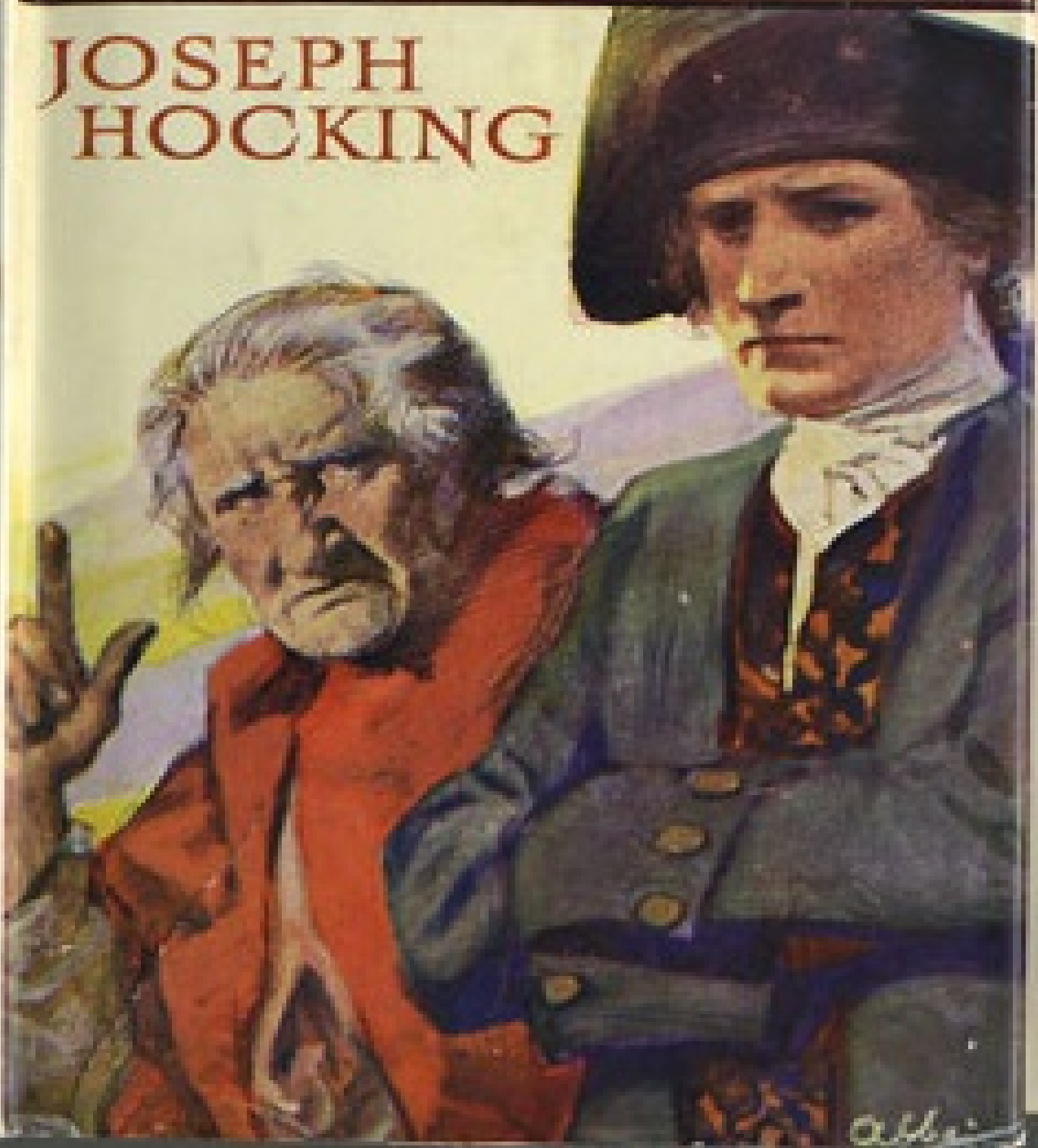
ROGER TREWINION

JOSEPH HOCKING



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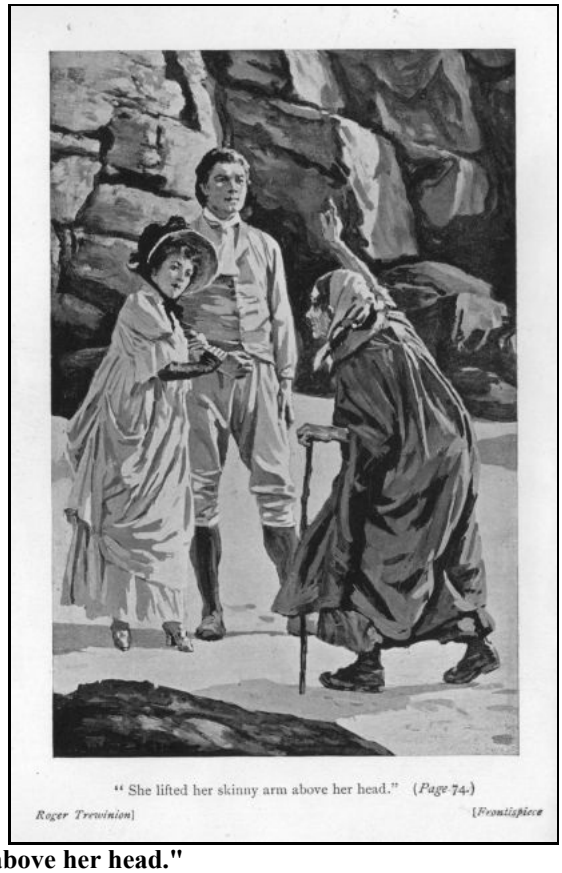

" She lifted her skinny arm above her head." (*Page 74.*)

Roger Trewinion] [*Frontispiece*

"She lifted her skinny arm above her head."

ROGER TREWINION

By

JOSEPH HOCKING

Author of "All Men are Liars" "The Scarlet Woman"
"A Flame of Fire" etc. etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUNNING KING

LONDON
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1905

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

ALL MEN ARE LIARS
FIELDS OF FAIR RENOWN
ISHMAEL PENGELLY
THE STORY OF ANDREW FAIRFAX
JABEZ EASTERBROOK
THE MONK OF MAR-SARA
ZILLAH: A Romance
WEAPONS OF MYSTERY
MISTRESS NANCY MOLESWORTH
THE BIRTHRIGHT: A ROMANCE
AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE?
THE SCARLET WOMAN
THE PURPLE ROBE
THE MADNESS OF DAVID DARING
LEST WE FORGET
O'ER MOOR AND FEN
GREATER LOVE
ESAU
FOLLOW THE GLEAM
A FLAME OF FIRE
THE COMING OF THE KING

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

When visiting my native county some time since, I was struck with the modern, "up-to-date," aspect of men and things. In this respect Cornwall has much changed even during the twenty years since I left it. The quiet, old-world feeling which I can remember has gone, and instead there is a spirit of eagerness, almost amounting to rush. I discovered, too, that the old stories, dear to me, are forgotten. All the old superstitions have passed away. I remember asking a man whether there were any witches or ghosts in his vicinity. "Look," he said, in reply, pointing at a telegraph post, "they things 'ave destroyed boath witches and ghoasts." And yet, less than four decades ago, when I was a child, ghosts, witches, charms, omens, and the like were firmly believed in. Perhaps the most vivid remembrance I have of my childhood's days, are those connected with the weird stories of the supernatural which my mother used to tell us, as I with my brothers and sisters sat around a roaring fire on winter evenings. I called to mind, too, the haunted places, which I feared to pass after dark; but on inquiring of the new generation concerning these same places, I found an utter ignorance of their old-time reputation. Old Tommy Dain, the famous wizard, is forgotten, while Betsey Flew, she who could blight corn, cause milk to turn sour, and ill-wish all but the eldest son of a family, has no part in the life of the present generation. And yet I remember wearing, for months, a charm which old Betsey had prepared for me, with what result I cannot tell, save that I never had the disease from which the charm was to save me. As for curing warts, crooked legs, weak backs, and other ailments by the means used in the good old days—well, they are utterly forgotten. In short, Cornwall, which even in my boyish days was the very Mecca of Folklore and superstition, has been completely changed. The spirit of "modernity" is everywhere, and thus the old West Country has gone, and a new West Country has taken its place.

Whether this has been an unmixed blessing, or not, I have grave doubts; anyhow, the Cornwall I love to think about is the Cornwall of my boyhood, when apparitions from the spirit-land were common, when omens and charms were firmly believed in, and when the village parson had power to "lay a ghost," by reading the burial service a second time over a grave, and taking great care to turn the prayer-book "up-side-down."

Much of the story which is here offered to the public was written some years ago, when the memory of the old time was more vivid than it is now; and although it has been re-written, I trust I have retained in its pages something of the atmosphere of mystery and romance for which my native county was once so famous. Indeed, the prologue, while not absolutely true to fact, is true in spirit. The story is not mine at all, but was told me long years ago by those who were old when I was but a boy, and who had no doubt of the truth of what they related. I am afraid I have not pieced their somewhat confused narratives together very well, although one told me by an old dame with wild eyes, and a strong love for a "bit ov bacca," which is reproduced in the chapter entitled "The Vault under the Communion," haunts me even yet.

JOSEPH HOCKING.

TREVANION,
WOODFORD GREEN,
The New Year, 1905.

PROLOGUE

I

The following story came to my knowledge under somewhat curious circumstances:—

I had gone to Cornwall, my native county, to spend my summer vacation, and there met with an old college chum, who asked me to accompany him on a walking tour.

"Where?" I asked.

"Let us do the Cornish coast," he replied, "it is the finest and most rugged coast in England. The scenery around is magnificent; there are numberless old legends told about many of the places we shall see; and I know that legends have always had a great attraction for you."

I must confess to a weakness for anything romantic, and was attracted by the proposal. Accordingly, we journeyed by train and coach to the most northern watering-place on the eastern coast of Cornwall, viz., Bude, and commenced our journey southward.

As this personal reminiscence is only written to tell how I came by the remarkable history which follows, I shall say nothing of our journey that has not a direct bearing on that history.

We had been walking some days, I need not say how many, when we saw, standing on a rough headland, and yet some little distance from the sea, an old house. It caught my attention the moment I first glanced at it. Grey and lonely, it looked the residence of some misanthrope or hermit, and its tower and battlements gave it the appearance of some feudal castle.

"That's a strange looking old place, Will," I said to my companion.

"It is, indeed," he replied. "It looks in good repair, too. I wonder if it's inhabited?"

"The best way to know is to go and see," I replied, and accordingly we bent our steps thither.

As we drew nearer we saw a hollow, which looked as though it had been scooped out by some giant's spade. In it were built two or three cottages, and by the fact of there being some tumbled-down houses near, we came to the conclusion that at one time a little village must have stood there.

"What in the world have people to do or live for here?" said Will. "We are five miles from any place that can be called a town, and there's scarcely a house near. Everything is as weird and lonely as the wilderness of Judea."

"I expect they live on the fish they catch, and the produce of their little farms," I said; "but come, there's a man yonder, we'll question him."

Accordingly we hailed him and he waited, evidently with some degree of curiosity, until we came up.

"What's the name of this place?" asked Will.

"Trewinion," was the reply.

"Trewinion? Is it in the parish of Trewinion?"

"Iss."

"Is there a parish church anywhere near?"

"Iss."

"Where?"

"There," pointing southward.

We saw a little grey tower about half a mile away, evidently a part of the building after which we had been inquiring.

"Are there any houses there?" we asked.

"Five."

"Whose are they?"

"Passon Teague's, Muster Yelland's, Bill Treloar's, Tom Williams's, and Jack Jory's."

"And what's the name of yonder place?" asked Will, pointing to the old house we had seen on the great headland.

The man looked at us curiously, and then replied:

"Trewinion Manor."

"It looks old," I said. "Is it?"

"Ould's Mathusla," was the brief reply.

"Who lives there?"

"Th' oull Sir Nick."

"Sir Nick" is the term usually applied by the Cornish people to his Satanic Majesty. Scenting a story I eagerly inquired what he meant.

"Well, he d' live there," was the reply.

"And what does he do?"

The man shook his head gravely. "Nobody knows but hisself," was the reply.

"But does the devil live there alone?" asked Will.

The man looked at us again, as though he wondered who we were.

"Who be you?" he said.

"We are simply out for a holiday," I replied, "and, as we were walking along, we saw that old place, and wondering what it was, and to whom it belonged, we thought we'd ask."

"Then you be'ant no friend or 'lation to un up there?" he said.

"None."

"Nor you wa'ant say nothin' to un ef I tell 'ee?"

"Not a word."

"Well, then, ould Squire Trewinion do live there."

"Alone?"

The man shook his head.

"Two ould servants," he said, solemnly.

"Is there anything strange about him?" I asked.

"Shud think ther es," he replied.

"What?"

"What! Why he've sold hisself to tho'ull Sir Nick, who do stick to un like a limpet to a rock."

As this mediaeval belief has scarcely died away among the Cornish people, I attached no importance to it, but asked in a jocular way for what he had sold himself.

"Nobody knows," the man replied, "but he hev sould hisself, and now he do never come out to shaw hisself nor nothin'. He wa'ant speak to nobody, and is as ugly as sin."

"Are these Trewinions important people?" asked Will.

"'Portant!" said the man, "sh'd think they be; why oal the land round do belong to un, and I've heerd my faather say as 'ow in th' ould days it was the grandest plaace in oal Cornwall; but now—m—m—m!"

"Now, what?" I asked.

"Hunted!"

"Hunted! Haunted, I suppose you mean. By what?"

"Ghoasts and evil sperrits, as well as with th' oull Sir Nick."

"Do you ever go up there?"

"No; I kip away in the daytime, and as fur goin' ther after dark, I wouldn't for a crock of gould."

We asked the man many more questions, but could get nothing much further from him. All I could gather was that the Trewinions had been a great people, but had fallen on evil days as the result of their own sinning, and that the present representative of the family was a recluse, living alone in the old Manor House, and that many curious stories were told about him.

"Well," said Will to me, "I think we've heard enough; let us get away from this outlandish place."

"Not until I've inquired at the place itself," I replied.

"You are mad," said he. "Evidently this old man is some strange creature, who prefers living alone, and will no doubt think it a piece of impudence on our part if we call. Perhaps he will set the dogs after us."

"Nevertheless, I'm going," I replied. "If you like to remain behind, you may do so; but I want to know the truth of this. I suspect a good story."

"Oh, well, if you will be foolish, I'll go," said Will, "but remember we have to walk twelve miles before we get to our resting-place to-night."

I did not reply, but went away in the direction of Trewinion Manor, while Will, grumbling, came on behind.

As we ascended the hill the view became wondrously grand. At least fifteen miles of coast were to be seen, with great rugged cliffs, hundreds of feet high, while huge rocks stood out in the sea as if inviting the fury of the waves as they broke upon them. In winter it must be almost terrible to live there, but now it was beautiful beyond compare. We found, too, that the old house was somewhat sheltered, on the one hand by the great headland which rose higher

as it neared the sea, and on the other by a thick, lofty wall. Besides this, a hill which rose up landward broke the force of the wind, so that it was not so exposed as I had at first thought.

There was no way of entering the grounds save by a door that was locked. It was thick and heavy, made of oak, and iron studded.

"Evidently those within are determined to keep out intruders," I said, as I saw the grim forbidding wall.

"I should think so," replied Will. "Now let's go on, for it's only waste of time to stay here."

My love for the mysterious, however, was too strong to allow Will's words to have due effect, and seeing a breach in the wall I climbed it. I found that this enclosure had so far sheltered the grounds of the house that a quantity of vegetation of various kinds had grown there, and although the place was now in a very neglected condition, it must in past years have provided for a great household. The house looked extremely lonely, and no soul was to be seen. I confess I was taken a little aback at this. To gain admittance did not seem either as pleasant or as easy as at first sight. I did not like to shout. The silence of the place, only broken by the sobbing of the waves, hundreds of feet below, forbade it, while to knock at the old iron-studded door was equally unseemly.

Yet I did not like to go away. My curiosity continued to increase, so I came down from the wall and began to examine the door. To my delight I saw fastened to a great gray rock, on which the door was partly hung, a piece of iron at the end of a chain.

Evidently this was in some way a means of communication with the house. I seized, and pulled it.

No sooner had I done so than I heard the clanging of a bell away up in the old house.

"There," I said to Will, who had kept on protesting, "perhaps that is like the bells in the old monasteries; it will frighten away all evil spirits."

Will grumbled about my having "plenty of cheek," while I waited, somewhat anxiously, I confess, for an answer.

Presently I heard a murmur of voices within, and then the withdrawing of bolts. After a few seconds the door turned on its rusty hinges and revealed two men both about fifty years of age.

"What do you want?" asked one sternly.

"I want to see Squire Trewinion," I replied boldly. I felt it would be of no use hesitating, and although I had no earthly business there I determined to get admittance.

"Why do you wish to see him?" was the next question.

"I will answer that to Mr. Trewinion himself," I said.

"Your names, then?"

"They are unknown to you," I replied, "and my telling them could serve no purpose. Lead the way to your master."

They looked at us suspiciously; but seeing two young men, well dressed and with plenty of assurance, they seemed inclined to let us in. Consequently a minute after we stood within the walls that surrounded this place of evil repute, the door being carefully locked behind us.

The two men, evidently servants, led the way up an unused road, by which we reached the tower entrance. Neither spoke a word.

On coming close to Trewinion Manor we found that it was built of granite, and had evidently been standing for hundreds of years. The stones of the doorways were curiously carved, and even the exterior of the place looked as

though it contained a hundred secrets. It was large, too, and must at some time have been the home of people of wealth.

The view was wonderful. In front of us stretched the mighty Atlantic, whose murmuring song told of the peaceful waves that now splashed on the shore. I had seen the Atlantic in a tempest, however, and so could easily fancy what a sight there must be when the waters beneath were lashed into fury by great storm clouds.

Arrived at the door, our guides stopped.

"We can show you no further without permission," said the spokesman. "I will tell the master you are here, and see if he will receive you."

Accordingly he went away, while the other stood at some little distance watching us.

"I've caught your mystery fever," said Will. "I'm longing to get inside now; but what excuse are you going to make for intruding?"

"I've settled that," I replied. "Our visit is an ordinary one, and I shall tell no lies."

I had scarcely spoken when the man returned, telling us to follow him, as his master would see us.

