jack o' Lantern to-night, to let you be the Jack. Do you understand ? And mind—not a word about me. Then—gold dust and bars of silver and purses of shillings. Mind you ask to be Jack o' Lantern. It is fun !—such fun !—roaring fun.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

JACK O' LANTERN.

EVENING closed in. Judith had been left entirely to herself. She sat in the window, looking out into the mist, and watching the failing of the light. Sometimes she opened the casement, and allowed the vapour to blow in like cold steam, then became chilled, shivered, and closed it again. The wind was rising, and piped about the house, whistled at her window. Judith, sitting there, tried with her hand to find the orifice through which the blast drove, and then amused herself with playing with her finger-tops on the opening, and regulating the whistle so as to form a tune. She frequently heard Coppinger's voice in conversation, sometimes in the hall, sometimes in the courtyard, but could not catch what was spoken. She listened with

childish curiosity to the voice that was now that of her lord and husband, and endeavoured to riddle out of it some answer to her questions as to what sort of a master he would prove. She could not comprehend him. She had heard stories told of him that made her deem him the worst of men : remorseless and regardless of others, yet towards her he had proved gentle and considerate. What, for instance, could be more delicate and thoughtful than his behaviour to her at this very time ? Feeling that she had married him with reluctance, he kept away from her, and suffered her to recover her composure without affording her additional struggle. A reaction after the strain on her nerves set in ; the step she had dreaded had been taken, and she was the wife of the man she feared and did not love. The suspense of expectation was exchanged for the calmer grief of retrospect.

The fog all day had been white as wool, and she had noticed how parcels of vapour had been caught and entangled in the thorn bushes, as the fog swept by, very much as sheep left flocks of their fleeces in the bushes when they broke out of a field. Now that the day set, the vapour lost its whiteness and became ash-grey, but

it was not so dense as it had been, or rather it was compacted in places into thick masses, with clear tracts between. The sea was not visible, nor the cliffs, but she could distinguish outbuilding, tufts of furze, and hedges. The wind blew much stronger, and she could hear the boom of the waves against the rocks, like the throbbing of the unseen heart of the world. It was louder than it had been. The sound did not come upon the wind, for the fog, that muffled all objects from sight, muffled also all sounds to the ear, but the boom came from the vibration of the land. The sea, flung against the coast-line, shook the rocks, and they quivered for a far distance inland, making every wall and tree quiver also; and the sound of the sea was heard, not through the ears, but through the soles of the feet.

Miss Trevisa came in.

“ Shall I light you a pair of candles, Judith ? ”

“ I thank you, hardly yet.”

“ And will you not eat ? ”

“ Yes, presently, when supper is served.”

“ You will come downstairs ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I am glad to hear that.”

“Aunt, I thought you were going to Othello Cottage the day I came here?”

“Captain Coppinger will not suffer me to leave at once, till you have settled down to your duties as mistress of the house.”

“Oh, auntie, I shall never be able to manage this large establishment!”

“Why not? You managed that at the rectory.”

“Yes, but it was entirely different.”

“How so?”

“My dear papa’s requirements were so simple, and so few, and there were no men about except poor Balhachet, and he was a dear, good old humbug. Here, I don’t know how many men there are, and who belong to the house, and who do not. They are in one day and out the next; and then Captain Coppinger is not like my own darling papa.”

“No, indeed he is not. Shall I light the candles? I have something to show you.”

“As you will, aunt.”

Miss Trevisa went into her room and fetched a light, and kindled the two candles that stood on Judith’s dressing-table.

“ Oh, aunt ! not three candles.”

“ Why not ? We shall need light.”

“ But three candles together bring ill-luck ; and we have had enough already.”

“ Pshaw ! Don't be a fool. I want light, for I have something to show you.”

She opened a small box and drew forth a brooch and earrings, that flashed in the rays of the candles.

“ Look, child, they are yours ! Captain Coppinger has given them to you. They are diamonds. See—a butterfly for the breast, and two little butterflies for the ears.”

“ Oh, auntie, not for me ! I do not want them.”

“ This is ungracious. I dare say they cost many hundreds of pounds. They are diamonds.”

Judith took the brooch and earrings in her hand ; they sparkled. The diamonds were far from being brilliants, they were of good size and purest water.