A minute later we stood within the silent walls of Trewinion Manor.

II

There was a cold vault-like atmosphere within the place, and as we went along the dark corridors, every footstep sounding on the granite floor and echoing through the great empty house, I felt like shuddering.

Outside the sun was shining and the west wind blowing, making everything bright and glad; but within all was cold and forbidding.

Still we followed the man curiously, and I must confess I felt my heart beat loudly against my ribs as he knocked at a dark, forbidding looking door. I do not think I am usually nervous, but on this occasion I was getting excited.

The knock was followed by a response.

"Come in," said a voice.

The old servant opened the door, and ushered us into a room that was on every side lined with books. There were thousands of volumes on the shelves. Some I saw were old and scarce, and exceedingly valuable. Others again were new and well bound. I gave them but little attention at the time, however, for my mind was drawn towards the lonely occupant of the room, the master of the house.

He looked about sixty years of age, but was large-boned, tall, and vigorous. His hair was iron grey, but had evidently been black. His eyes were black, and his great rugged forehead was fringed with bushy eyebrows, which gave him a somewhat fierce appearance. His nose was large, his mouth was large, and his chin, too, was large, square, and determined. He was no ordinary man. There was the stamp of unusual power upon him. He was no trifler, and yet beneath his look of determination and energy something was lacking. He seemed as though his determination needed to be roused, his energy to be stimulated. Yet I could see nothing in his appearance which justified the opinions we had heard expressed about him, nor could I discover anything which suggested a misanthrope.

He placed chairs for us both, and then politely asked what he could do to serve us. He had a strong, deep, somewhat musical voice, and had I not been otherwise informed, I should have regarded him as one who often

entertained visitors, so free from restraint did he seem.

"I hope you will excuse us for calling," I said, "but my story must explain my rudeness. I follow literature as a profession, and have for some months been engaged on a work dealing with the legends and superstitious beliefs of Cornwall. I am, however, enjoying my vacation now, and my friend and I are on a walking tour along the coast. Seeing this old grey mansion, and thinking there might be some story in connexion with its early days, I have taken the liberty of calling."

He looked at me curiously, as though he suspected me of some sinister motive, and his black eyes glittered.

"Have you heard anything which would lead you to think this house had a story? or have you come here out of pure speculation?" he said, brusquely.

"I suspected there must be legends about a house as old as this," I replied, "and a man we met some distance from here told us that—that——"

"You need not go further," he said, grimly, "I know all the stories that are afloat among the people who live within a few miles of the place. You have heard that I have sold myself to the devil, and that the house is haunted by evil spirits?"

I did not reply.

"You are bold fellows to come here," he continued, "for I am reported to have wonderful powers, being able to call to my aid the might of the king of darkness. But I do not know your names and so cannot talk freely with you."

I told him our names.

"I know you both by reputation," he said. "You," turning to Will, "are a barrister, and bidding fair to donning silk, while you," turning to me, "are making your name known as a novelist."

"I have read your books," he continued; "and—well"—he stopped and mused a minute, and then, pointing to the bookshelves, continued—"I get nearly everything. Science, religion, history, travel, poetry, romance, I see them all. That's how I know your names and professions. I send one of my servants to Plymouth every month, and thus I get all I need."

We soon fell to talking about books, and I found that intellectually this Squire Trewinion was a man of more than ordinary power. We had not conversed long however, before I saw a great change come over him. He seemed possessed by some nervous dread, and was evidently anxious to drop the subject of books.

Seeing this, I turned the conversation to the old house in which we stood, and asked him the year of its erection.

"It dates from the time of Charles II," he said, "and is, perhaps, the best built house in the whole county. And it had need to be so, for the storms which sometimes beat upon us are terrific."

"Are there any stories or legends about it?" I said, laughingly.

He looked at me as though he would read my heart's inmost secrets, and then burst out:

"Yes, there are stories, there are legends, there are mysteries, and they are true."

I thought at first that he was joking, but he continued:

"Yes, there is truth in the wildest story afloat, not perhaps in the exact way that the ignorant clowns think; but, sir——"

He stopped again for a second, as if making up his mind upon some point. Evidently, his lonely mode of living caused him to act differently from the conventional society man.

"We Trewinions are an old race, sir, and some of my ancestors have been very violent," he continued.

"That is not to be wondered at," I replied. "Life here, a century ago, must have been far different from the life of to-day, while earlier still, when smugglers sought the caves around, and pirates sailed the seas, it must have been almost impossible for anyone to live in such a neighbourhood as this without leading a strange life."

"You are interested in mysterious stories and legends, are you not?" he said.

I told him that I had almost a passion for the supernatural, the mysterious, and the occult.

He looked at me again, long and steadily.

"I have read some things you have written," he said at length. "You dabbled a little in the mysterious in them; but I have in my possession a history——"

Again he stopped, and I begged him to go on, for I felt he had something of importance to tell me.

"You said you were writing a book on the superstitions and legends of Cornwall," he said, "and were anxious to collect anything that might be of interest."

I told him that this was so.

At this he went to the window and looked out over the blue expanse of the sea, after which he turned towards me, and looked steadily into my face.

"I have a strange impulse on me," he said.

I made no answer to his words, but frankly met his gaze.

"You are an utter stranger to me in one way," he went on, "but both your personal appearance and your writings suggest that you and I have much in common. Besides, great God! although I live the life of a hermit, I long at times for the companionship of a kindred soul."

I was still silent, deeming that this was the best means of obtaining his confidence.

"It seems like pure madness," he said at length, "but, look here, would you care to look at a manuscript, which not only contains suggestions of one-time superstitions and customs, but something of the history of an old Cornish family?"

"I should be more than delighted to see it," was my reply.

For a moment he muttered as if to himself, then, like a man taking a great resolution, he turned to a large safe and unlocked it. His hand trembled as he did so, as though he were afraid.

"I have only read the manuscript once," he said, "and I have not seen it for twenty years. I tremble as I look for it now. You will know why when you have read it."

He took from the safe a large parcel, wrapped in paper, on which were written the following words:

"THE CONFESSIONS

OF

ROGER TREWINION,

OF

TREWINION MANOR,
CORNWALL.

"May the Lord have mercy upon me a miserable sinner."

"Roger Trewinion was my grandfather," said he, as he saw me looking at the name. "My father was called Roger—I am called Roger—the last of my race. If—ah—if—but I daren't think of that."

"And may I read these confessions?" I asked eagerly, for I longed to get away alone and commence them.

"Yes, I am going to let you. How I dare trust you with them I don't know, except that I've read one or two of your books, and, well I am a man of strong impulses. It is characteristic of my race. Besides, I feel like trusting you.

"After you've read it," he continued, "you will know why I live here as I do; you will understand something of the web of mystery that is woven about this place. You will see the curse that rests upon my life."

"Curse?" I said questioningly.

"When you have finished with it," he went on, without heeding my words, "bring the old manuscript back, and I will lock it up again. Much as I wish it had never been written, or rather, the deeds it recalls had never been done, I would not like to lose it now, for it possesses a strange fascination for me."

We stayed an hour longer at Trewinion Manor, not liking to decline the hospitality which was proffered us. But I was anxious to be alone. The story of the grandfather of the present owner of this strange place was of paramount interest to me, and so, after many promises, many questions and many requests, I hastened away with my precious burden under my arm.

I remember nothing of the journey along the coast that day, except that I was constantly hurrying Will along so that we might more quickly reach the watering-place where our luggage had been sent, and where we had engaged rooms.

Arrived there I went immediately to the apartment allotted to me, where I left "the Confessions." After a hasty meal, I ordered candles and returned to my room to read, while Will went out to see the town.

I read on all the night, nor did I cease until I had finished the manuscript which Roger Trewinion had placed in my hands.

It is not now my purpose to tell you my impressions concerning it. The fact that the story therein told follows this chapter bears witness to the interest I found in it. Whether it will prove equally interesting to the reader is not for me to say.

I have now told how I came by these confessions of Roger Trewinion, so I need write little more concerning them.

Let it be understood, however, that my only share in the story is that of editor and reviser. Much of it had to be re-written and much of the dialect transposed into ordinary English. Still, the history stands practically as I found it, and, wherever I have re-written or revised, I have endeavoured to retain the spirit in which Roger Trewinion originally wrote.

Of the belief and deeds of the writer, I may have a few words to say by and bye; but my only duty at present is to lay before you the history he wrote at a time when strange deeds were done in this western county, and when its people were influenced and bound by strange and sometimes cruel superstitions.

THE END OF PROLOGUE.

CHAPTER I

THE PROPHETIC WARNING

"*And the boys grew, and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau; but Rebekah loved Jacob.*"

What I, Roger Trewinion, am about to write is true. I tell what I have seen, and heard, and have been.

I was born in the year of our Lord, 1750. I am now sixty years of age.

My family is an ancient one; not that I boast of it, for families reckon as little when the terrible realities of life press heavily upon us. Still, in mentioning the fact that my family is ancient and honourable, I do not do so without a purpose. Events will show that it matters not much what name we bear if the man within us be not strong to resist temptation.

Our family included, besides myself, one son and two daughters. The son, my brother, was called Wilfred, my two sisters, Katherine and Elizabeth. I am the elder son, and am called Roger after my father. Wilfred was born two years after me. Katherine and Elizabeth were respectively four and six years younger than myself.

People always said I was a true son of my father. From my childhood I was big, strong, and daring. I must add, too, that I was passionate and revengeful. My brother was neither so tall nor so daring as I; but he was, nevertheless, exceedingly strong and wiry, and although, being the older, I was the stronger of the two, I often had difficulty in proving myself the master. Especially was this seen when we used to wrestle on the soft, spongy grass that grows on the headland. I could lift him from the ground and throw him over my head, such was my advantage in weight and strength. Yet so cunning was he, and so agile, that he would cling around me, and twine his limbs around mine, so that I had to be very careful or I should have been disgraced by being thrown.

Our dispositions, too, were different. I was noisy, boisterous, passionate and outspoken. Wilfred was quiet and thoughtful. I often did deeds without thinking; but not so Wilfred; he weighed and considered both his words and actions. Consequently I was ever getting into scrapes, but Wilfred seldom or never.

I was my father's favourite. I was a sturdy young dog, he said, just like the rest of the Trewinion race, and would be an honour to my name. Wilfred, on the other hand, received but little notice from my father, but was the darling of my mother's heart. My father saw little or no fault in me and saw plenty in Wilfred. My mother saw only perfection in Wilfred and only imperfections in me. This, I am afraid, raised a barrier between my mother and my father, for which I was then, and am now, truly sorry.

In spite of these differences I loved Wilfred very much. Was he not my brother? were we not born in the same room? did not the same mother suckle us? and did we not both bear the name of Trewinion? Wilfred, however, did not love me so much. I think it was because he was a little jealous of me. The jealousy came about in this way.

Maidens love strength and daring; and as I was able to do for my sisters many thing which Wilfred was unable to do—such as scaling the cliffs for rare plants, getting precious stones, and so forth—I was more beloved by them than Wilfred was. Thus, as he saw Katherine and Elizabeth ever clinging to me, and avoiding him, he would look darkly at me, and go with his sorrows to our mother, who, in her kindness of heart, would give him comfort and sometimes indulgences which I do not think were always good for him.

Still, we were fairly good friends, and sometimes after I had fought a boy for teasing him, we would be quite happy together.

I am writing these things now because I think they have a bearing on some of the events that happened in my after life.

We were educated at the vicarage of Trewinion by the vicar, the Rev. Thomas Polperrow. The living of

Trewinion was only worth about £100 per annum, and so Mr. Polperrow was glad to augment his salary by taking pupils. There were eight boys besides ourselves, who came from places some three or four miles around; so we were able to have right merry times together.

I was not a very good scholar. I found it difficult to apply myself to any task; Wilfred, on the other hand, was the best pupil the vicar had. At twelve years of age he was quite a Latin scholar and was great at Euclid, and mathematics generally. This was exactly as it ought to be, my father said, for Wilfred was to be a clergyman, and when Mr. Polperrow died could be installed into the living. But although Wilfred had the advantage as far as scholarship went, I had the advantage of him in other ways. To save my life I could not conjugate a Latin verb; but I knew every creek and cove on our rockbound coast; and had gone into every cave that honeycombed the cliffs. This was considered exceedingly daring on my part, by those who believed, as many did, that these caves were the nocturnal homes of witches and dark spirits of the dead. It was true that I did not go after dark, for the sobbing waters of the sea wailed and made terrible noises as they swept into the caves at night time, and it was then that I used to hear strange cries as I stood on the top of the cliffs and listened.

I had no doubt then, nor do I doubt now, that spirits from the invisible world do appear in such places, and what I have to relate will fully bear out my belief. Mr. Polperrow, the vicar, has proved on many occasions that the belief in spirits appearing on earth is scriptural.

I had reached the age of fifteen when my father came to me as I rambled about the great headland on which our house is built.

"This is your birthday, Roger," he said.

"Yes, father," I replied. "Thank you for the new pony. I have just ridden over to Rosecarrow to see Tom Tremain. He goes like the wind."

"Ay, I saw you ride away. You have a firm seat, Roger. I am glad to see you ride so well."

"Well, I ought to ride well, father, for you taught me," I replied.

"Let's see, you are fifteen to-day, Roger, are you not?"

"Yes, fifteen to-day."

"What a big lad you are. What weight are you?"

"Nearly eight score pounds, father," I replied.

"So much, eh? Well, well, the Trewinions are a big race. I weighed as much when I was your age."

"And see what a big man you are now."

My father did not reply for a minute; then he said slowly—

"Roger, my boy, when I was fifteen my father took me into the library and read to me something which closely affected my welfare. There is no knowing how long I may live, and I think that what was read to me then should be read to you now, for it applies to all the Trewinion heirs. Come with me."

I followed my father into the house, and we entered the library together.

"Ours is a curious race, Roger," my father began. "Our name began strangely. God grant that it may not end with you."

"I hope it may not, father."

"Cherish the hope, my lad, for the last son of the Trewinions will die a terrible death, haunted by evil spirits."

I shuddered.

"The Trewinion race sprang from the Trevanions," he went on. "The mother of our people was a Trevanion, and she, while but a child in years—for she was scarcely seventeen—married a nameless nobody, who, fearing the wrath of her brothers, ran away like a coward as soon as their wedding was found out. When it was known that she was going to be a mother, Lord Trevanion built a house and sent her here with a nurse, blessed with the gift of second sight. When the child was born—a son—the nurse, who was held in great respect by the family, sent for Lord Trevanion, who came, wondering at her message. Then she told him that many things had been revealed to her on the night of the child's birth, which she thought he ought to know.

"On being asked what she meant, she replied that messengers from the spirit land had revealed to her that the boy was to be called Roger Trewinion, and that he was to have certain lands in that neighbourhood, then owned by Lord Trevanion.

"So much was he moved by the nurse's story that this manor house was built, and the lands now belonging to it were handed over to this child. And thus, Roger, your name and mine began to be, and thus we own the lands belonging to Trewinion Manor."

"And what became of the mother of this child, father?" I asked eagerly.

"She lived many years with her son; lived with him, indeed, until she died."

"And he?"

"He married a lady belonging to the Penwardle family, one of the best families in the county."

"And so our race has lived here ever since?"

"Ever since. They dare not leave it. If, for six months at a time, the master of the family, or the son and heir, live away from this place, built at the command of Heaven, he brings a curse on the race of Trewinion which shall last unto the third generation."

I felt very grave, for this was strange news to me. In my young, careless life I had not troubled to ask the history of my family.

"There are many things I have to say on another occasion," said my father, "but most of them can wait. One thing, however, I must tell you. The nurse who was with the first Trewinion at his birth lived until he was blessed with a son, then, according to the records of the house of Trevanion, she uttered these words:"

My father here took a piece of paper from a strong box and began to read:

> Trewinion's land so rich and free,
> Stretching out against the sea,
> So Trewinion's name shall stand,
> Like the rocks which on the sand
> Defy the angry breakers' power,
> While Trewinion's heir is pure.
> And so Trewinion's heir and pride
> A power shall be in the country side.
> And his enemies one and all
> Shall for ever droop and fall.

"This refers to us, father, does it not?" I said.

"It refers to me and to you; and if God gives you children it refers to your eldest son and to his eldest son. But I have not read all yet, Roger, my son. Pay good heed to what follows next.

> But let Trewinion's heir observe
> Never from the right to swerve,
> If from God's pure laws he stray

Trewinion's power shall die away;
His glory given to another;
And he be crushed by younger brother.
Then his son, though born the first,
By the people shall be cursed.

And for generations three
Trewinion's name shall cursed be,
Trewinion's heir must never hate,
Never from this law abate.
Trewinion's son must e'er forgive
Or 'twill be a curse to live.
If he take unlawful ways,
Dark, indeed, shall be his days.
His loved one taken by his brother,
His power given to another,
Who will surely seal his doom,
Unless he claim the powers of wrong.
The course cannot be turned aside
While evil feeling doth abide.

———

Let these words be ever read,
Ere Trewinion's lord be dead,
To the true and lawful heir,
And so Trewinion's blessings share.

"It seems very curious, father," I said, when he had finished. "It is poor poetry, and has little or no meaning."

"I will say nothing about the poetry," replied my father; "no doubt it seems to you poor, silly doggerel; but I have no doubt of this, Roger, your interest and mine lie in abiding by what it says."

"But it seems so vague, father," I urged.

"Not so vague, Roger. Your grandfather took to unlawful ways. He kept a smuggling vessel, which in some cases ought to have carried a black flag, and the maiden he loved was given to another, who died of a broken heart. For twenty years my father's life was a curse. His mind was filled with the most horrible fancies. Dark dreams haunted his pillow, and then, although he married my mother, he was until the day of his death harassed by difficulties and crushed by oppressors."

"And did he die happy, father?"

My father looked very strange as I asked this question, and for a moment did not reply. Then he said, slowly:

"Roger, my boy, I was with him at the last, and never shall I forget the scene. It was as if a terrible dread rested upon him; and he seemed to feel an awful presence in the room.

"'Can I do anything for you, father?' I asked.

"'Send for the parson, Roger,' said he, 'and let him give me rest, or the curse that rests on me will rest on you.'

"It was midnight, and no one would dare to go, so I rode away alone to the vicarage. It was an awful ride. The powers of darkness seemed to know my object, for the elements were against me and I heard terrible howling along the sea coast; but I feared lest the curse of the Trewinions should fall upon me. The vicar was afraid to come when I told him about my father; but I threatened to drag him thither by the hair of the head if he refused. At length I got him to ride in front of me, and we came to my father.