“ I really do not wish to have them. Persuade Captain Coppinger to return them to the jeweller ; it is far too costly a gift for me, far, far. I should be happier without them.” Then suddenly—“ I do not know that they have been bought. Oh, Aunt Dunes, tell me

truly. Have they been bought? I think jewellers always send out their goods in leather cases, and there is none such for these. And see, this earring, the gold is bent, as if pulled out of shape. I am sure they have not been bought. Take them back again, I pray you."

"You little fool!" said Miss Trevisa, angrily. "I will do nothing of the kind. If you refuse them, then take them back yourself. Captain Coppinger performs a generous and kind act that costs him much money, and you throw his gift in his face; you insult him. Insult him yourself with your suspicions and refusals—you have already behaved to him outrageously. I will do nothing for you that you ask. Your father put on me a task that is hateful, and I wish I were clear of it."

Then she bounced out of the room, leaving her candle burning along with the other two.

A moment later she came back hastily and closed Judith's shutters.

"Oh, leave them open," pleaded Judith. "I shall like to see how the night goes—if the fog clears away."

"No, I will not," answered Miss Trevisa, roughly. "And mind you, these shutters remain shut, or your

candles go out. Your window commands the sea, and the light of your window must not show."

"Why not?"

"Because should the fog lift, it would be seen by vessels."

"Why should they not see it?"

"You are a fool. Obey, and ask no questions."

Miss Trevisa put up the bar, and then retired with the candle, leaving Judith to her own thoughts, with the diamonds on the table before her.

Her thoughts were reproachful of herself. She was ungracious, and perhaps unjust also. Her husband had sent her a present of rare value, and she was disposed to reject it, and charge him with not having come by the diamonds honestly. They were not new from a jeweller; but what of that? Could he afford to buy her a set at the price of some hundreds of pounds? And because he had not obtained them from a jeweller, did it follow that he had taken them unlawfully? He might have picked them up on the shore, or have bought them from a man who had. He might have obtained them at a sale in the neighbourhood. They might be family jewels, that had belonged to his

mother, and he was showing her the highest honour a man could show a woman in asking her to wear the ornaments that had belonged to his mother.

He had exhibited to her a store-room full of beautiful things, but these might be legitimately his, brought from foreign countries by his ship the *Black Prince*. It was possible that they were not contraband articles.

Judith opened her door and went downstairs. In the hall she found Coppinger with two or three men, but the moment he saw her he started up, came to meet her, and drew her aside into a parlour, then went back into the hall and fetched candles. A fire was burning in this room, ready for her, should she condescend to use it.

“I hope I have not interrupted you,” she said, timidly.

“An agreeable interruption. At any time you have only to show yourself and I will at once come to you, and never ask to be dismissed.”

She knew that this was no empty compliment, that he meant it from the depth of his heart, and was sorry that she could not respond to an affection so deep and so sincere.

“ You have been very good to me, more good than I deserve,” she said, standing by the fire, with lowered eyes. “ I must thank you now for a splendid and beautiful present, and I really do not know how to find words in which fittingly to acknowledge it.”

“ You cannot thank and gratify me better than by wearing what I have given you.”

“ But when ? Surely not on an ordinary evening ? ”

“ No, certainly. The rector has been up this afternoon and desired to see you ; he is hot on a scheme for a public ball to be given at Wadebridge for the restoration of his church, and he has asked that you will be a patroness.”

“ I—oh—I ! after my father’s death ? ”

“ That was in the late spring, and now it is the early winter ; besides, now you are a married lady—and was not the digging out and restoring of the church your father’s strong desire ? ”

“ Yes ; but he would never have had a ball for such a purpose.”

“ The money must be raised somehow, so I promised for you. You could not well refuse ; he was impatient to be off to Wadebridge and secure the assembly rooms.”

“ But, Captain Coppinger——”

“ Captain Coppinger ? ”

Judith coloured.

“ I beg your pardon, I forgot. And now I do not recollect what I was going to say. It matters nothing. If you wish me to go, I will go. If you wish me to wear the diamond butterflies, I will wear them.”

“ I thank you.” He held out his hands to her.

She drew back slightly and folded her palms, as though praying.

“ I will do much to please you, but do not press me too greatly. I am strange in this house, strange in my new situation ; give me time to breathe and look round and recover my confidence. Besides, we are only half married so far.”

“ How so ? ”

“ I have not signed the register.”

“ No ; but that shall be done to-morrow.”

“ Yes, to-morrow ; but that gives me breathing time. You will be patient and forbearing with me ? ”

She put forward her hands folded, and he put his outside them and pressed them. The flicker of the fire

ient a little colour to her cheeks, and surrounded her head with an aureole of spun gold.

“Judith, I will do anything you ask. I love you with all my soul, past speaking. I am your slave. But do not hold me too long in chains, do not tread me too ruthlessly under foot.”

“Give me time,” she pleaded.

“I will give you a little time,” he answered.

Then she withdrew her hands from between his, and sped upstairs, leaving him looking into the fire, with troubled face.

When she returned to her room the candles were still burning, and the diamonds lay on the dressing-table where she had left them. She took the brooch and earrings to return them to their box, and then noticed for the first time that they were wrapped in paper, not in cotton wool. She tapped at her aunt's door, and, entering, asked if she had any cotton wool that she could spare her.

“No, I have not. What do you want it for?”

“For the jewelry. It cannot have come from a shop, as it was wrapped in paper only.”

“It will take no hurt. Wrap it in paper again.”

“I had rather not, auntie. Besides, I have some cotton wool in my workbox.”

“Then use it.”

“But my workbox has not been brought here. It is at Mr. Menaida’s.”

“You can fetch it to-morrow.”

“But I am lost without my needles and thread. Besides, I do not like to leave my workbox about. I will go for it. The walk will do me good.”

“Nonsense, it is falling dark.”

“I will get Uncle Zachie to walk back with me. I must have my workbox. Besides, the fresh air will do me good, and the fog has lifted.”

“As you will, then.”

So Judith put on her cloak and drew a hood over her head, and went back to Polzeath. She knew the way perfectly: there was no danger; night had not closed in. It would be a pleasure to her to see the old bird-stuffer’s face again; and she wanted to find Jamie. She had not seen him, nor heard his voice, and she supposed he must be at Polzeath.

On her arrival at the double cottage the old fellow was delighted to see her, and to see that she had

recovered from the distress and faintness of the morning sufficiently to be able to walk back to his house from her new home. Her first question was after Jamie. Uncle Zachie told her that Jamie had breakfasted at his table, but he had gone away in the afternoon and he had seen no more of him. The fire was lighted, and Uncle Zachie insisted on Judith's sitting by it with him and talking over the events of the day, and on telling him that she was content with her position, reconciled to the change of her state.

She sat longer with him than she had intended, listening to his disconnected chatter, and then nothing would suffice him but she must go to the piano and play through his favourite pieces.

“Remember, Judith, it is the last time I shall have you here to give me this pleasure.”

She could not refuse him his request, especially as he was to walk back to Pentyre with her. Thus time passed, and it was with alarm and self-reproach that she started up on hearing the clock strike the half-past, and learned it was half-past nine, and not half-past eight, as she supposed.

As she now insisted on departing, Mr. Menaida put on his hat.

“ Shall we take a light ? ” he asked, and then said—
“ No, we had better not. On such a night as this a moving light is dangerous.”

“ How can it be dangerous ? ” asked Judith.

“ Not to us, my dear child ; but to a ship at sea. A stationary light might serve as a warning, but a moving light misleads. The captain of a vessel, if he has lost his bearings—as is like enough in the fog—as soon as the mist rises, would see a light gliding along, and think it was that of a vessel at sea, and so make in the direction of the light, in the belief that there was open water, and so run directly on his destruction.”

“ Oh, no, no, uncle, we will not take a light.”

Mr. Menaida and Judith went out together, she with her workbox under her arm, he with his stick, and her hand resting on his arm. The night was dark, very dark ; but the way led for the most part over down, and there was just sufficient light in the sky for the road to be distinguishable. It would be in the lane, between the walls, and where overhung by thorns, that the darkness would be most profound.

The wind was blowing strongly, and the sound of the breakers came on it now, for the cloud had lifted off

land and sea, though still hanging low. Very dense overhead it could not be, or no light would have pierced the vaporous canopy.

Uncle Zachie and Judith walked on talking together, and she felt cheered by his presence, when all at once she stopped, pressed his arm, and said—

“ Oh, do look, uncle! What is that light? ”

In the direction of the cliffs a light was distinctly visible, now rising, now falling, observing an unevenly undulating motion.

“ Oh, uncle, it is dreadful! Some foolish person is on the downs going home with a lantern, and it may lead to a dreadful error, and to a wreck.”

“ I hope to heaven it is only what you say.”

“ What do you mean? ”

“ That it is not done wilfully.”