"Ah, Roger, his cries were fearful! 'Take away Trewinion's curse!' he screamed, and he looked as though he saw angry spirits around him.

"The parson prayed, and, in the name of One above, commanded all evil to depart; but for a long time no ease came. Then there was a noise outside—three raps against the window, as though a bird had flown up against it. The moment after the light in the room changed.

"'Do you forgive everyone?' said the vicar.

"'No,' said my father, 'I can never forgive the man who stole from me the woman I loved.'

"'But,' said the vicar. 'Trewinion's curse cannot be removed while unforgiveness is in your heart.'

"My father looked at the blue light on the table, and then said, 'I'll try and say the Lord's Prayer.' He went steadily until he came to the words, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.'"

"'I can't say the words,' he groaned.

"'Say them with all your heart and the curse will be taken away,' said the vicar.

"My father tried again and succeeded, and no sooner had he done so than the light changed and a holy calm rested upon us all.

"'It's gone,' said my father. 'May God bless you, Roger, and do you never forget the Trewinion's warning.'

"By this he meant the lines we have been reading.

"'I will never forget, father,' I said, and soon after he died happily."

My father left me then, placing in my hands the old nurse's lines. For a long time I mused over what he had said, and wondered about my grandfather's death-bed scene. Was it as my father had said? Was it Trewinion's curse that rested upon him? I began to think of what the vicar, my schoolmaster, had told us only the day before—that every sin brought a curse, brought misery, brought remorse, and while sin or unforgiveness was cherished in our hearts we could not realise happiness or forgiveness. Was this the case with my grandfather, or was my father's belief right?

The interview made a deep impression upon me, however, and a great awe rested on me for days. I felt that as the heir of the Trewinions I was surrounded by terrible powers, and I did not know whether they were good or evil. So my young mind was fed, and so my imagination was stimulated.

What was to be my future? What had the powers which took such an interest in my race in store for me? Looking back over the years that are gone I ask, Were the things told me superstitious fancies, or is the Trewinion curse a reality? Remembering what has happened between then and now, I dare not answer the question.

CHAPTER II

THE WITCH'S WARNING

Ban. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, and these are
of them. Whither are they vanished?
Macbeth. Into the air; and what seemed corporal, melted,
As a breath of wind. Would they had stayed!
Ban. Were there such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten up the root
That makes the reason prisoner?
Macbeth, Act. I, Scene 3.

Let it not be supposed that Wilfred and I ever had any quarrels, at any rate before my fifteenth birthday. I do not remember even one. This, however, was not my fault. Ofttimes when I was displeased I said things which, if said to many brothers, would have provoked a quarrel; but Wilfred apparently took no heed of my angry words; save to give me a peculiar look, which sometimes almost made me shudder. But he never lost his temper in return, or indulged in violent speech. This was peculiarly trying to me, for I was passionate, and longed to give vent to my feelings; but he would shrug his shoulders at my rage and, with a strange smile, walk away.

Consequently, although my brother never spoke angrily to me, there were no confidences between us. We never told each other our thoughts, as most brothers do, and we were never companions in any escapades or adventures. Thus I did not speak to him about the curse of the Trewinions, nor of what my father had communicated to me about the history of our house. Yet Wilfred seemed to know far more than I did about everything appertaining to our people.

At first I wondered about this, but after a while I began to realise how much my mother and Wilfred were to each other, and how often they walked together. Besides, I often saw him in the library conning over books that to me contained no interest whatever.

About three years after the interview with my father, that is to say, when I was eighteen years of age and Wilfred sixteen, I had gone out on the headland, and, in a dreamy way, was watching the sea birds as they soared around and around, ever and anon making a dive into the water. Up to this time I had remained a pupil of the Rev. Thomas Polperrow, but had been told by my father that my school days were over. He would, he said, have sent me either to Cambridge or Oxford but for the fact that the Trewinion heir was forbidden by the laws of the family to leave the house for six months together. In my case it did not matter so much, as Mr. Polperrow had given me all the advantages of his University education; and as I was not to be a man of letters like my brother Wilfred, I had all the learning that was necessary for filling the position of Squire of Trewinion Manor.

I was thinking of these things when my brother Wilfred came to me on to the headland.

"It's fine to be you, Roger," he said.

"Why, Wilfred?"

"Because your cares are over. Your life will be one long holiday, you will have everything you need, and will be the most important man in the country side."

"Yes," I said, "and you, Wilfred, will be a great scholar. You will be a clergyman and write books. Your name will live long after I am dead and forgotten."

"It is false," he said. "My prospects are of the dreariest nature. You will give me the living of Trewinion when Mr. Polperrow dies, and I shall drone out my life on your bounty. Ah! The thought makes me mad."

"No, don't say that, Wilfred," I replied, "you will inherit the vicarage as your right, while you know that everything I can give you I shall. Besides, I cannot help being the eldest."

"No, no, you can help nothing, Roger; but there, although I shall be 'Wilfred, the penniless' I shall go to Oxford, and perhaps something will turn up there for me."

"And even if nothing does turn up, Wilfred, and you have to bury your talents down here, we shall still be brothers, and we shall still have each other."

I said this because my heart was very tender towards him. I felt sad that I should have so much and he so little; but he only looked curiously at me, and a strange light played in his eyes.

He left me for a minute, and, walking to the very edge of the cliff, stood watching the waves; then he came back to me again and I thought his sadness was gone.

"What a long time since we've wrestled, Roger," he said; "let's have a hitch now."

Wrestling was then, as it is to-day, the favourite sport of Cornish youths; so I gladly took off my coat, and we began our fun. I soon saw, however, that Wilfred did not regard it as fun. He strained every muscle of his body in order to throw me, until I had to put forth my whole strength. Although I was stronger and heavier than he I had not much advantage. He was so supple and knew so many clever tricks that he was constantly in fair way of obtaining the mastery.

The grass on which we stood was as soft as a sponge, so no harm could befall either of us should we be thrown. At any rate, such was my thought. So becoming a little exasperated at Wilfred's clever strategems, I became somewhat rough, and taking him from a vantage point I had gained I threw him down with great force.

I do not think that I hurt him very much, but as chance would have it he fell on a rock that was concealed by the spongy turf, and when he rose he was pale and trembling.

"You do well," he said at length, "to show your strength in such a way. First you seek to throw me unfairly, and then you choose a rock by which I could be hurt."

"Nay, Wilfred," I said, "I did not throw you unfairly; nor did I know there was a rock there. They are so much hidden by the turf that it would take a wizard to tell where they are. But I'm sorry you are hurt; let me help you home."

He looked at me strangely again.

"Help me home?" he said; "no, I can go without help; and I tell you this, Roger, big as you are I'm as strong as you."

This pricked my pride. "As strong as I, Wilfred, why I could throw you over my head."

"Yes, you say that now because my arm has been hurt on this rock; but you wouldn't dare to wrestle again if I were well."

This put me into a passion. "Not dare!" I cried. "If I daren't it would be because I should be afraid of hurting your poor, thin body. Name any day you like and I'll take you."

"No," he said, "I've had enough of you. Never mind, my turn will come."

I again challenged him, and said all the things I could to vex him; but he would not reply, and giving me another of his strange looks he went towards the house.

He had not been gone long before my temper began to cool down, and loving my brother very much I began to blame myself a great deal. I condemned myself for not letting him throw me. I was a coward and a brute, I thought within myself, to hurt my younger brother, and acting on the impulse of the moment I hurried towards the house in order to ask his forgiveness.

I had gone about half the distance when I met an old woman who was almost bent double with old age and

rheumatism. We recognised each other in a minute. The old woman was Deborah Teague, the terror and yet the blessing of the whole neighbourhood. To her friends there could be no greater comfort than Deborah. She was acquainted with medicine that cured almost every disease save that of old age. She knew all the healing qualities of every herb that grew in the neighbourhood. Deborah was doctor and nurse to all the people round about. Fever, colds, ague, rheumatics, scarlatina, jaundice, bile; Deborah could cure them all, and a dozen diseases besides. But this was not all. What she could not cure by her medicine she could by her charms, for with these she was abundantly supplied. Ringworms, warts, gout, adder's stings, whooping cough, measles, she could charm every one of them, and what was more, no one who was a friend of Deborah's went away uncured, if a cure were possible.

Consequently she was much thought of when her helpful qualities were taken into consideration, but, as I said, she was feared as well as loved, for Deborah made her enemies tremble. Not only did she possess the power to heal, but also the power to curse. Her eye was like that of the fabled serpent, called the basilisk, and in her anger she ever struck terror. She could stop horses from drawing, and keep cows from yielding their milk. For her to "ill wish" anyone was a sure sign that ruin would befall them. Nor was this all. Everyone throughout the whole countryside believed that Deborah had been seen walking along the beach towards the haunted cove, and it was reported again and again that she held intercourse with the powers of darkness. It was also believed that other women, possessing similar power to hers, likewise met there, and conversed about unlawful things.

She also had the power of telling fortunes and reading the future, and thus nearly all the lads and girls in the district came to her at one time or another for advice and help.

I had always been taught to be careful not to offend Deborah Teague, for she had once nursed me through a serious illness, and looked on me as a favourite.

No sooner had we come close together than she lifted her hand as if to tell me to stop; then when I obeyed her gesture, she looked me straight in the eyes.

"Cain and Abel," she said, mysteriously.

"No, Mrs. Teague," I replied, catching her meaning, "nothing of the sort."

"Yer brother es gone to his mawther," she muttered. "I axed un what was the matter, and he said you'd took advantage and hurt un."

I accordingly told Mrs. Teague what had taken place.

No sooner had I spoken than she seized my hand, and with her bony fingers began to draw the skin together over my joints, peering curiously all the while.

"Maaster Roger'll av to be keerful," she said.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Maaster Roger'll av to be keerful," she repeated, in a half wheedling, half chuckling voice. "Maaster Roger es the ouldest and the biggest, and the strongest; but Maaster Wilfred ev got the eyes to zee."

"Oh, don't trouble, Mrs. Teague," I said; "I'm going to Wilfred now, to tell him I'm sorry I've hurt him."

"And mark my words, Maaster Roger," she said, "when you go, oal you zay will be took no noatice ov, but yer mawther and Maaster Wilfred 'll look black."

"How do you know, Mrs. Teague?" I said.

"Know!" she repeated, "what do'ant I know? Tell me that!"

I looked at her and was silent.

"I'll tell ee," she cried, and then stopped. "We musn't talk here," she continued. "Will'ee come to th'oull

Debrah's house to-night, Maaster Roger, and I'll tell ee something for yer good? No, not to-night; but to-morrow night at nine o'clock."

I promised her I would do so, and Deborah hobbled away. As soon as she had gone I went straight home with a heavy heart. Although I was a full-grown man I dreaded my mother's anger, and Deborah's words rang in my ears. Besides, I feared that Wilfred might be prejudiced against me and not see things in their true light.

No sooner had I entered the dining-hall than I saw my mother bathing Wilfred's head, my father looking on gravely meanwhile. Even my father's presence could not quell my mother's anger against me.

"You the elder brother!" she cried. "You, the heir to the Trewinions! The name will be disgraced if you are master of the Manor. You, a great strong monster, to punish a younger brother who is not full grown!"

I tried to explain, but she would not allow me to do so, while Wilfred looked at me with that strange expression which always appeared on his face when he was not well pleased.

Shortly after, I went away with my father to whom I told my story.

"Roger," he said, when I had finished, "you must be very careful, my lad. You will be either a blessing or a curse to your family. Future generations will either bless your memory or they will remember your name with loathing."

"Why," I said, "does so much depend on me?"

"Everything depends on you, Roger. You are the first-born son, and if you turn out bad, everything will turn out bad. So, my boy, whatever you are, or whatever you do, be truthful, be pure, and be forgiving."

"God helping me, I will, father," I replied.

Some time after we all gathered together in the library, where we usually sat in the evening. My father made it a rule to send the servants to bed early when we had no company, so although it was only eight o'clock and scarcely dark he had taken down the old family Bible in order that we might hear the Scriptures and join in prayer before retiring. My mother sat by Wilfred, her hand locked in his, while I sat near to my father, as was the usual custom, and we waited for the servants to come to prayers.

Instead of all coming together, only one came, and announced that Deborah Teague had something to tell us.

Father, in spite of all the complaints against Deborah, regarded her with much favour, and told the servant to show her in.

The old woman came in mumbling as usual. She waited for no greeting, and took no notice of my mother's harsh look.

"Maaster Trewinion," she said, lifting the forefinger of her skinny right hand, "expect!"

She stood up nearly straight as she spoke, and I thought of the Jewess prophetess whose name she bore.

"Expect!" she repeated. "Expect a stranger and expect a storm."

"What do you mean, Deborah?" asked my father kindly.

"Just that," she replied. "I ha'ant a vollied the fortins of this eer ous for nothin', and I say expect."

"A stranger and a storm," repeated my father. "The storm would be nothing to wonder at, the weather is so changeable, but the stranger——"

"Es a woman," said the old crone, "and a young woman. I cud tell—but I wa'ant."

"Could tell what?"

"Clouds, and storms, and darkness!"

"Come, tell us."

"No, Maaster Trewinion, I be'ant zackly sure, but this I zay, git yer booats ready to help the perishin', and it may be as ow the stranger and the storm'll be together, like."

The old woman went away at this, while father, always heedful of what Deborah might tell him, asked me to order some men to get the strongest and best boats in readiness.

As I went down to the village which lies in the hollow near our house, I remembered the curious looks that passed between my mother and Wilfred while Deborah had been talking, and then I thought of my promise to meet Deborah at nine o'clock the next night. I wondered whether I ought to do so or not, and as the night gathered around I almost shuddered at the thought of meeting her alone. Had she, I asked myself, intercourse with evil spirits? Had she given herself to the devil for knowledge and evil power, as it was reported she had done?

I reached the village at length and went in search of the men my father had mentioned. There was a harbour near, and as at the time of which I write a good number of people lived in the village, most of whom managed to do a great deal of fishing throughout the year, a number of boats had been built.

After telling the men to make preparations for a storm, I was about to go back to the Manor House, when the question of Deborah Teague came into my mind again. What had she to tell me? And ought I to listen to what she had to say?

I could not for a long time make up my mind. On the one hand was a great curiosity as to what she had to tell me, besides an anxiety to please the old woman; on the other I felt sure she gained her knowledge by unlawful means.

I decided at length. I would go to the vicar that very night. It was not late yet, only half-past eight, and daylight had barely gone. Surely the Rev. Thomas Polperrow would settle the matter for me. If her power were evil he could guard me against it; if it were good, then all was well.

It was a beautiful night. The moon was nearly full, although it was encircled by a large misty ring, which betokened a change in the weather; but the sea was calm and bright, and shone like glass. All along the coast I could see the misty outlines of the cliffs, while here and there a giant rock jutted into the water.

What was that? A wail!

Was it the night cry of a sea bird telling of the foretold storm? Or was it——stop!

A figure all in white stood near me!

I could not move. I was riveted to the place. Surely it was a visitant from the spirit land!

Slowly it moved away. It went to the edge of the cliffs and disappeared from my sight.

I was not so much surprised at this, for there was more than one spot along the coast where those acquainted with the place could disappear as if by magic. Still, my nerves were shaken. Perhaps some evil was portended. I would rather have returned home, but I felt drawn to go to the vicar. He could explain. He could tell me what I wanted to know.

Does anything happen in one's life without a meaning? Is the Great Spirit of God in every event, ever trying to warn us from evil and draw us towards good? If so, these things of which I am now writing must be in some way connected with the after events of my life. But I shall not try to connect them now. All I purpose to do is to write just what happened, so that my children and my children's children may learn lessons from my history.

I hurried on to the vicarage, therefore, and was soon admitted to the study, I anxious to ask Mr. Polperrow's advice, he evidently wondering what I had to say to him.

CHAPTER III

THE MARCH OF EVENTS

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."—*Ex.* xxii. 18.

"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold there is a woman with a familiar spirit at Endor."—1 *Sam.* xxviii. 7.

"Well, Roger, and what do you wish to see me about?" asked Mr. Polperrow as soon as we were comfortably seated.

"I am somewhat in a dilemma," I replied. "The truth is, I want to do something which I am not sure is right, and so I have come to you about it."

"You have done right, Roger. I hope you will always be as mindful of your old friend. But what's the matter?"

"Do you think there are any witches living to-day?"

"Witches! Witches, why certainly, my boy; and yet I don't know exactly——"

And the vicar broke off abruptly, as though he were exceedingly doubtful about the matter.

"What do you mean, Mr. Polperrow?"

"I mean this, Roger. There are a great many women who have been condemned as witches when they have simply had the gift of second sight. During the reign of the Stuarts, hundreds were put to death as witches and wizards, and yet I am not sure, but they were innocent people. Don't mistake me, my boy; I'm not going against the Scriptures. I know that witches get their power from the devil—that is, real witches; but I verily believe that a lot of women who suffered in the time of James I were good women, who, through their goodness, obtained knowledge unknown to the generality of people."

"And ghosts, what about them?"

"Roger, I would rather not talk about them now." The vicar's voice was low and husky.

I thereupon told him about my encounter with Deborah Teague and what she had said, after which I asked him if I should go and see her.

Mr. Polperrow was some time before he answered. "I am not sure," he said, at length, "that old Deborah deserves all that has been said about her. She is a sensible old dame, and has searched out the healing qualities of many of the plants growing around, and thus has gained her reputation as a doctor; besides this, she has a curious way of making the silly folk here do as she tells them; but beyond this I believe a great deal of the talk is so much nonsense."

"Then you think it would be no harm going to see her?"

"Roger, my boy," said the vicar, "the world in which we live is full of mystery, full of shadows. We cannot understand the occult forces that everywhere exist, we cannot read the mystic writing which is everywhere appearing on the lives of men. Before I went to college I was a firm believer in many things which I have since discredited. Once I believed in supernatural events, but since I have seen what can be produced by purely natural and explainable means, I have begun to doubt, and yet I cannot deny some things which the most superstitious and ignorant believe."

"Then what would you advise?"

"I would go and see this old woman; perhaps she knows things, not by any supernatural means, but by keeping her eyes open."

"But if she should possess evil power, Mr. Polperrow?"

"Read your Bible and say your prayers before you go, and in your heart defy all that's wrong."

I went away from the vicarage with a strange feeling that my life was surrounded by mystery, and that unseen forces were hemming me in.

What are we, after all, but the creatures of circumstance? Forces over which we have no control make us what we are. I was born the elder son and Wilfred the younger. I was born with a strong, healthy body, and an impulsive, passionate nature. Wilfred was more delicate, more thoughtful. What had we to do with the choosing of all this? Could I help doing the things that I did? Could I resist the life-forces which moved me, even as a mighty wave moves a ship that sails thereupon? Are we, then, the architects of our own fate, or is our destiny fixed? Is it man who moulds the circumstances, or circumstances that mould the man? Who shall answer these questions? Looking back over my life I cannot, and yet in some way I am conscious that there has been a beneficent hand helping me, and making me strong, even stronger than circumstances.

As I went home I thought the moon became dimmer, while sad, moaning sounds were mixed with the musical splash of the waters, as they played upon the hard sea sand. I slept well that night. No thought of the figure in white haunted my pillow, no thought of my visit to the village witch hindered my sleep. I was young, I was innocent, my blood coursed joyfully through my veins, and the future looked bright, and so I feared not.

The next day the sky was overcast. The sea looked smooth as glass, save that now and then it gave a mighty heave, as if some terrific monster beneath sought to lift a weight from his tired shoulders. Sometimes we heard a moan sweeping across the waters; but we were familiar with the sound, living as we did close to the broad Atlantic.

As evening came on the sky grew darker, while my mind became full of the visit I was to make to old Deborah Teague. I made only a light meal, and as soon as I was able to do so, went alone to her cottage.

It was a little tumble-down shanty, standing beneath a hillock, and was as lonely a place as it was possible to be. Eighteen years of age though I was, my heart beat faster as I thought of Deborah living alone in a house that had the reputation of being haunted. What was I doing? In spite of what the vicar had said, was it not wrong for me to hold converse with the strange old woman?

But I would not go back; and so making straight for the little window, through which I could see a candle dimly burning, I was soon face to face with her.

"Maaster Roger was 'fraid," said the old woman, half questioningly, half wheedlingly.

"No," I said, "I don't think so."

"The Trewinions was never 'fraid ov th' livin', my deer," said the old woman, "but the dead, ah, the dead."

"They can do me no harm, so why should I be afraid?"

"Ah, why! ah! ha!" she giggled. "But Maaster Roger es weth wawn that can do lots ov things."

"Oh, yes, lots, Deborah," I said; "you can cure more diseases than any doctor in Truro."

"And more than that, Maaster Roger; but don't you be 'fraid, my deer, I wa'ant hurt you."

"No, I don't think you will; but why have you brought me here to-night?"

"Because I want to tell ee summin, my deer. Ah, Maaster Roger, tes terrible fur theer to be favourites in a house."

I was silent.

"They say how maaster is maaster; tedn't allays so, my deer. Missus es maaster sometimes. They say I'm a witch, my deer, do'ant um? I read the Bible, Maaster Roger. Iss, an ould woman like me, and theer I've seed that Isaac loved Esau best, and 'Becca, she loved Jacob best. Well, who got off best, my deer, hi? Iss, my deer, and they was twins, they both had wawn mawther."

"What do you mean?"

"I main that Maaster Roger'll have to be keerful, my deer. Ah, theer's jillusy in curious plaaces."

"I don't at all understand what you mean."

"No, but you will, my deer. Do'ee mind what I zed to 'ee 'esterday arternoon, dedn't I tell 'ee as 'ow you'd git nothin' but black looks for all yer explainin'?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, ded 'ee un. Was ould Debrah right or wrong?"

"You were right, Deborah; but then, I was in the wrong. I should not have hurt him so."

The old woman chuckled as I spoke, as though I were trying to hoax her.

"And ef you wadn't in the wrong, they'd make ee in the wrong between 'em."

"Deborah," I said, "you must be in the wrong. You talk as though my mother were my enemy."

"Mawther!" she repeated, "who zed she was yer mawther?"

For a minute I did not know what to say. Was she not my mother? Of course she was. I had ever been taught to call her mother, and my father had ever called her his wife.

"Do you know what you are talking about?" I said, excitedly.

"Knaw!" she repeated. "Knaw! Iss, and I cud tell 'ee lots ov things, Maaster Roger, my deer."

"But what do you mean by hinting that my mother—that is—that—that she isn't my mother at all?"

"Why es it that she've bin allays agin 'ee, hi? Why have she allays tried to shaw that you was in the wrong and yer brother in the right? Why es it that your eyes es black and yer hair brown and curly, while yer brother and sisters ev got blue eyes and yella hair, tell me that, will 'ee, my deer?"

This had never struck me before; certainly there was no likeness between my brothers and sisters and myself.

"B—but," I stammered.

"No buts, my deer, I be'ant goin' to tell 'ee nothin' more, though ould Debrah do knaw lots ov things. There's no time, now, you've got other things to do, and a terrible lot to go through as soon as you git away. Hark, do 'ee 'ear that?"

It was the sound of the breakers upon the rugged rocks and hard sea sand, while the wind blew and moaned dismally.

"Dedn't ould Debrah tell 'ee ov a storm? Well, tes come, and, Roger, yer dark days es comin' on."

"But what did you mean by telling me to come here to hear what I have? I am sure of nothing."

"Main! I main this. Maaster Roger'll have to bee keerful of the woman he do call mawther. Watch her every day

and watch Maaster Wilfred, too. Hark, do 'ee 'ear that?"

I heard nothing but the roar of the rising storm.

"I can hear nothing but the wind," I said.

"But I can, I can," she said. "I can hear the screech ov the sufferin'; oa tes wisht, terrible wisht, Maaster Roger, but tes yer fate, my deer. I'll tell 'ee more another time, but you must go now, go and help em, you father wants 'ee go, and be keerful of they I've tould 'ee about."

She pushed me out as I spoke, all the time looking around as though she saw sights unseen by me.

"You'll want oal yer strength and oal yer courage, my deer, oa tes terrible. May Roger be protected; but oa, if 'ee saves her 'ee 'll have to suffer."

Wondering at her words, I rushed out into the wild night, and had scarcely done so before I saw a dark form rise from under the window in the cottage, and hurry away right in the teeth of the wind. I started and followed, but whoever he might be, he was more fleet than I. The night was dark because of the storm, but the figure looked like that of my brother Wilfred.

Full of conflicting thoughts, I hurried home, where I found my father dressed as if to go out.

"What's the matter, father?" I asked.

"There's a vessel round the point, Roger, and she's signalled for help."

"Let me go with you. Is it a large one?"

"No, and I am afraid that my friend's child is in her."

"What child?"

"Did you see that horseman this morning, Roger?"

"Yes, father."

"He came to tell me that an old friend was dead, and that in his last hours he had expressed a wish that I should take care of his child."

"Yes, father; what then?"

"She started to come here by boat, and should have arrived in our little landing-place by this. Hark! that's another signal for help. Come, Roger; where's Wilfred."

"Wilfred cannot help on such a night as this, especially as his brother hurt him so yesterday," said my mother, who had just come into the room.

"Come, let us go alone, then, Roger," said my father.

We hurried down to the little harbour, where a dozen hardy Cornishmen were preparing to launch a boat on the angry sea.

"Not gone yet, men?" said my father.

"No, Maaster Trewinion, and ted'n no good. We should be knocked to pieces in two minutes," said one.

"But we're goin' to have a try," said another.

It was, indeed, a dangerous undertaking. The seas were now rising up like great hills and again falling into deep

valleys. It seemed impossible for a boat to live.

"We ca'ant do no good," said the first speaker.

"But they've signalled for help," said the second, "and I ca'ant stand that!"

As he spoke we heard a sound like a crack of a musket, which faintly reached us above the roar of wind and wave.

"We'll man the biggest boat somehow," said my father. "Come here, everyone; who will go with Roger and me?"

To the honour of the brave Cornish boys, a crew was ready in a minute.

We jumped into the boat and soon were out in the boiling surf.

"Hold your oars firmly," cried my father, "now, then, pull while you may, the storm is rising every minute."

Bravely those noble lads strained and tugged; but it was terrible work. We were tossed about as though the boat in which we sat were a chip or a bit of cork.

For a minute no word was spoken. Every man breathed hard, and laboured with all his strength, while my father watched, grasping the rudder in his hand. Time after time I thought we should have been thrown into the sea, but luckily we caught no side winds.

Presently we heard my father's deep voice:

"I see her," he cried. "My God, she's going straight upon the 'Devil's Tooth.'"

The "Devil's Tooth" was one of the most dangerous rocks on the coast. It was called "devil's tooth" because it was thought to possess evil power, and because it had been the means of wrecking many vessels as they tried to get into our harbour.

He had scarcely spoken when we heard a most awful crash. It was far louder than the roar of the storm, and immediately afterwards we fancied we caught the cry of people in distress.

"There, it's on! Pull!" cried my father, "we may reach them yet. God help and preserve us all."

Every man pulled with all his might towards the great rock with the terrible name.

"The great God will help us," said one solemnly.

"Amen," cried the rest; "but this is terrible."

Meanwhile, inch by inch, we drew nearer to the doomed vessel.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRECK ON THE "DEVIL'S TOOTH."

At the best of times the rock called the "Devil's Tooth" was by no means beautiful. It stood with five points towering into the air like the prongs of a great tooth, and at its feet were scores of smaller rocks, mostly hidden by the water.

Strange stories have been told about it. Some have said that on stormy nights emissaries of Satan sit there, and lure vessels on to destruction; but at the time I had no thought for such stories. The terrible crash of the vessel was still echoing in my ears, and, in my fancy, I heard above the howling of the storm the shrieks of the perishing.

We could not see much. The moon was full, but had been hidden by the clouds. Only by the light of the storm, which was nearly darkness, could we perceive anything. I know that my words are almost paradoxical, but I can express my meaning in no better way. Still, our eyes were accustomed to the darkness of a storm, and thus both my father and I had some idea of what we were doing.

Slowly we made our way. Carefully my father sought to evade unnecessary danger.

It was terrible work. Now we were lifted on the pinnacle of a wave, and again we sank deep in dark gulfs, until I thought we should never rise again. But every man was strong and hardy, every man had braved a dozen storms, and so we struggled on.

But for my father's thorough knowledge of the coast we must have perished. With his knowledge there was hope. Suddenly we found ourselves in comparatively smooth water and out of the beat of the wind. We had shot into the "lew" (sheltered) side of the rock, and were able for a moment to rest.

"She is just around the point," said my father.

"Iss, Maaster Trewinion," was the reply.

"The question is, How can we get to them?" said my father. "If we try to get our boat around there it means death for all of us. The only means of saving the poor souls, if they are not all gone already, is for us to scale the rock here and make our way to those on board. Then they might be brought here one by one."

"You see'd her break on the rock didn' 'ee, Maaster Trewinion?" said one.

"Yes," replied my father, "she broke close against the long prong."

"Then ef she edn't gone to pieces there may be hope," replied the man; "but who can climb up here?"

"Two will be enough," said my father; "who'll go first?"

"Let me," said I.

"Not yet, Roger," said my father.

Two others immediately volunteered, and started to climb, but the rock was slippery, and there was only one way by which the top could be reached.

They failed in their attempt.

"Tie a rope round my waist, father," I cried. "I've climbed it many times and know the way."

"Go, then, Roger, my boy, and may God preserve you."

It was only because of my boyish freaks that I knew the easiest way to reach the summit of the rock. One day I

had laid a wager with Wilfred that I could climb to its summit, and so I had carefully examined it when the tide was low, and after once climbing it, I had often gone thither to hunt for the nests of sea-birds.

All my knowledge was necessary now. The stones were slippery as glass, and I had to feel carefully for the jutting rocks in order to get from one point to another. A false step, a bit of crumbling rock, a slip of the hand would have destroyed our hopes, and perhaps have maimed me for life, if not killed me. Providence, however, was in my favour. After many a strain and many a struggle I reached the top.

I shall never forget the sight that met me. Even in the hour of death I think I shall remember the terrible scene. Holding fast by a rugged peak I could in the stormlight dimly see the five huge prongs of the "Devil's Tooth," grim and ghastly; while upon them broke the great black waves!

How the breakers roared! How the wind howled as it beat upon the great rock on which I stood! Whenever the waves receded I could see the white foam all round, while the spray beat pitilessly upon me. I had never seen the like before. It is an awful thing to watch a storm from the shore; but to stand in the midst of it, to hear it all round you, is more awful!

I heard a shout from beneath. "Do you see the wreck?" was the query.

I looked in the direction of the long prong and saw the outline of the vessel.

"Yes," I replied, "but I shall want help to get to her. There! I've fastened the rope to a rock, let Bill Tregargus come up."

Instantly, by the tugging of the rope, I knew that some one was coming, and a little later the giant form of Bill Tregargus was beside me.

We made our way to the wreck, and as we drew nearer I was sure I saw people clinging to the half broken mast. Nearer and nearer we came, and then, to our joy, we saw that two men had got from the vessel and were now trying to scale the rock.

"There's hope yet, Bill," I said. "Have you brought the rope with you?"

"Part on't, Maaster Roger, and part I tied to the rock."

I shouted as loud as I could, but I was unable to make them hear. The thunder of the storm made my little shout of no avail. I called to the people on the vessel, but there was no response.

Meanwhile the waves swept over the doomed vessel, and roared along the cruel rocks. There seemed but little chance of our rendering help. Even we, sheltered as we were by the great prongs of the rock, found it difficult to stand.

I took the rope from Bill, and, holding one end in my hand, I threw it straight to the men, who I could see were struggling below. The effort succeeded. It was immediately caught, and soon we got a man on the top of the rock.

"Many on board?" I asked.

"Twelve," he gasped.

"Can you make the other one tell the crew to do as you have done?"

We looked again, seeking for the best method to signal, and to our delight saw that those on the vessel realised that help was come. In the dim light I could see that they were leaving the vessel.

It was only a question of time. One by one, we pulled them up, some bruised and beaten, but still hopeful, others gasping for life, and others again dazed and faint.

We asked no questions; it was our work to save them first and question them afterwards; and so, one after

another, man by man, they reached the summit of the rock.

At length we came to the last man. He was getting old and stiff. Even in the night I could see that he was bent and weak.

"Are you all here?" I asked, when he had reached the top.

The old man who had last come up looked around him, and then cried out:

"But where is Miss Ruth?"

"Miss Ruth?" gasped two or three; "is she not here?"

"No woman has come up," I replied.

"Then Miss Ruth is still on the vessel," cried the old man. "Wretch, wretch, that I am to leave her."

"But she left the vessel," replied another; "why, Tom Poltewan said he was going to help her down."

"She said she must get something from the cabin," said another, "and I didn't see her. I thought Mr. Inch would be sure to take care of her."

Then followed a confusion of tongues, and in the storm I did not distinguish what was said. Evidently in the great anxiety to escape death a woman had been overlooked. But she must be rescued. The work which had been begun must be completed. Surely God who had helped us thus far would not desert us now?

What was to be done, however, had to be done quickly. The vessel had struck on a great rock, the billows were sweeping over her, and she might go to pieces any minute. The storm, although it had not yet reached its full height, was rapidly rising, the wind blew louder and louder, until we could scarcely hear each other speak. The men we had saved were battered and bruised and nearly unconscious. As I think of it now it is a wonder to me that they escaped death.

I tied the rope round my waist, and then asked Bill to lower me down by the slippery rock. At first he objected to this, but I insisted, and soon stood upon a broad flat ledge which was close to the wreck.

My object now was to get upon the vessel, but that was not easy of accomplishment; the great breakers were constantly sweeping over the vessel, and I began to despair of rendering assistance. I determined to try, however, and after many vain attempts, reached the deck. To look for anyone there was madness. No woman could stay in such a place. Either she had been swept away or she must be down below. In spite of storm and darkness I found my way there. The vessel was half full of water, and I felt that it would be worse than useless to attempt to find anyone in the darkness. Just then I heard a cry for help.

I cannot describe what followed. I have a dim recollection of grasping a cold hand, of struggling to the deck, of holding fast by the broken mast, and of a terrible wave that swept me quite away. After that all was oblivion.

When I woke to consciousness I was in my own bed, with my father and Deborah Teague sitting near me. At first everything seemed hazy, then things became more real, until all the events of the storm flashed before my mind.

"How did I come here?" I asked.

"God helped us to save you, Roger, my boy," said my father.

"How?" I asked, faintly.

"I got impatient of your being away so long, and so one of the other lads succeeded in getting on the rock, while I, wanting to be near you, followed him. I got to the long prong in time to see you swept off the deck."

"And then, father?"

"Then I went down to the broad ledge and found you both unconscious. You had been stunned by the awful force with which you were hurled on the rock."

"And she, father, the—the—one who was with me?"

"We got you both in the boat after awhile. God only knows the difficulty we had, for the storm rose every minute. Had the rock been further out at sea I don't think we could have weathered it; but the gridiron point broke the force of the wind just a little!"

"And is she well, father?"

"A great deal bruised, my boy, and very weak, but she'll recover."

"Who is she?" I asked after being silent for a few moments.

"Her name is Ruth Morton; she is my old friend's only child," answered my father, slowly.

I turned on my pillow wearily. I was tired and sore, and wanted rest.

"That's right," said my father, "go to sleep again, I'll send the doctor to you, and he, together with Mrs. Teague, will soon make you well."

He left the room as he spoke. Deborah looked keenly at me.

"You'll soon git well, Maaster Roger," she said presently.

"I think I shall," I replied, "I am far from dead yet."

"Iss, iss," she repeated, "you'll soon git well, Maaster Roger, but old Deborah was right. The storm and the stranger comed together, ded'n um?"

I did not answer.

"Maaster Roger must be of good heart," she continued, "for he ain't a seed the end of this ere matter yet."

I asked her to explain herself, but she would not. She sat silently by my bedside until the doctor came and gave me a sleeping draught, after which I remembered nothing for a long while.

I lay in my bed for more than a week. During that time my mother came to see me twice, while Wilfred came only once. Evidently they did not care much about my recovery. I was grieved at this, for in my heart I loved them sincerely. My father told me, however, that Ruth Morton was recovering, and was anxiously looking forward to the time when she would be able to see me, and thank me for what I had done. In spite of this, however, I did not ask many questions about her, and when, after some days, I was pronounced well enough to see her, I cannot say I looked forward with any pleasure to our meeting. Perhaps the reason for this was that I hated to be thanked, or perhaps it was that I did not like talking to girls, but be that as it may I was in no happy frame of mind when my father led me to the room where she sat. I remember that my blood rushed to my face as for the first time I saw the one I had probably saved from death.