“ Wilfully? ”

“ Yes, with purpose to mislead. Look. The movement of the light is exactly that of a ship on a rolling sea.”

“ Uncle, let us go there at once, and stop it.”

“ I don't know, my dear; if it be done by some unprincipled ruffian, he would not be stopped by us.”

“It must be stopped. And oh! think! you told me that your Oliver is coming home. Think of him.”

“We will go.”

Mr. Menaida was drawn along by Judith in her eagerness. They left the road to Pentyre, and struck out over the downs, keeping their eyes on the light. The distance was deceptive. It seemed to have been much nearer than they found it actually to be.

“Look! it is coming back,” exclaimed Judith.

“Yes; that is done wilfully. That is to give the appearance of a vessel tacking up channel. Stay behind, Judith; I will go on.”

“No; I will go with you. You would not find me again in the darkness if we parted.”

“The light is coming this way. Stand still; it will come directly on us.”

They drew up. Judith clung to Uncle Zachie’s side, her heart beating with excitement, indignation, and anger.

“The lantern is fastened to an ass’s head,” said Uncle Zachie. “Do you see how, as the creature moves his head, the light is swayed, and that, with the rise and fall in the land, makes it look as though the

rise and fall were on the sea. I have my stick. Stand behind me, Judith."

But a voice was heard that made her gasp and clasp the arm of Uncle Zachie the tighter.

Neither spoke.

The light approached. They could distinguish the lantern, though they could not see what bore it; only—next moment something caught the light—the ear of a donkey thrust forward.

Again a voice, that of some one urging on the ass.

Judith let go Menaida's arm, sprang forward with a cry—

"Jamie! Jamie! What are you doing?"

In a moment she had wrenched the lantern from the head of the ass, and the creature, startled, dashed away and disappeared in the darkness. Judith put the light under her cloak.

"Oh, Jamie! Jamie! why have you done this? Who ever set you to this wicked task?"

"I am Jack o' Lantern," answered the boy. "Ju, now my Neddy is gone."

"Jamie, who sent you out to do this? Answer me!"

“ Captain Coppinger.”

Judith walked on in silence. Neither she nor Uncle Zachie spoke; only Jamie whimpered and muttered. Suddenly they were surrounded, and a harsh voice exclaimed—

“ In the King’s name! We have you now—showing false lights.”

Judith hastily slung the lantern from beneath her cloak, and saw that there were several men about her, and that the speaker was Mr. Scantlebray. The latter was surprised when he recognized her.

“ What!” he said. “ I did not expect this—pretty quickly into your apprenticeship. What brings you here? And you, too, Menaida, old man?”

“ Nothing simpler,” answered Uncle Zachie. “ I am accompanying Mrs. Coppinger back to the Glaze.”

“ What, married in the morning, and roving the downs at night?”

“ I have been to Polzeath after my workbox. Here it is,” said Judith.

“ Oh, you are out of your road to Pentyre—I suppose you know that?” sneered Scantlebray.

“ Naturally,” replied Mr. Menaida. “ It is dark

enough for any one to stray. Why! you don't suspect me, do you, of showing false lights and endeavouring to wreck vessels? That would be too good a joke—and the offence, as I told you—capital.”

Scantlebray uttered an oath, and turned to the men and said—

“Captain Cruel is too deep for us this time. I thought he had sent the boy out with the ass; instead, he has sent his wife—a wife of a few hours—and never told her the mischief she was to do with the lantern. Hark!”

From the sea—the boom of a gun.

All stood still as rooted to the spot.

Then again—the boom of a gun.

“There is a wreck!” exclaimed Scantlebray. “I thought so—and you, Mistress Orphing, you're guilty.”

He turned to the men. “We can make nothing of this affair with the lantern. Let us catch the sea-wolves falling on their prey.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SEA-WOLVES.

ON the Doom Bar!

That very merchantman was wrecked, over which so many Cornish mouths had watered, aye, and Devonian mouths also, from the moment she had been sighted at S. Ives.