Perhaps my sadness foreboded the dark days that came afterwards.

CHAPTER V

THE SHAPING OF EVENTS

The brave man is not he who feels no fear;
For that were stupid and irrational;
But he whose noble soul its fear subdues
And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from.
—*Joanna Baillie.*

Ruth Morton was fourteen years of age, but looked far younger. To me she appeared only a child of twelve. She was diminutive in stature, and had an innocent childish face. I did not think her beautiful, and yet I remember that her face was pleasing. I remember, too, that her mouth looked very sensitive, and was indicative of a gentle nature; but what struck me most were her eyes. They were large and grey, and seemed to contain a world of meaning. Her hair was dark brown and fell in heavy masses on her shoulders.

She looked at me curiously, as if striving to read my character, and when my father mentioned my name she timidly held out her little hand.

"You must be friends," said he; "indeed, you must be brother and sister, and I shall look to you, Roger, to take care of her."

I scarcely know now what I answered, but I daresay it was little to the point. During the next few minutes I was very uncomfortable, for she tried to thank me for saving her life.

As soon as I could I led her to talk of other matters, chiefly because I knew not what to say or how to act.

By and by she spoke of her father's death, and what she felt when she was informed she must leave her home and come to Trewinion Manor. She told me, also, of her desire to come by boat, and how Mr. Inch, an old trusted servant, had arranged to get a crew together, and how they had sailed along in sight of the giant cliffs.

She had a sweet, childish voice, and talked in a way that was quite fascinating. By and by, as she told how the storm came on suddenly, of the dread feelings she had as she saw the waves rise higher and higher, and how she lost hope when the little vessel with an awful crash was swept upon the great rock, I could fancy myself again out on the angry sea.

In a little while my father left us, and then I wished I were again back in my room, for I knew not how to talk. She, too, seemed ill at ease.

"I'm sorry you and your brother are not better friends," she said, after we had been silent a few seconds.

I was surprised at this, and wondered who could have have been talking to her.

"Have you seen Wilfred?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, I have seen him twice. He came yesterday, and again to-day. Your mother was here, too."

"I am glad they have been to see you," I replied, "but I did not know that Wilfred and I were not friendly."

She looked at me, I thought, suspiciously, as though she doubted my words, but did not speak.

Had my mother and Wilfred, I wondered, been saying evil things about me. I hoped not, and yet it might be. Certainly, their conduct towards me had been strange. I would not talk of this, however, and so asked her if she liked my sisters.

"Very much," she replied. "They have been with me every day; and the first two days when I was ill they were

with me nearly all the time. I think, I see them coming now."

As she spoke Katherine and Elizabeth entered the room. They were bright, buxom maidens, well-grown and healthy. The latter, though two years younger was quite as well grown as the stranger who had come to live amongst us. Yet there was a difference. Ruth Morton possessed a dignity and a grace which were foreign to both my sisters. Children they all were, pretty they all were, yet the beauty of Ruth Morton was of a different nature. She had been cast in another mould, and thus presented a contrast to my sisters.

I was a great favourite both with Katherine and Elizabeth; but I did not stay with them. Stiff and weak as I was I found my way back to my room, where, throwing myself on the bed, I tried to rest.

I knew nothing whatever of the arrangements that had been made about Ruth staying with us, except that Mr. Inch, the old servant, was to remain, that the crew had been sent back to Penwingle, and that the steward was taking care of the Morton estate. I took no interest in the matter, however. From all I could gather her mind had been prejudiced against me, and there was a look of satisfaction on her face when I left her. She was as transparent as the day, so I had no difficulty in seeing that in spite of my having risked my life to save her, she had a bad opinion of me. Well, it did not matter much; in a few years she would be of age and would return then to her old home.

I had banished all unpleasant thoughts from my mind when the door opened and Wilfred entered.

"Well, Roger," he said, "getting better?"

"First rate, Wilfred," I replied.

"Lucky, as usual," he said.

"How?"

"Why, in the first instance, you were privileged to save Ruth Morton's life, and secondly, you are the hero of the neighbourhood for miles around. The talk of the whole countryside is the bravery and daring of Roger Trewinion."

This was said bitterly I thought, but I was not sure. Wilfred had sometimes a way of talking which entirely hid his real feelings and meaning.

"I don't know," he went on, "if the parson isn't going to preach a special sermon next Sunday, when his subject will be 'Roger Trewinion's Bravery and the Mercy of Providence.'"

He spoke mockingly, and I began to think that something had displeased him. I was not sure of this however, so merely said that I hoped nothing of the sort would be done.

"Oh, but I hope it will," he said. "Why, the people are saying that you jumped from the top of the highest prong of the 'Devil's Tooth' on to the wreck, that you waded through water several feet deep, and that just when you had carried little Ruth on the deck the vessel broke in pieces, upon which you plunged into the sea and carried her ashore. I had no idea I had such a brother."

He laughed jeeringly.

His manner of speaking made me feel that if Wilfred had ever possessed any love for me it was becoming embittered.

"Have you seen Ruth?" he went on.

"Yes, I saw her to-day."

"Father introduced you to her, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And no doubt she was exceedingly anxious to glorify the hero who saved her."

"No, I don't think she was, but I did not stay long with her. I fancy she doesn't like me."

"No?" he said, questioningly. "I wonder at that, for she seems to like me a great deal; indeed, we are great friends."

"I am glad to hear it," I replied, "for somehow I can't be friendly with strange girls."

"No," he said, "I don't think you are cut out for a girl's friend, and you are not the kind of fellow a girl would like."

There is something in every man's heart which causes him to feel hurt when he hears another say something about him that he would have no hesitation in saying about himself. I had said many times that I was not a lad whom girls liked, and yet when Wilfred said it I was annoyed.

"After all, it's right," he went on. "It is not fair that you should have everything and I, nothing. You have the Trewinion name, its houses, its lands, and its blessings, while I have nothing but my brains, and people's love."

"There are curses in connexion with Trewinion's heir as well as blessings," I said. "I am fettered on every hand."

"Curses," he sneered; "all old wives' tales. I wonder at you thinking about them. Were I the eldest son I would throw all that to the wind, I would see the world; I would enjoy myself, and spend some of the hoarded gold of generations."

He looked at me closely as he said this, and I began to feel that perhaps the old stories were foolishness. All my father had told me seemed real in the night time, but in daylight it was shadowy and unreal.

"Do you know about these stories?" I said.

"Yes."

"How?"

He looked a little confused, and then said, hurriedly:

"Oh, I have read the history of our house, and have hunted up the family documents. You see, while you have been climbing the 'Devil's Tooth' I have been grinding away at the story of the devil's curses. But, bah, Roger, what are curses to you? Surely, you can laugh at them all."

Throughout the conversation I felt that he had some purpose in his talk. It seemed as though he were sifting me and seeking to read my thoughts, and so I was silent.

"Do you know anything about little Ruth's family?" he went on.

"No," I replied.

"Her father owned miles of land," he said, "and it is all left to her. Your estate, Roger, is but a patch on hers. Morton Hall, too, is about twice as big as this house. Eh, but you were lucky to save her life."

Looking back after a long lapse of years I feel that this is not the natural talk of a boy of sixteen, and as I write, I ask myself whether I have not incorrectly recorded our conversation. It is true I only write from memory; nevertheless, I think I have faithfully described what was said. Really, Wilfred was never a true boy. He was always older than I, though born two years later, and when quite a child he had an old-fashioned way of speaking. The villagers were in the habit of saying that Wilfred had the brains of the family, while I had the heart. Anyhow, he could always outwit me, and if ever we were matched against each other, I, in the long run, always came off second best.

A few days later I was able to be out again, and once more lived my old, free, untrammelled life. My father and I still continued friends and companions; but Wilfred was little with me. I noticed, however, that he was always anxious to please me. He ceased to sneer when speaking of me, and I thought he looked sad and downhearted. This made me gentle and forbearing towards him; so much so, that I often went out of my way to help him.

I often thought of old Deborah Teague's words as to whether he were or were not my brother; but I could find no answer to my questionings. That we both had the same father I did not doubt; but was his mother my mother? Was that tall, stately woman who always treated me so coldly really and truly my mother? I asked old Deborah again and again, but my father I dared not ask.

My mother's demeanour to me was always the same. I never had a mother's cares, never realised a mother's love, and so I could do no other than to watch, even as old Deborah told me to watch.

Ruth Morton and I did not become friendly. Evidently she did not like me. I noticed that she looked at me furtively, and would never be alone with me by choice. I could not help feeling that in some way her mind had been poisoned concerning me, and I was not long in deciding who was the poisoner.

It is true that I did not try to win her liking.

I felt it rather hard that she should treat me so harshly, and so I never forced my company upon her.

This state of things existed for nearly two years. Wilfred was friendly, and, evidently, beloved by her, but I was disliked. Often my brother took her and my sisters for long walks, but I never did. I was busy on my father's estate and learning the secrets of agriculture, while he in the hours not devoted to study would be away with them, and became, I thought, more than ever a favourite with Ruth and my sisters.

During these two years I had become quite a man in stature, while Wilfred had likewise grown to be a tall, handsome fellow. I remember that all this time my mother encouraged the growing friendship of Ruth and Wilfred, and seemed delighted when she noticed her evident dislike for me.

I was now twenty. Wilfred was more than eighteen, Ruth was sixteen, and had grown quite a young woman. Katherine, too, who was the same age, had become a splendid example of a healthy, happy, country girl, while Elizabeth promised to become the beauty of the family.

At this time an event happened which made us better friends.

One afternoon I was sitting on the great headland overlooking the sea. It was a glorious day. The sky was clear, the sun was shining brightly, and the bright waves beneath were laughing and playing in the light of the sun. To me, as I sat there, the great sea was singing a wondrous song, full of a rich, rare music, which touched the deepest feelings of my nature. I had not heard much in my life about religion, and I am afraid I had not thought much about God, but as I sat there that day, a great rock above me and hundreds of feet of cliff beneath, while the sea chanted a song which the tones of a thousand organs could not reproduce, I felt a longing in my heart to serve my Maker and to do my duty while here below such as I had never felt before.

While I sat there I heard voices above me. Someone was standing on the great rock in a crevice of which I sat.

"Let's ask Roger to go with us?" said a voice.

I recognised it in a second as my sister Katherine's and I waited for the answer.

"No," I heard Wilfred say, "he hates girls; besides, he'll be as ugly as a bear with a sore head."

"That's not fair, Wilfred," said Katherine. "Roger does not hate us, and as for his being ugly, you know he's not."

"Well, we can't find him, anyhow," said Wilfred, "so let us go."

I must confess I felt angered by this, for I should have liked to accompany them. I strove to banish my brother's

unkind words from my mind, however, and again tried to listen to the music of the sea; but it was all driven from my heart. For I have learnt this is truth: we must have music within us if we are to realise music in anything without.

I could not sit there long. My brother's words began to burn and sting; I would go for a walk, too.

I had not gone far when I saw someone running towards me. It was Wilfred.

"Help, Roger!" he shouted.

"What's the matter?" I said.

"Ruth has fallen down the cliff!"

"Fallen down the cliff! where?"

"Up here. Come with me."

We started running together and quickly came to a place where Elizabeth was weeping bitterly, while Katherine was descending the steep declivity as if to try and render help.

"Where is she?" I said excitedly. "And how did she get where she is?"

"She wanted a plant," cried Wilfred. "I told her it was not to be obtained, or I would get it; but she would not listen to me, and said she would fetch it herself. She went down a little way all right, but when she reached out her hand for the plant she slipped and fell."

"Fell! Fell where?" I asked, excitedly.

"To a ledge a few feet below."

"Did you see her?"

"Yes."

"And did you not try to reach her?"

"Why, how could I do anything? I could only go for help."

It is true Wilfred was younger than I, but I thought this conduct cowardly. He seemed to fear for himself, and dared not risk his own limbs. Katherine, on the other hand, though but a girl of sixteen, was trying to rescue her friend.

I quickly scrambled down the declivity, and was not long in reaching the point from which Ruth fell. Katherine was here also, but she could go no farther, for the ledge beneath, although only about eight or nine feet down, was narrow, and to fall from there meant certain death. The mystery was how Ruth had fallen on to this ledge, and for a time I was afraid she had been precipitated on the rugged rocks beneath. I heard a moan, however, and saw a bit of her white dress, so my mind was comparatively at ease.

I sent Katherine back, and told her to run for a rope, as it might be necessary, and then prepared to reach the narrow rock on which Ruth lay.

"Keep a good heart, Ruth," I said; "I am coming to help you."

There was no reply, but I still struggled to get to her. Time after time I essayed to reach her, and time after time I failed. I climbed around and around, and from different points tried to get a footing on the rock where she lay, but in vain. It was isolated, and was at least nine feet from any point above it, and nearly as many from any standing place on the same level.

There was only one way by which she could be reached, and that was by gaining a rock nearly on the same

level, and then leaping over the chasm that lay between. This I determined to do, for how could I do less? Ruth was lying like one dead, and if I did not help her who could? I got on the point after some difficulty, and then found that I was in nearly as much danger as she. I had jumped down to this jutting rock, but I could not jump up again; the distance was too great. Could I get on the rock where she lay there seemed a possibility to get down, for the cliff looked slanting from that point.

Beneath me were two hundred feet of rugged cliff, and if I failed to reach Ruth I should fall from point to point on the rocks beneath and be killed.

I took off my coat and prepared to leap.

At this moment she awoke to consciousness and looked around her, and seeing her position she gave a scream of affright.

"Don't move," I said, "I'm going to save you."

Her eager eyes gave me strength and courage. I disencumbered myself of everything that would hinder me and placed my feet in the best position for a leap.

By this time I began to be excited. The sound of the sea seemed cruel, while the rocks looked like so many giant gaunt spectres that would lure me to destruction. There was no time for wild fancyings, however, so I nerved myself for what lay before me.

Then I took the leap.

CHAPTER VI

LINK TO LINK

I shall never forget the feeling which possessed me when I made this terrible leap. If my foot should slip, if I should fall short, if I should fall and be dashed to pieces! It was only a second; but I seemed to live a whole lifetime in that second. I landed safely, however, and was soon by Ruth's side.

To my delight she was scarcely hurt at all, except that she had received a shock. She was trembling violently, but she was a brave little thing, and as soon as I came she conquered her weakness.

"Can we get away from here, Roger?" she said, at length.

"I think so," I replied. "If we can't get down from here they will get us a rope, which I will fasten around you, so that you may be easily drawn up."

"Oh, I do not think I dare be drawn up," she said, with a shudder. "Can we not get down? I dare try with you to help me."

I examined the rocks, and decided to make the attempt. It was a long and tedious journey, especially as I had to clamber from rock to rock, and then lift Ruth. We managed it, however, and after a time stood safely on the hard beach.

No sooner had we done so than I heard my father's voice above. He had come with a rope and other means by which we might be helped; but right glad was he when he saw that we were not needing his help.

"The tide is out," I shouted in answer to his query as to how we should get home, "and I shall walk down to Trewinion Cove, and thus escape climbing any cliffs."

We started together.

"This is the second time you have saved my life, Roger," Ruth said.

"Do you think so?" I answered. "You might have got on all right without me."

"I do not think I have been just to you," she went on.

"How?" I asked, abruptly.

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you," she said, "but I cannot help it now."

I asked her to explain.

"I have sudden likes and dislikes," she said, "and when you saved me in the storm, and I heard that you were going to be my brother, I was glad—more glad than I can say. Then when I was getting well your mother came and told me that you had neither fear nor feelings. That you had risked your life out of mere love of danger, that you were cruel and vindictive. That, although you were the heir of the Trewinions, you were totally unfit for its responsibilities. That your brother Wilfred was in reality robbed of the position which he alone was fit to take. That you had ever been cruel to him, that, although you were superior in strength, you took advantage of his weakness. Thus, when I saw you, although you had saved my life, I was prepared to dislike you."

"And then?" I asked.

"I thought you verified what your mother had said. You seemed rough and uncouth, and very different from your brother."

I suppose most of us like to be thought well of. None of us wish to be looked upon as objects of repugnance.

Anyhow, I was in no pleasant frame of mind, and I had hard work to keep from bursting out with some strong invective against my brother, but I held my tongue and waited for her to continue.

"Since then," she went on, "I have been finding out my mistake, and I have wanted to tell you so; but you have always been so cold and repellent that I dared not. You are rough and stern, Roger, not a bit like Wilfred."

I bit my lip angrily.

"Yes, I know you have saved my life again," she said, as if divining my thoughts. "I know that Wilfred dared not do what you have done; but what I meant was that anyone who does not understand you would think you harsh. Besides, it takes some time to know you."

"But I always felt friendly towards you, Ruth, even though you seemed to dislike me."

"And I shall always be more friendly to you in the future. I want you to forgive me, Roger. Will you?"

She looked at me, and her great grey eyes were full of kindness, and her voice was so gentle that I felt quite uncomfortable.

"Don't talk about forgiving," I said, rather roughly, I expect, "let us be good friends."

She looked very pale as I said this, and then I saw that she was more shaken and hurt than I had at first thought. She would have fallen, I believe, had I not upheld her. I led her to a rock, where she sat down for a rest, and when I had found some fresh water for her, she was quite refreshed. She took hold of my arm as we walked home, however, and I felt a strange pleasure in helping her. She had grown just like one of my sisters to me, and she seemed to regard me as a brother.

We talked quite pleasantly on our way, until we forgot the great danger in which we had both been a little while before. I forget just now what we were talking about; but I know that while we were laughing heartily at something she had been saying we were startled by a voice telling us to stop.

We looked up, and Deborah Teague stood before us. She eyed us keenly, and when she saw how friendly we were, she said, "Maaster Roger, mind what ould Debrah said."

"I always do mind what you say, Deborah," I replied; "you have always been a friend to me."

"Maaster Roger," she continued, "ould Debrah hev vollied the fortins of yer family for years, and she ought to knaw."

"Well, what's wrong now?"

"It wur a woman as tempted Adam, it wur a woman as tempted Samson, it wur a woman as tempted Ahab. Lev Maaster Roger be keerful."

"I hardly know what you mean," I said, a little astonished at this strange speech.