She had been entangled in the fog, not knowing where she was, all her bearings lost. The wind had risen, and, when the day darkened into night, the mist had lifted in cruel kindness to show a false glimmer that was at once taken as the light of a ship beating up the Channel. The head of the merchantman was put about, a half-reefed topsail spread, and she ran on her destruction. With a crash she was on the bar. The great bowlers that roll without a break from Labrador rushed on behind, beat her, hammered her

further and further into the sand, surged up at each stroke, swept the decks with mingled foam and water and spray. The mainmast went down with a snap. Bent with the sail, at the jerk, as the vessel ran aground, it broke and came down, top-mast, rigging, and sail, in an enveloping, draggled mass. From that moment the captain's voice was no more heard. Had he been struck by the fallen mast and stunned or beaten overboard? or did he lie on deck enveloped and smothered in wet sail, or had he been caught and strangled by the cordage? None knew; none inquired. A wild panic seized crew and passengers alike. The chief mate had the presence of mind to order the discharge of signals of distress, but the order was imperfectly carried out. A flash, illumining for a second the glittering froth and heaving sea, then a boom. A lapse of a minute, another flash and another boom—almost drowned by the roar of the sea and the screams of women and oaths of sailors—and then panic laid hold of the gunner also, and he deserted his post. The word had gone round, none knew from whom, that the vessel had been lured to her destruction by wreckers, and that in a few minutes she would be

boarded by these wolves of the sea. The captain, who should have kept order, had disappeared; the mate was disregarded; there was a general *sauve-qui-peut*. A few women were on board; at the shock they had come on deck, some with children, and the latter were wailing and shrieking with terror. The women implored that they might be saved. Men passengers ran about asking what was to be done, and were beaten aside and cursed by the frantic sailors. A Portuguese nun was ill with sea-sickness, and sank on the deck like a log, crying to S. Joseph between her paroxysms. One man alone seemed to maintain his self-possession, a young man, and he did his utmost to soothe the excited women and abate their terrors. He raised the prostrate nun, and insisted on her laying hold of a rope, lest she should be carried overboard in the swash of the water. He entreated the mate to exert his authority and bring the sailors to a sense of their duty, to save the women, instead of escaping in the boat, regardless of themselves only.

Suddenly a steady star, red in colour, glared out of the darkness, and between it and the wreck heaved and tossed a welter of waves and foam.

“There is land!” shouted the mate.

“And that shines just where that light was that led us here,” retorted a sailor.

The vessel heeled to one side, and shipped water fore and aft over either rail, with a hiss and hum. She plunged, staggered, and sank deeper into the sand.

A boat had been lowered, and three men were in it, and called to the women to be sharp and join them. But this was no easy matter, for the boat at one moment leaped up on the comb of a black wave, and then sank in its yawning trough; now was close to the side of the ship, and then separated from it by a rift of water. The frightened women were let down by ropes, but in their bewilderment missed their opportunity when the boat was under them, and some fell into the water and had to be dragged out; others refused to leave the wreck and risk a leap into the little boat.

Nothing would induce the sick nun to venture overboard. She could not understand English. The young passenger addressed her in Portuguese, and, finally, losing all patience, and finding that precious time was wasted in arguing with a poor creature who,

in her present condition, was incapable of reasoning, he ordered a sailor to help him, caught her up in his arms, and proceeded to swing himself over, that he might carry her into the boat.

But at that moment dark figures occupied the deck, and a man arrested him with his hand, whilst in a loud and authoritative voice he called—

“No one leaves the vessel without my orders. Number Five, down into the boat and secure that. Number Seven, go with him. Now, one by one, and before each leaves, give over your purses and valuables that you are trying to save. No harm shall be done you; only make no resistance.”

The ship was in the hands of the wreckers.

The men in the boat would have cast off at once, but the two men sent into it, Numbers Five and Seven, prevented them. The presence of the wreckers produced order where there had before been confusion. The man who had laid his hand on the Portuguese nun, and had given orders, was obeyed not only by his own men, but by the crew of the merchant vessel, and by the passengers, from whom all thoughts of resistance, if they ever rose, vanished at once. All alike, cowed

and docile, obeyed without a murmur, and began to produce from their pockets whatever they had secured and had hoped to carry ashore with them.

“Nudding! me nudding!” gasped the nun.

“Let her pass down,” ordered the man who acted as captain. “Now the next—you—” He turned on the young passenger who had assisted the nun.

“You scoundrel!” shouted the young man, “you shall not have a penny of mine.”

“We shall see,” answered the wrecker, and levelled a pistol at his head. “What answer do you make to this?”

The young man struck up the pistol, and it was discharged into the air. Then he sprang on the man acting as captain, struck him in the chest, and grappled with him.

In a moment a furious contest was engaged in between the two men on the wet, sloping deck, sloping, for the cargo had shifted.

“Hah!” shouted the wrecker, “a Cornishman!”