She lifted her skinny hand above her head.

"Mind," she said, "mind Trewinion's curse! Oh, tes comin', tes comin'. I see it now. Mind, Maaster Roger, my deer, mind. Doan't 'ee forgit what ould Debrah tould 'ee on the night of the storm, years agone. 'Twas the mawther that was too cunning for Esau, ah, and ef Maaster Roger ed'n keerful the mawther'll be too cunnin' for him."

Try as I would I could not help shuddering at her words, while Ruth clutched my arm convulsively.

"Keep boath yer eyes oppen, Maaster Roger, or the curse'll be upon 'ee, for as sure as ould Debrah spaikes tes comin'."

She waddled away when she said this, leaving us to wonder at her words.

What caused her to speak like this? How could she know what she did?—for her words came true. Did she possess some power to peer into the future? Were things clear to her vision to which I was blind? Or was it simply that she was clear headed and clever and her statements amounted only to a shrewd guess?

I will not dare to answer. I have seen so many strange things happen, which I have been unable to explain, that to say she was possessed of a power that was not natural would be unwise. And yet I have been fed upon strange mental food, and have been led to believe in things at which some laugh.

"What does she mean, Roger?" said Ruth, when she had gone.

I was silent.

"Do you think she is a witch?" she continued; "she looks like one."

"She is a strange old woman," I said, as lightly as I could, for I did not want Ruth to be made anxious, "and some think she is a witch; but Mr. Polperrow says she is only a clever old woman who knows more than the common run of villagers."

She was about to ask more questions when we saw my father, Wilfred, and my sisters coming towards us. Both my sisters gave a shout of joy, and I saw a glad look in my father's eyes. But Wilfred's face was black as night, and the gleam of a devil flashed in his eyes. He did not speak, and while the others were anxiously asking questions as to what we did and how we had managed, Wilfred stood and glared savagely at me. His eyes became red, and his face like the face of a corpse.

I asked myself whether my father had accused him of being a coward, or if my sisters had been foolishly praising me, as they sometimes did, for neither Katherine nor Elizabeth seemed to realise how rough and uncouth I was. I noticed, however, that when Ruth began to magnify what I had done, as in her exaggerated notions of things she did, he gave a cynical, sarcastic laugh, and walked back to the house alone.

Did Wilfred care so much about praise, I wondered, or was he bitter towards me because I was heir to the Trewinion lands? Why else should he be so unbrotherly to me?

I do not think my sisters did Ruth any good by talking to her about her danger, for it brought back to her that faintness which she experienced upon the sands, so we soon took her indoors, where, being able to rest in quietness, she recovered.

I do not think it is my nature to remain unfriendly with any one, so I made an opportunity of trying to find Wilfred, in order to know what I had done to offend him. I found, however, that he was with my mother, and did not wish to be seen.

Again Deborah Teague's words came back to me. Was Wilfred's mother my mother? If so, why was it she never allowed me into her private room? Why were there no confidences between us as there were between her and my brother? Was she the cause of my brother's anger?

That evening we all sat together in the library, as we generally did before going to rest. Ruth still looked pale, and complained of pains. Evidently her fall had hurt her more than we had thought. My mother sat near her, and lovingly held her hand, often saying soft loving words, as though she wanted to be a mother to her. I was glad of this, for I was sure that Ruth must often feel sad and lonely, and it must comfort her to know that although she was an orphan she was still beloved.

We all joined in conversation, with the exception of Wilfred. He sat behind his mother, never speaking a word. I forget now what were the subjects of discussion; it does not matter much. Still I cannot but wish that some clever painter could have put the gathering on canvas, for to me it looked beautiful. My father was so stately and grand, while my mother was, I think, the handsomest woman I ever saw; and behind her was the clear, Greek-like face of my brother. The three girls, too, looked the picture of contentment. It was a home scene in a quiet old house, and worthy of a painter's skill.

We had been sitting there some little time, when the vicar walked in. He was always a welcome visitor and I

regarded him as a sort of second father. He joined in our conversation quite naturally, and we soon became quite merry together.

Presently there was a lull in our talk, and then Wilfred, without any warning, broke out excitedly, and in a loud voice,

"Father, I want to go to Oxford."

We all looked at him in astonishment. He had been so silent all the evening that this made us think something was the matter.

My father eyed him keenly, and then replied quietly.

"I had arranged for you to go next year, Wilfred."

"Yes, but I want to go now," he said, excitedly. "I've been home here long enough; I've wasted enough time."

"You've not wasted so much time, my boy," said my father, kindly. "Mr. Polperrow has had you in hand, and has given you a good drilling; besides, you are only just turned eighteen."

"I know," he said; "but I am the younger son, and so shall have no fortune. Thus, I think, I should waste no time in getting an education. Mr. Polperrow told me, not long since, that he could not do much more for me, and as I am to be 'penniless Wilfred' I think I might have a chance to earn my bread."

"You will not be penniless, Wilfred," said my father. "You will be as well endowed as most young men, and I have my plans for the future."

"But I can't stay here longer," he cried. "If I have talents why should I waste them here? Give me a chance, and then the second son may turn out to be as good as the elder."

This was spoken both bitterly and sadly, as if he felt his lot to be hard.

"I have come about this very matter," said Mr. Polperrow. "Wilfred has very great gifts, and the sooner he goes to Oxford the better. I have some little influence there, and if you thought fit I would make arrangements at once."

My mother's eyes fairly shone with joy as he said this, and then she too joined in the plea that Wilfred should be allowed to leave home so that his powers might have a fair chance of being tested.

My father at length gave his consent, and Mr. Polperrow went away with the commission to procure for Wilfred an entrance into this ancient seat of learning.

When we retired to rest I thought long over the events of the day. What was the meaning of this sudden desire to depart? Was there a league between the three who had advocated this step? Only a few days before Wilfred had been speaking of going to Oxford a year later. Why then this sudden resolution?

I fell asleep, however, without solving the problem, and as during the next few days Wilfred wore a grieved expression and seldom spoke to any one but his mother and Ruth, I was still deeper in mystery. When we were all together, if he spoke to me, he spoke kindly, but when we were alone he betrayed a hatred for me that I could not understand.

A month later my mother was in great sorrow. Wilfred had started for Oxford.

CHAPTER VII

THE WITCHES' CAVE

As I look back over what I am now about to relate, my mind is strangely confused with the amount of reality and unreality that appeared. At one time I am inclined to think it all real, at another I am led to regard it as pure imagination, or as due to the credulity of a hot-brained youth. Be that as it may, however, I will try and set down what I remember as faithfully as I can.

After Wilfred had gone things were very quiet. My mother seldom spoke to me, but kept Ruth by her side, until the two became, as it seemed to me, almost inseparable. Indeed, she took far more notice of Ruth than she did of her own daughters. As a consequence my sisters and I were often together, until the villagers came to say that Roger Trewinion wanted no sweethearts but his sisters.

On the afternoon of a sultry autumn day, some time after Wilfred had gone to Oxford, I had to walk past Deborah Teague's cottage, and saw the old woman sitting on the doorstep quietly smoking.

"Come ere, Maaster Roger," she said; "I've been waitin' for 'ee a bra long while."

I looked at her in astonishment.

"Iss' my dear, I knawed you was a comin', so I says I'll jist wait for Maaster Roger."

"How did you know I was coming?"

"Knaw!" she replied, "what doan't I knaw? But come in, I want to talk to 'ee."

"What about?"

"Somethin' you're interested in, my deer. Ther set down. Yer brother es gone away to college edn't a?"

"Yes, he's gone."

"Ah, ould Debrah ev for a long time bin thinkin' 'bout it, my dear."

"About what?"

"'Twas a hawful storm, Maaster Roger, wadn't it, then? People do say that ould women ca'ant do nothin', but, law, that storm wur big enough and bad enough!"

"Do you mean to say that you caused the storm then?"

"No, not me, my dear, but I knawed it wur a comin' ded'n I un? And ded'n I give 'ee warnin', my dear? Ef I dedn't, why she would'n ev bin livin' now."

"Deborah," I said, "you are talking in riddles. If you have anything to tell me, let me know about it."

"Doan't 'ee be vexed, Maaster Roger. Ould Debrah is yer friend, and do want for you to be her friend!"

"But I don't understand all this mysterious talk. You are hinting at strange things. Let me know about it. Is there witchcraft in the matter?"

"Ould Debrah do knaw 'bout Trewinion's curse, doan't she, my deer? How should she know that except by—well, we wa'ant say what."

"Yes, you have hinted about it? But what have I to do with it? I have done nothing that will cause it to rest upon me."

"But tes comin', Maaster Roger, ef I and some more doan't help 'ee. Tell 'ee, my dear, things belongin' to the sperrits can onnley be stopped by they who—well, who have got power in they paarts."

I was getting interested.

"Are you a witch, then?" I asked.

"Can 'ee bear to hear it, Maaster Roger?" she whispered.

"I can bear anything," I said.

"Maaster Roger, you've eerd of Farmer Jory?"

"Yes, often."

"Ah, ee died a awful death, my deer."

"So I've heard," I said. "People have told me that his last hours were terrible; that he seemed like one placed upon a rock. And that although at one time he was well off, all his cattle died and his ground refused to grow crops."

"You've eerd that, av 'ee? Well, now, I tell 'ee summin. My old man Pitter used to work for'n, my dear, and my maid went there to sarvice. Pitter and me were 'appy as two turtle doves, my deer, and my maid was the puttiest in the parish. Well, Farmer Jory was a bad man, my deer. He ought to ev married my maid, and he ded'n, an' though I went down on my knees and prayed to 'im to save her frum disgrace, he would'nt, and so she died heartbroken. By this time Pitter wur nearly a cripple and couldn't work much, so that we wur nearly starvin'. He had worked for the Jorys oll his life, and now when they ought to ev 'elped us they left us to starve. Twa'nt more'n three weeks after we berried the maid afore Pitter died of starvation and a brokken heart, and I wur left alone. Oh, Maaster Roger, ef you could ev knawed what I suffered you would pity me. I wur nearly mad wi' grief and shame, and the day after my owld man wur berried I wur sittin' in the doorway theer, when Betsey Tressider comed 'long. I was allays 'fraid of Betsey, cause people said she wur a witch, and did meet with a lot ov others up in the witch ov Fraddam's cave. She axed me what I wur grievin' for and I tould her. Then she laughed and zed I wur a fool not to be revenged on Farmer Jory, and not to make 'im suffer more'n I'd suffered. I axed her ow I cud do it, and she tould me to become a witch. Then I axed her ow I could be a witch, and she tould me to go to Logan Rock nine times at midnight and tich it wi my little vinger, an' she laughed and went away.

"Well, I wur oal alone, and so I thot and thot, and then I went to Logan Rock and tiched it wance, and I veeled a strange shivery feelin' and then I did it every night until the ninth night."

"And what happened then, Deborah?" I asked.

"I shan't tell 'ee that, my dear, but when I comed 'ome I seed Farmer Jory, and I looked top un, and I zed—well, never mind what I zed; but you knaw what happened."

"But witchcraft is of the devil," I said.

"Tes and tedn't," she said, mysteriously. "Who can charm as well as me, and the charms es oal bout goodness. Here, my dear, I'll tell 'ee some charms, and then you'll knaw ef they be good; but never tell a man, Maaster Roger, ef you do you'll break em. You knaw that Tommy Triscott's cheeld came to me t'other day with a scald, and I charmed un, and the charm is this:—

> Then came three angels out of the east,
> One brought fire, and two brought frost;
> Out fire, and in frost
> In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—Amen.

"And is Tommy better?"

"He had aise in three minutes; but he wur cured with a good name. I'll tell 'ee nother. You do knaw when you wur a cheeld you had a great thorn in ye arm through fallin' off a hedge, and you comed to me, and I charmed it and cured 'ee?"

"Very well."

"Well, I'll tell 'ee the charm:—

Christ was of a Virgin born,
And He was prick'd by a thorn,
And it did never throb nor swell,
And I trust in Jesus this never will.

Christ was crowned with thorns;
The thorns did bleed but did not rot.
No more shall thy finger,
In the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

I could not help a creepy feeling coming over me as she uttered the words. I remembered her charming the place where the thorn had been and rubbing some ointment over it, and I also remember how quickly I had ease.

"So, my deer," she went on, "tedn't always a bad power that witches have."

"Well," I said at length, "have you asked me to come in here in order that you might tell me this?"

"Not all, my deer. I've wa'anted to show 'ee as ow I've got power, Maaster Roger, and that tedn't oal bad. And I want 'ee to harken to me so that you may not have the Trewinion's curse."

"Can you stop it?" I asked.

"I weth others can," she said.

"But the curse of the Trewinion's will not come upon me," I said, "for I shall not do anything to incur it."

"Wa'ant 'ee, but you will, Maaster Roger, and ef you doan't do as I tell 'ee you'll rue it to yer dyin' day. I see it comin', I see it comin'," and she lifted her skinny hand above her head. "I zee Maaster Roger beggard, I zee un starvin', I zee un mad wi' shame, I zee un ouseless, and omeless, I zee hes brother where he ought to be oal through Trewinion's curse."

In spite of myself I felt the old woman to be speaking the truth.

"But I will abide by everything written for my safety," I said.

"You ca'ant, you ca'ant," she screamed.

"Why?" I asked.

"You were born in a onlucky month, and the onlucky week of the month, and a onlucky day of the week, and an onlucky time ov the day."

"Why, when was I born?"

"You was born at nine o'clock ov a Friday evenin', in the third week in May," she said.

"And I can do nothing to avert the curse?"

"No, but I can."

"How?"

"Will 'ee come wi' me to Betsey Fraddam's cave?"

"When?"

"To-night."

"At what time?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"No," I said with a shudder.

She glared at me with her evil eye, then she said slowly:

"You'll come."

Betsey Fraddam's cave had an evil reputation. It was the meeting-place for all the evil women in the neighbourhood. Women who possessed terrible power. I had been taught to believe in them and to avoid coming into collision with them.

"Who'll be there?" I asked.

"You'll see," she said.

I went home soon after, pondering over Deborah's words. We retired to bed early at our house, and by ten o'clock quietness reigned everywhere. I could not sleep, however. My mind was excited by what old Deborah had told me, and when eleven o'clock came I had an intense desire to go to Fraddam's cave. The witch of Fraddam was almost a household word among the simple people. It was said that she was constantly raising storms and working mischief, and that if any one saw her thus engaged, woe be to that one for ever after. From my earliest childhood I had been frightened with stories of Betsey Fraddam's cave. It was whispered that the terrible witch herself met the living witches and goaded them on to terrible deeds.

Still I wanted to go. In the silence of the night the curse of the Trewinion's became terrible to me, and I was anxious to know how I could avert it. Besides, so much had my mind been filled with stories of the superstitious and wonderful that I felt afraid to disobey the old woman's summons. It is true I was a young man fairly well educated, and as a consequence disbelieved many of the stories of a priest-ridden age. And it may be that as the years roll by future generations may disbelieve in what we speak of to-day, even as we disbelieve the stories of the past. Nevertheless, at half-past eleven I rose and dressed quietly in order to go down to Fraddam's cave.

I remembered the old vicar's words, however, and said my prayers before starting, and then hurried down the precipitous pathway to the sand. The tide was out, and I could hear the sweet murmur of the sea in the distance. There was no wind, and the pale light of the moon lit up the scene, which was grand in the extreme. On my right hand behind me, rose the giant cliffs, rugged and forbidding, on the great headland stood our house, bluff and bold like an old castle.

I looked in the direction of the cave of evil repute, but could see nothing. My heart throbbed wildly. As old Deborah had said, we Trewinions never feared the living, but we trembled at the thought of the dead.

As I drew near Fraddam's cave I saw a twinkling light, and on coming up to its mouth I saw the bent form of an old woman.

"Trewinion's heir!" said a voice, and the light was taken into the cave.

As if drawn on by a charm I entered. It was the first time I had ever dared to do so. Often had I passed by the cave; but its reputation for evil was so terrible that I had avoided entering it. I doubt whether any inhabitant for miles around would ever think of intruding in a place which, it was believed, belonged to the powers of darkness.

The cave became larger the farther I penetrated into it, and was lit up by a ruddy kind of light. I noticed, too, in

spite of my fears, that the main cave led to smaller ones, and that on each side of the entrance the ground was honeycombed. Presently the light became brighter, and, turning a sharp angle, I saw a good sized fire, on which a crock was steaming round about which weird forms sat. The ground was quite dry and it was evident the tide seldom came so far. As my eyes became more accustomed to the light, I recognised some of the women who sat there. Betsey Flue, Mally Udy, and Tory Bone lived within a mile of Trewinion Manor, and had doubtful reputations.

None of them looked at me for some time. They were intent on watching the fire and the steaming crock. The smell from this article was by no means unpleasant, evidently some savoury meat was being cooked, and I began to feel the place to be less gruesome than I had at first anticipated. I noticed, too, that a great many things were stowed away which could have no connection with the unseen world. Evidently the cave was used by smugglers as well as witches.

"Let Debrah Teague spaik," said an aged crone.

"Maaster Roger do knaw what I main," said Deborah. "There's an awful curse for the Trewinion 'ouse, and unless Maaster Roger do as we do tell un he'll ave it."

Ghastly as was the sight, uncanny as was the place, this speech of the old woman dispelled much of my fear. The nocturnal gatherings of witches were in my idea always associated with mysterious incantations. Although Shakespeare was a forbidden book to us boys, I had read "Macbeth," and this meeting was altogether dissimilar from the meeting of witches therein described. In spite of everything, I could not help thinking these old women were met for some sinister purpose far removed from the mysteries of witchcraft, so I said boldly:

"Old Deborah wanted me to come here; I have come. What do you want?"

"The curse is comin'. We can remove it," said the old woman who went by the name of Mally Udy.

"How?" I asked, for the sound of their voices and the sound of my own made me bolder still.

"We've worked a charm," said Mally, the oldest woman in the party. "We stole into Trewinion Church and took some water that the parson had used fur christenin' his oan grancheeld, an' we've made a broth of it. We've boiled a piece of lamb in it, with some sycamore leaves and some hagglet (white thorn) leaves, and we've said nine charms, nine times aich, and it'll ondo any curse."

"Where is it?" I said.

"Here, a boilin' now," was the reply.

I began to feel fearful again.

"But Maaster Roger must make a vow afore he drinks," said Mally.

"What?" I asked.

"You must say this," she said, shaking her skinny finger. "I, Roger Trewinion, promise never to hurt the women here to-night, or their children. I promise it by the sperrits of the place. And I make a vow that I'll allays protect they and their children as fur as I can."

There was a cunning look on her face as she spoke. I felt now that these were evil women, and that I would have nothing to do with them.

"I refuse to make the promise," I said.

"You'm afraid, you'm a coward," cried Deborah.

"No, I'm not afraid, I'm not a coward," I said, "and I'll stop these proceedings of yours. You have other reasons than witchcraft for coming here, and I'll know what they are."

This roused their passion.

"Evil sperrits shall tear 'ee," they said, "and oal your tribe."

"You are a set of evil hags," I said, furiously; "and the mysteries of this cavern shall be brought to light."

"Stop!" said old Mally Udy, "this broth here was fur yer good. I'll turn it to something bad and make 'ee drink it. The spirit of Betsey Fraddam is here, and she'll make a mixture for 'ee."

I had worked myself up into a passion and I kicked the crock and overturned it.

Never shall I forget the terrible words they said to me, or the curses they called upon me. They cursed me in body and mind, they cursed me in love and hate, in living and dying.

What was it, I wonder? Meaningless jargon, or not? When my story is told you will be able to judge better.

I went out of the cave in fear, and when outside I fancied I saw the terrible form of Betsey Fraddam. Then I went back to my home trembling.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

O beware of my lord of jealousy;
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on: that cuckold lives on bliss
Who, certain of his fate, love not its wronger.
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes yet doubts; suspects yet fondly loves.
—*Othello.*

Alone in my room that night I began to think again. I had hurried back from the cave with fearful speed, never daring to stop or think. Now I could do both, and for hours I tried to solve the problem before me. What was the meaning of this night's adventure? Had these women the power to rid me of a terrible calamity, or were they seeking simply the protection I should be able to afford in the future years? They were all in bad repute, and ofttimes the anger of the people was aroused against them, thus if they could gain my friendship they would be comparatively safe. Did they seek to frighten me into a promise, or was there some dread meaning in their words?

These questions drove me to pray, or rather, to say my prayers. I did not, could not, really pray. To me there was no real God. All was as misty and unreal as the mythical stories I had read about the fabled Greek gods. For hours I sought light, and help, and strength; but none came, and when daylight came I was still in doubt.

The next day I passed by old Deborah's cottage. I thought she might have something to say to me, but when she saw me she, bent her head and would not answer to my "good-day." Try as I would I could not help feeling that she had ill-will against me, and would lose no opportunity to do me an injury. Once I thought of speaking to my father about it; but I dared not tell him that I had been to Fraddam's cave at midnight; that act was in itself enough to bring darkness to my future, if there were any truth in the stories which floated in the very atmosphere of my life.

Days lengthened into weeks, and weeks into months, and nothing happened. Old Mally Udy passed and re-passed me, but she gave no sign of our midnight encounter. She dropped her usual curtsey of respect when she saw me. Thus it was that the awe of the night in Fraddam's cave died out. I gave up seriously thinking about it, and as the affairs of the Trewinion estate began to rest on me my mind was fully occupied.

During the months that followed, I believe I was moody and taciturn. At any rate, my sisters did not find so much pleasure in being with me as formerly, while Ruth was still my mother's companion. She was always kind to me, and seemed glad if she were able to do little sisterly acts, but we were never alone together, and never were there any confidences between us.

On my twenty-first birthday there were great festivities at our house. All the tenant farmers, their wives, and their children, together with the cottagers and labourers on the estate, were invited. These, with the neighbouring gentry, made a gay scene. There was one vacant place, however, which largely spoiled the enjoyment of the day. This was my brother Wilfred's. He had been pressed to return home, but had refused to do so, even for the celebration of my coming of age. Indeed, he intimated that he did not wish to do so until his three years of college life should come to an end.

My father was annoyed at this; but my mother said not a word. It seemed to me that she had expected things to turn out so, and was not at all surprised. Her behaviour to me after my birthday was more cold than ever. She took no pains to make herself friendly towards me, yet, unless Deborah Teague were right, she was my mother.

The months slipped rapidly by, until three years had elapsed since Wilfred had gone to Oxford, and now he was daily expected to return.

During that time none of us had seen him except my father and mother, who had travelled to Oxford specially for that purpose. My two sisters often speculated what he would be like, how he would act, while Ruth, too, seemed to look forward with great pleasure to his return.

Ruth had grown to be a beautiful woman. She was by no means tall or stately, but she was as fair as a spring morning, and lovely beyond compare. Great pains had been taken with her education, and this, added to her personal charms, caused her to be envied for miles around by girls of her own age.

Her old friend Mr. Inch had remained at our house all this time, and tried to gratify her every wish. He was friendly with Wilfred, and I found out that they corresponded regularly. With me, however, he was not nearly so friendly. He was always polite, almost painfully so; but he never looked me straight in the face, and often, I thought, regarded me with dislike. I explained this, partly by the fact of my uncouth ways, and partly by his intimacy with my mother, who regarded him with great favour.

At length the day arrived when Wilfred came back. I shall never forget it, for it began a new era in my existence. I awoke on the morning of that day bright and cheerful, with not a cloud that was worth the mentioning upon the sky of my life. When I retired to rest all was changed. I awoke a boy, I went to sleep a man. But for that day these confessions would never have been written; the events I shall relate would never have come to pass. Even now, as I look back, my heart beats more rapidly at the thought of it, and a strange feeling possesses me, which reminds me of what I felt then.

I remember how anxiously I saw the horses being attached to the old family carriage, and with what joy I saw my father and mother driven away to meet the coach by which Wilfred was to come. I longed, as much as any of them, to see him, although I said but little about it, for, in spite of his apparent dislike of me, he was still my brother, and I loved him very much.

We all stood at the old hall door as the carriage drove up, and watched my father alight. Then another form stepped on the hard gravel, and carefully assisted my mother.

I should scarcely have recognised him as my brother. He had gone away but little more than a boy, he had returned a handsome, cultured man. He was not big and clumsy like myself, but tall and lithe, and yet exceedingly muscular. There was grace in his every movement, while refinement was stamped upon his handsome face. I could not help feeling the contrast between us. I was a great boorish country clown, he was as handsome as a Greek god. Surely, too, there was a look of malicious satisfaction on my mother's face as she saw the difference between us. He seemed to change the very atmosphere of the house. Everything had a new meaning when associated with him. My sisters looked at him with admiration, while Ruth was evidently fascinated by the charm of his presence.

In his boyish days he had often seemed sulky, but that was all gone. His demeanour towards my father was at once respectful and affectionate, to his mother he was kind and loving, to the girls he was gallant and considerate, while to me I thought he extended an air of patronage.

The old Wilfred had gone, and a new Wilfred had taken his place; a Wilfred who was brilliant, gallant, scholarly.

I remember that we dined early that day, and after dinner I went out alone, as I often did, and sat upon the great headland which stood out against the sea. I remained there some time thinking, and wondered what kind of a life we should lead now that Wilfred had come back. I felt in some way that I had no right to my father's estate; I was not fit for it, and that I lived there on my brother's bounty.

These thoughts were disturbed by the sound of voices, and looking up I saw a sight that caused my brain to whirl and my heart to throb violently.

Wilfred and Ruth were walking arm-in-arm, and he was looking at her at once tenderly and with an air of proprietorship. Then I knew what I did not know before, then I realised what nearly drove me mad. I loved Ruth Morton with all the strength of my being, while she, I could tell from the tender confiding look on her face, was in love with my brother Wilfred.

I staggered to my feet, scarcely knowing what I was doing, and stared them in the face foolishly.

"Ah, Roger," said Wilfred, lightly, "enjoying yourself in the old way? All play and no work. Happy fellow, you, Roger; but then, some people are born lucky."

I felt myself treated as a child. There was a jeering look upon his face as he spoke, and his tone was that of a man speaking to another of inferior intellect.

I did not answer his sally. I only felt desirous of joining in their walk, of having a chance, no less than he, of speaking to Ruth; so I stammered out:

"You are going for a walk; let me go with you."

He did not hesitate a minute before replying, and in the same tone as he spoke before.

"You won't mind, I'm sure, Roger, when I tell you that we prefer taking this walk alone. We haven't met for three years, and have so much to say to each other."

Again I was treated as a child, and I became angry. I was about to say something very foolish, but before I could utter the words they were gone, and I heard Wilfred laugh a low, jibing kind of laugh.

I think I was mad during the remainder of that afternoon. My brain was on fire, and everything seemed to whirl around me. My love was no sooner known to myself than the object of it was snatched from me by another, and that other my other brother.

I tried to convince myself that he was more worthy than I. I told myself that I was a country bumpkin, an ignorant clown, and unworthy to aspire to a maiden like Ruth Morton. That I was under a curse, that I dared not leave the Trewinion lands for six months at a time, and that it was better she should love Wilfred. This however, did not satisfy me. Try as I would to stifle it, I could not help thinking I had more claims to her love than he. What had he done for her? Nothing! I, on the other hand, had twice risked my life for hers. But for me she would have died, and yet she had bestowed her love on another. Had she? I was not sure, and yet there could be little or no doubt about it. Wilfred was capable of winning any woman's affection, and I felt certain she would not resist his wishes. The very first day of his return they had gone away together, and no doubt he would impress her with his cleverness and greatness.

I would know the truth and that soon. Such was my determination. I would ask her to walk alone with me as she had done with Wilfred, and then I would find out.

I cannot describe my new found love, or, rather, the knowledge of the love I had felt for years. It was so strange, so great. I had from the first taken a special interest in Ruth; from the first I had regarded her as a very dear sister. Now she was a thousand times more than a sister. Nothing was too good for her. My one great thought was to give Ruth happiness and joy. Why, then, did I not without a murmur sacrifice her to Wilfred. Surely he could give her more happiness and joy than I? Strange as it may seem, I felt that he could not. I shuddered at the thought of her belonging to him in any way, and I ground my teeth at the thought of their being together.

Perhaps this was because of my jealousy. Nevertheless, I am sure that rough, uncouth, ay, half savage as I was, I would willingly have laid down my life to save her from pain.

I had no chance to speak to her that day, nor the next, nor indeed for many days. When my chance came, something stepped in between us. Either Wilfred was with Ruth, or my mother claimed the girl as her companion. I need not say that this maddened me more than ever and made me act in anything but a creditable way. I would leave the merry family party and go down to the village to talk with the fishermen. I would seek to forget my own sorrows by laughing at their jokes, or entering into their lives. Again, I would indulge in long, lonely walks, or go away fishing alone. I knew I was fighting against my own interests by doing this. I knew I was allowing my brother to use every fascinating art in his power.

At length, my time came. We had all been out in the harvest fields together, watching the reapers cut the golden wheat and gather it into sheaves.

Surely the earth has few fairer sights than this! I have travelled over a great deal of the globe, but I have seen nothing fairer than our old Trewinion fields at harvest time. Especially was this so beneath the light of the harvest moon. I shall never forget it. As twilight faded, a thin mist rose from the earth, which, as the pale moon's rays shone through it, looked strangely beautiful. The corn moughs (stacks), too, looked weird and ghastly in the dim light,

while the silver sea in the distance made a low, delicious music as it gently rippled on the shore.

In the distance I could hear the men and women singing on their homeward way some plaintive Cornish songs, which to me blended sweetly with the low sighing of the wind.

Ruth and I had by some means became separated from the rest, and my heart fluttered rapidly, for I had determined to find out if she loved my brother Wilfred. It has never been my way to lead up slowly to a subject. What I have to say I must blurt out at once, ofttimes in a way that gives pain to those to whom I speak.

"Ruth," I said, "I have long wished to tell you something."

"Have you, Roger?" she said, cheerfully "then tell me at once, for you have made me curious. What can you wish to say to me?"

There was no hesitation, no trembling in her voice.

She spoke as naturally as my own sisters might have spoken.

"Let us go home by Pentvargle Cove," I said, "and turn in at Honeysuckle-lane."

"Very well," she said, gaily; "and you'll pluck some of the honeysuckle for me, won't you? I can smell it from here; how delicious it is. Wouldn't Wilfred enjoy this?"

She was thinking of Wilfred even now, when she was alone with me, and I was about to burst out with an angry remark about my brother when I looked down into her face.

To me it seemed like the face of an angel. Her large, lustrous grey eyes had a far-away look in them, and an expression of sweet, placid contentment rested on every feature. Never have I seen a face so sweet, so beautiful. Tenderness, truth, purity were there, mingled with courage, sacrifice, daring. It was a face never to be forgotten when once seen. Never did I love her as I did then, and I could not say angry words about my brother.

I have said I was clumsy in my mode of expression. I could say nothing as it should be said; and now, when I felt I ought to be more than usually careful, I was more than ever confused.

"Come Roger," she said, "what is it you want to tell me?"

"I want to know, Ruth," I said, my voice trembling, "why you shun me, dislike me, hate me so?"

CHAPTER IX

OMENS OF DARKNESS

Look here upon this picture, and on this;
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what grace was seated on his brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself.
An eye like Mars to threaten or command.
—*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 3.

She looked up as if surprised at my question.

"Hate you, shun you, Roger," she repeated. "Whatever led you to ask such a question?"

"How can I help asking it," I said, "when it is true? You never have a word for me now. Your every thought is given to my brother. I suppose it is because Roger is a boor, Roger is a clown, Roger is ugly."

"What can possess you to speak in such a way?" she said.

I knew I had spoken foolishly; but I could not help it. I was mad with rage and jealousy. Having once begun to speak, all judgment and discretion were gone. I was determined to know my fate, determined to know if she loved my brother Wilfred.

"Possess me!" I answered. "Well, I hardly know; but this I know. Ever since my prig of a brother has come home from Oxford with his affected smile and flattering ways, Ruth has had no ears or eyes for any one else."

"Still I fail to understand you," she said.

"I do not doubt," I replied, savagely, "that I am too ignorant a clown to make my meaning clear. Were Wilfred speaking, you would understand him. He would put his thoughts in such poetic language, and speak in such cooing tones, that little Ruth would be made to think as he thought, and feel as he felt; but I—I am nobody."

"Roger," she said, "you are not kind, you are not speaking like my big brother."

"No, I cannot," I said, "I do not feel that I am your brother. What kind feeling have you towards me? Not a jot. It is Wilfred, Wilfred, ever Wilfred."

She walked on by my side in silence, I feeling that I had been a brute, a savage. What right had I to speak so roughly, and thus to annoy her? I looked down at her face, and I saw that her eyes were filled with tears and her lips trembled. For a moment my jealousy and anger were gone.

"Forgive me, sister Ruth," I said, "I ought not to speak so. Try and forget what I have said. See, we are in Honeysuckle-lane, and here is some."

I picked a sprig of honeysuckle as I spoke and gave it to her, which she received kindly. This emboldened me. Perhaps after all I was not so hateful to her.

I have not a very poetical nature; but I think the scene by which we were surrounded aroused what little I had. The birds were finding their way to the hedgerows to seek rest for the night, ever and anon giving a faint chirp of content. The beetles went humming heedlessly by, the bees laden with honey returned to their hives, and all nature seemed to be at peace. The honeysuckle and the hedge flowers that grew in wild confusion perfumed the lane in which we walked; the nuts hung in thick clusters on the fences, blackberries everywhere abounded. One by one the stars came out of their obscurity until the heavens became glorious; and as we walked on, the evening became more still. The harvesters reached their homes, and we no longer heard the sound of their voices. The night wind served only to make delicious music as it played with the leaves on the trees and hedges or coquetted with the golden corn.

Now and then we could hear the sea murmur its old, old song. To me it told of peace, and calm, and beauty.

And I was alone with the maiden whom I loved more dearly than my life.

I said that her kindness emboldened me, so with great trembling hands I took her bonnet from her head and wove a piece of honeysuckle amid her nut-brown hair.

Beautiful, beautiful Ruth! Yes, after the long stretch of weary years I still call her so; but that night she was to me more than beautiful, she was like an angel. I was young and unsophisticated, and—and I did not know what was coming.

For fully five minutes we did not speak. Slowly we walked side by side in the calm still eventide, until we emerged from the lane, and went towards Pentvargle Cove. Then the sight of the rugged cliffs seemed to alter my feelings, and the old jealous passion returned. I could see the five great prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" towering into the sky, and I could not help thinking of the time, years ago, when I had scaled its slippery precipitous sides to save the girl at my side. Again the old desire to know the worst came back to me. Did Ruth love my brother Wilfred?

"Do you see the 'Devil's Tooth' yonder, Ruth?" I said.

"Yes," she said, "how calm the sea is now. How different from when I saw it first. Then—but I cannot bear to think about it, can you?" and she shuddered as she spoke.

"Oh, yes," I said. "I like to think about it. Why, Ruth, I was able to save you, you know."

She was silent, and again a bitter feeling crept into my heart.

"Don't you wish it had been Wilfred who saved you, instead of Roger?" I asked, a little bitterly.

"Why?" she said, quickly.

"Because you seem to think so much more about him. You like to be in his company, and you treasure every word that he says."

I thought she looked confused, as she said hurriedly, "Why should I not?"

At this answer I was as much the slave to my mad feelings as when we had commenced our walk. It was bitter hard for me. There, in sight of the very place where I had saved her, she admitted her preference for him who had done nothing for her.

"Why should you not?" I answered, boisterously, "why not indeed. There is every reason why you should. No doubt you wish Wilfred were the elder son and I the younger. No doubt you wish he were Trewinion's heir, and that I were penniless."

"No, Roger," she said, "were you penniless, and were your father to die, you would have no means of obtaining a livelihood. It is best as it is."

Blunt and dull of perception as I was I could not help seeing the purport of this. She thought me too much of a fool to earn a living; that it was only by the money which I inherited as a birthright I was saved from starving.

"I see the point of your answer, Ruth," I said. "You think Wilfred far more fit for the position of Trewinion's heir than I, and that I am too ignorant a clown to get a living for myself."

"I cannot help what conclusions you draw from my words, Roger," she replied.

"There is only one conclusion to be drawn," I answered. "You think Wilfred better than I. You think he should be master, and not I. You think I am a brute, a savage."

"I think no such thing," she replied, "but you must yourself feel the difference between you and him. He is kind,

thoughtful, gentle; he is cultured and refined. He gives way to no fits of passion, nor does he seek to hurt one's feelings."