“Yes, a Cornishman,” answered the youth.

The wrecker knew whence he came by his method of wrestling, a trick peculiar to the county.

If there had been light, crew, invaders, passengers would have gathered in a circle and watched the contest, but in the dark, lashed by foam, in the roar of the waves and the pipe of the wind, only one or two that were near were aware of the conflict. Some of the crew were below. They had got at the spirits and were drinking. One drunken sailor rushed forth swearing and blaspheming and striking about him. He was knocked down by a wrecker, and a wave that heaved over the deck lifted him and swept him over the bulwarks.

The wrestle between the two men in the dark taxed the full nerves and the skill of each. The young passenger was strong and nimble, but he had found his match in the wrecker. The latter was skilful and of great muscular power. First one went down on the knee, then the other, but each was up again in a moment. A blinding whip of foam and water slashed between them, stinging their eyes, swashing into their mouths, forcing them momentarily to relax their hold of each other, but next moment they had leaped at one another again. Now they held each other, breast to breast, and sought with their arms bowed like the legs

of grasshoppers to strangle or break each other's neck. Then, like a clap of thunder, a huge billow beat against the stern and rolled in a liquid heap over the deck, enveloping the wrestlers, and lifted them from their feet and cast them writhing, pounding each other, prostrate upon the deck.

There were screams and gasps from the women as they escaped from the water; the nun shrieked to S. Joseph—she had lost her hold and fell overboard, but was caught and placed in the boat.

“Now another!” was the shout.

“Hand me your money,” demanded one of the wreckers. “Madam, have no fear. We do not hurt women. I will help you into the boat.”

“I have nothing; nothing but this. What shall I do if you take my money?”

“I am sorry. You must either remain and drown when the ship breaks up, or give me the purse.”

She gave up the purse, and was safely lodged below.

“Who are you?” gasped the captain of the wreckers, in a moment of relaxation from the desperate struggle.

“An honest man—and you a villain,” retorted the young passenger, and the contest was recommenced.

“Let go,” said the wrecker, as he and the young passenger regained their feet, still clasping each other, “and you shall be allowed to depart, and carry your money with you.”

“I ask no man’s leave to carry what is my own,” answered the youth. He put his hand to his waist and unbuckled a belt; to this belt was attached a pouch well weighted with metal. “This is all I have in the world, and with it I will beat your brains out.” He whirled the belt and money-bag round his head, and brought it down with a crash upon his adversary, who staggered back. The young man struck at him again, but, in the dark, missed him, and, with the violence of the blow and weight of the purse, was carried forward, and fell on the slippery, inclined planks.

“Now I have you!” shouted the other; he flung himself on the prostrate man, and planted his knee on his back. But, assisted by the inclination of the deck, the young man slipped from beneath his antagonist, and, half rising, caught him and dashed him against the rail.

The wrecker was staggered for a moment, and had the passenger seized the occasion he might have finished the conflict; but his purse had slipped from his hand,

and he groped for the belt till he found one end at his feet ; and now he twisted the belt round and about his right arm, and weighted his fist with the pouch.

The captain recovered the blow, and threw himself on his adversary, grasped his arms between the shoulder and elbow, and bore him back against the bulwark, drove him against it, and cast himself upon him.

“ I’ve spared your life so far. Now I’ll spare you no more,” said he, and the young man felt that one of his arms was released. He could not tell at the time, he never could decide afterwards how he knew it, whether he saw, or whether he guessed it, but he was certain that his enemy was groping at his side for a knife. Then the hand of the wrecker closed on his throat, and the young man’s head was driven back over the rail, almost dislocating the neck. It was then as though he saw into the mind of the man who had cast himself against him, and who was strangling him. He knew that he could not find the required knife ; but he saw nothing, only a fire and blood before his eyes that looked up into the black heavens, and he felt naught save agony at the nape of his neck where his spine was turned back on the bulwarks.

“Number Eight! any of you! an axe!” roared the wrecker. “By heaven! you shall be as Wyvill, and float headless on the waves.”

“Coppinger!” cried the young man, by a desperate effort liberating his head. He threw his arms round the wrecker. A dash and a boil of froth, and both went overboard, fighting as they fell into the surf.

“In the King’s name!” shouted a harsh voice. “Surround—secure them all. Now we have them, and they shall not escape.”

The wreck was boarded by, and in the hands of, the coastguard.

END OF VOL. II.



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