"Yes, yes," I said, bitterly. "He has been to Oxford, and has learnt tricks dear to a woman's heart, and, having learnt them, he knows how to practise them. He can quote poetry, and make soft speeches; he can please you with flattery. His face is pale and interesting, his hands are soft and white; and Ruth is very fond of him."

"You are unkind, and you are unjust, Roger. If he has been fonder of study than you, and if he has learnt to govern his temper, don't be jealous or cruel. Better try and emulate him. You call yourself boorish and clownish. Try and improve yourself; and then, perhaps, you will not feel so much inferior to your brother."

As I have said before, no one cares to hear another say what in self-disparaging moments he often says about himself. A dozen times in the last fortnight had I spoken of myself as inferior to my brother, but for another to say it was wormwood and gall to me.

"Copy my brother!" I said, savagely. "Be a soft-fingered coward like him! To be afraid of my own shadow like him! Copy him! Why he is but a mere woman disgracing the clothes he wears. Had I been a puny thing like him I should have ran away just as he did, and left you to die on yon rocks. And yet you talk of my copying him. Why, he's just a soft-muscled contemptible coward."

"I scarcely know which I like less," she cried, "a coward—although I don't admit that your brother is one—or one who boasts of his own bravery and taunts you with his own kind deeds. Roger, do you think because you cannot appreciate your brother's nobleness that it does not exist?"

This silenced me. I had been answered. She had championed my brother. She had declared in so many words that she preferred him to me. She regarded what I had done for her as nothing.

I found then that my passion had been inflamed by hope, that my jealousy was due to this reason. No sooner did Ruth speak in the way I have described than a dull despair laid hold of my heart, and I was dumb. I could see now that she loved Wilfred, and that she saw nobility in him, which, in her opinion my nature was too poor to see, that the fact of my having saved her life was to her little more than the action of an animal, who acted instinctively without a thought of danger. Well, on the whole I was glad to know the worst. I knew how to act now, I was not upheld by any false hope.

"I am glad you have told me this, Ruth," I said quietly. "It is best that I should know. I am afraid I have behaved very rudely! forgive me and you shall have no reason to complain again."

She clutched my arm tightly, and seemed about to protest, but I did not allow her to speak.

"It was mean and unmanly of me to say what I have," I said, "but I was excited and almost beside myself; let us walk more rapidly towards home."

At this Ruth looked at my face as if in surprise, and began to speak.

"I hope I have not hurt your feelings, Roger, but I—that is——"

"Pray, don't distress yourself, Ruth," I said. "It is well you have spoken and let me see the truth. Perchance I shall be thankful some day that you have spoken. Look, what's that?"

I pointed towards the "Devil's Tooth," which we could still see rising clearly against the sky. On its very summit was a small flickering light, and in my fancy I saw a dark form moving among its rugged peaks.

"It's a light," said Ruth, as if glad to change the subject; "what can it mean?"

"It means death," I said.

"Death! I don't understand, Roger."

"Whenever any one sees a light on the 'Devil's Tooth' it means death to some one belonging to the man or woman who first saw it," I replied with a shudder.

"But that's only a superstition," replied Ruth, "surely you will pay no attention to such stories."

I knew it was only a superstition; but such is the power of education and association that I could do no other than believe the warning to be real. Why should it come just now when I was so little able to bear it? Why should a darker cloud blacken my sky than was already there?

I looked again. The light was gone, but surely I saw even in the pale moonlight a dark moving figure. Try as I would to banish the feeling I could not help fearing that a dread calamity was about to fall on me. I felt ill able to bear it. I had been stunned by the fact of Ruth's love for Wilfred and her dislike for me. It is true she had not told me in as many words that she disliked me, or that she loved Wilfred better, but I was convinced that she thought him more noble and true, and that there was no hope of her ever coming to love me.

It was quite dark now, and we were away from the soothing influences of the green honeysuckle lane and the rustling of the ripe corn. We were walking on the top of the cliff and could see the misty outline of the coast. We walked slowly on for some distance, and then we both stopped, trying to see if the dark form were a reality or only a fancy. Scarcely had we done so when I felt my arm touched.

"What be 'ee lookin' for, Maaster Roger, my dear?" said a half-wheedling, half-mocking voice.

I turned and saw Deborah Teague.

I must confess that seeing her there alone made me feel strangely. She had not spoken to me since the night when we met in the cave of evil repute. Whenever we did chance to meet she looked steadily on the ground, never answering any words I might address to her. I did not wonder at this, for I fancied she had some ill-will towards me for not complying with her wishes, but I did wonder at her coming now and speaking to me in this familiar way. Nevertheless, I answered quietly:

"I thought I saw some one on the 'Devil's Tooth,' but I'm not sure."

"Ded 'ee zee a light jist now?" she continued.

"Yes, I did," I replied.

"Do 'ee knaw who made the light?"

"No," I replied. "I have been wondering what it meant."

"Iss, and you've bin tellin' Miss Ruth 'bout it, aint 'ee, Maaster Roger? I'll tell 'ee what you've zid (seen). You've zid Betsey Fraddam, my dear, and you do knaw what that do main."

"I know what foolish people say it means," I replied, "but I do not know what it really means."

"Do'ant 'ee? But you will. 'Tis nearly come, Maaster Roger. You defied and got vexed with they who would kip this from comin'; but 'tis comin' now!"

"What's coming now?"

"Trewinion's curse," she screamed.

"You hag," I cried, aroused into a passion. "You have ill-wished me."

"Ill-wished 'ee? No, I ain't, and that you do knaw. We can't ill-wish a eldest son; but the curse es comin', and that we could have kipt off."

"See there, see there!" she continued, pointing towards the great forbidding-looking rock, "do 'ee zee the light? I

can!"

Again I saw the flickering light on the rock between the great prongs, and my flesh crept with fear.

"Ted'n too late, is it?" she said. "Come to th' ould plaace to-night at the same time, and we may do summin."

"Do you think I'm a fool?" I said. "You cannot gull me with your stories, for I know your tricks."

She laughed in my face, revealing gums that were toothless save for one yellow fang that rested on her lower lip.

"Oa, I remember it, Maaster Roger," she said. "Ould Debrah do knaw the curse. La me zee, how do it go?—

> His power be given to another,
> And he be crushed by younger brother,
> Then his son, though born the first,
> By the people shall be cursed;
> And for generations three
> Trewinion's heirs shall cursed be!

The old woman recited these lines glibly, as though they had been often on her lips, and she chuckled as she repeated them.

"Go home," I said, angrily, "and trouble me no longer with your ugly face."

"Iss! Iss! I'll go," she screamed; "but there'll be black days for you. Ah, yer brother'll be wise if you be'ant. Ah, a Trewinion disgraced, starvin', ruined!"

I turned savagely towards her, but old as she was she nimbly stepped out of my way, and pointed to the five-pronged rock.

"The light es gone, and Maaster Roger's hope es gone, unless he do come to Betsy Fraddam's cave at midnight, and there 'ee'll zee strange things."

"You'll suffer for this, Deborah," I said, almost beside myself.

"Zee where you're standin'," she screamed, "and think of what you zeed three years agone, when you went to see the passen."

I looked, and, to my horror, I remembered that long years before I had on this very spot seen a figure in white, which had disappeared on the edge of the cliff.

I was so astonished that for a minute I did not move, and when I recovered my senses Deborah had gone, although I thought I heard her croaking, mocking laugh a little distance away.

"The old woman is mad, Roger," said Ruth; "let us go home quickly."

I was nothing loth. I hurried on as though the furies were behind me, while Ruth was evidently as anxious as I to get indoors.

We had entered the old postern door, and were walking up the drive leading to the house, when a servant met me.

"Mr. Roger," he said, anxiously, "you must please come in at once."

"Why, is anything the matter?"

"Yes, your father has fallen off his horse and is badly hurt."

A great dread laid hold of me, but I hurried towards his room.

CHAPTER X

THE GATHERING DARKNESS

As I made my way along the dim corridors, fear gripped me. The weird form I had seen between the prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" had told me of darkness to come. This accident to my father was the fulfilment of the omen. Arrived at the door of my father's bedroom I heard muffled voices within; but no sooner was my arrival known than I was immediately admitted. I found my father propped up in the bed by pillows. There was a ghastly cut upon his face, and his hair was clotted with blood. Evidently, too, he was suffering great pain, and he breathed with difficulty.

No sooner did he see me than he beckoned me to approach. Although I did not notice them at the time, I found out afterwards that my mother was there, and Mr. Polperrow, the vicar, together with Mr. Inch and the family doctor.

"Roger!" said my father, hoarsely.

"Yes, father," I said, coming up and kneeling by his bedside.

My presence seemed to soothe him, for he gave evidence of less suffering, and a look of peace stole over his face.

He laid his right hand upon my head fondly. "My eldest-born boy," he said, slowly, "my big-hearted son. I am going to die, Roger," he said.

"No, father, no!"

"Yes, Roger, 'twill soon be over. Only a few hours at most. I have met with an accident, my boy. I was riding from Truro, and got near home, when three men, who had been drinking hard at the tavern near by, came out from the hedgeside and frightened Bess; she is a very flighty mare, you know. She gave a side leap and threw me. My foot caught in the stirrup, and I was dragged along the road until I fancy the mare trod on me."

He said this quite calmly, as though it were a matter of everyday occurrence. As for me, I could not speak, my heart was nearly bursting with pain.

"I want to say a few more things to you before I die, my own boy," he continued, slowly.

"Say what you will, father, but don't talk of dying. Surely, surely, the doctor here can make you well again."

"No, no, Roger, no doctor can cure me," and he looked wistfully into the doctor's face, who shook his head sadly. Then I felt sure that my father's words would come true; that soon I should lose him.

The doctor felt his pulse; then said that what my father wished to tell me must be told quickly.

"Yes, yes," said my father. "You, Roger, are my first-born, my own boy," and again he lingered lovingly over the words.

"Your own boy," I repeated, proudly.

"You are Trewinion's heir," he continued, "the master of all the Trewinion lands. You remember what I told you years ago, my boy?"

"Yes, father."

"Ever remember them, Roger. Be careful."

"I will, father."

"There were other things in connexion with the history of our people that I meant to tell you, but I kept putting it off, and now it's too late; but perhaps it's as well as it is. You will find them out in time. God grant you may be prepared. What I want to say now refers to Wilfred, and to Ruth Morton."

I scarcely breathed. I thought I should hear something that would make clear my future relation to Ruth, and would clear up the mystery that I felt existed in regard to my brother and myself.

"Wilfred——" he hesitated a moment, and then his eyes sought my mother's. Instantly she came to his side, and looked at him strangely. He heaved a sigh, and continued:

"Wilfred is younger than you, and does not by law inherit any of the Trewinion lands. I have left him money, however, and given him a good education, still——"

"What, dear father?"

"I fancy he thinks himself hardly treated. If you like, Roger, you might grant him an annuity," and he named a sum.

"God is my witness, father, that I'll be true to your wishes; if I can, I'll give him more."

"That's my own boy, Roger. He will not need it; but it's perhaps best."

I looked at my mother as he said this. There was a terrible look on her face. I cannot describe it. Mockery, disdain, anger, despair, vindictiveness were all stamped there, but I heeded little; I was too intent on catching my father's every word.

"With regard to the girls, Roger, they will live on with you. I have left them a farm each—bought with the money saved through the years. The rents of these farms have been, and are, accumulating. It's all written down, and, when the lawyer comes, you can go into everything. These farms, and the money received from them, will be their wedding portion if they marry; if they don't they will never be in want."

I could only say, "Yes, father."

"If it's God's will," he went on, "Wilfred will succeed Mr. Polperrow and have the Trewinion living, unless anything happens to you, then—then he will be Trewinion's heir."

Involuntarily I again looked at my mother's face. There was exulting triumph on it, mingled with a look of terrible hatred. I did not know what it meant, nor could I conjecture.

"But I hope there's no danger of that," he continued. "You are my eldest born, my own boy."

How fondly he repeated these words, and how proud I felt, in spite of my grief, as I heard him speak them; and so I again repeated:

"I'm your own boy."

"There's just one other matter I'm going to speak to you about," he said, after a pause. "I ought to have spoken to you about it before; but I thought there was plenty of time. Mr. Inch, will you come near?"

The old man came up with a stately step. He had always been treated with great respect in our house, especially as he was Ruth's valued friend, and had much to do with the managing of Ruth's estate.

"You remember," went on my father, and I noticed that he spoke with more difficulty, "the night you saved Ruth?"

"Yes, father."

"I had been in communication with her father prior to that; indeed, as you know, we had been friends for years."

He turned to Mr. Inch when he said this, and went on:

"You know Mr. Morton's wish with regard to Ruth, Mr. Inch; he told you before he died all about it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Inch, "and it was mentioned in his will."

I looked again at my mother. There was a stony look upon her face. It was ghastly to see.

"Yes, to be sure," said my father, "it was mentioned in the will. What was his lifelong wish, Roger, was also mine. His desire and mine was, and is, that our families should be united, that you should wed Ruth."

In spite of the tragic circumstances, my heart gave a wild leap for joy! Ruth, my darling, my life, would be mine! It was her father's wish, and she, I was sure, would be faithful to his least desire. I could bear anything now!

"Will you do this, Roger?"

"Gladly, if Ruth will, father," I said huskily.

"Forgive me for interposing," said Mr. Inch, "but you have not exactly stated the true conditions of Mr. Morton's will."

"In what way?" asked my father.

"What Mr. Morton stated in his will was that he desired his daughter Ruth to marry the heir of the Trewinion estate, so that not only might the families be united, but the estates also be joined."

"Well, is not Roger the heir of the Trewinion lands?"

"Yes, but you mentioned just now the possibility of anything happening to your elder son, then, of course, your second son would take his place."

"Yes, yes. Of course, of course," said my father, wearily.

"Does Ruth know about her father's wish?" I asked.

"No, not yet," replied Mr. Inch, "he thought it best that it should be kept from her until she reached her twenty-first birthday, unless necessity arose for her being told. No such necessity has arisen, and hence she remains in ignorance of the arrangement that was made between her father and Mr. Trewinion."

"Everything else I have stated in my will," said my father, "and all things are arranged in due form. Roger, my boy, you will try and be true to the Trewinion's name?"

"God helping me, I will," I said, "but, father, have you anything to say about my mother?"

"Your mother!" he repeated, vacantly. "Ah, yes, of course, she will live on here—unless—but that is all arranged. You need not worry about her."

Inexperienced as I was, I could not help thinking that this was strange. Why should my mother's welfare be dismissed in such a careless way? I could not understand matters. Perhaps, however, everything was privately arranged, and my father did not care to speak before those who were outside our family circle.

I looked at my mother again, but this time her face told no story. Evidently, I was to know nothing about her future, at any rate, for the present.

After this my father grew weaker rapidly, and although he suffered but little pain we knew that his life was fast ebbing away.

What I felt as I sat and watched I cannot describe, for he desired me to remain to the end. Nor will I try and write about the farewell between him and Wilfred, and my sisters, and Ruth. Such scenes are not to be written about;

they cannot be. Even now that solemn hour comes back to me, and I try to realise, as I tried to realise then, that my father's spirit went to be with God.

Oh, this mystery of death! It surrounds us all, and yet we understand it not. There we stood talking with him, who was soon to be no more with us—and we knew it. What would become of his spirit? We did not know, we could only hope. Would father become nothing, or would he live on? I could not realise the fact of his death then. I can barely do so now. For one hour my father talked to us. His brain thought, his tongue spoke, his soul felt, the next—he was gone; and yet he was not gone. He lay there, the father I had embraced, and yet he did not lie there. The body could not love, and my father *did* love me.

After we had sat some time in silence, Mr. Polperrow spoke to my father. He asked him if he felt himself safe for the next world; but father answered him not.

"You have always been a good churchman," continued Mr. Polperrow, "and have always been regular in partaking of the Holy Communion."

My father smiled, I thought sadly, and then he beckoned to me again. He looked as though he had something to tell me—at least, I thought so—and I put my ear close to his mouth. He was now very weak, and spoke with difficulty; but I thought I caught the words:

"Be careful."

I thought he referred to the legend about the curse and assured him that I would be careful, but he did not seem satisfied.

"Beware of——" he said, and seemed to hesitate before pronouncing the word that would make the sentence complete. He looked round the room until his eyes rested on the place where my mother and Wilfred stood, then he sighed deeply.

"I will beware of everything wrong," I said, in trying to lead his mind from difficulty or doubt. "You are sure everything is well with you. No vestige of the curse remains with you."

He looked at me strangely, then a smile lit up his face and a new light beamed from his eyes.

"There is no curse," he said. "God is love."

These were his last words. Soon after his soul took its flight into the unseen.

Then I went out into the night alone. One by one the events of the day flashed through my mind, until I was sick and dizzy.

I was terribly excited; but beneath the excitement was a dull, aching pain. For hours I walked the headland and tried to realise that my father was dead, that I should hear his voice no more; but realisation was impossible. I had seen him ride away in the morning, a handsome, robust, man in the prime of life, and now——.

In my grief for him everything else had for the time been forgotten. Everything had been dispelled by this great calamity, and what was hardest of all to bear was that I was not sure that my father was—somewhere. I could not think of him as being in hell. I could not think of God, father, and hell at the same time, but was he anywhere?

"Father," I cried, "let me know that you are somewhere! Let me hear you speak, if only a word; only to know that all is well."

The night was very still. Not a breath of wind stirred, the harvest moon was just sinking into the sea, and the water was all aglow with its light. But I heard no voice. Even the sea made no noise, so still were its waters.

"Ah!" I cried, "my father is gone, for ever gone, and I am cursed with the curse of my people."

Was it fancy? Was it the voice of man or the voice of God that I heard in answer to my despairing cry? Fancy it

could not be, for it was past midnight and I stood alone on the great headland. Surely God spoke to me, for there, alone in the silence, I heard my father's last words repeated. How they came I know not, but this I know, in tones sweeter than thought can fancy came the glorious message, "There is no curse, God is love."

After that I was able to think and connect, link by link, the events of the evening.

And all this was but the twilight which told of the coming night.

CHAPTER XI

THE CALL TO RENOUNCE

Whereat Siddartha turned,
And lo! the moon shone by the crab! the stars
In that same silver order long foretold
Stood in range to say, "This is the right!—Choose thou
The way of greatness or the way of good;
To reign a King of Kings, or wander lone,
Crownless, and homeless that the world be helped."
—*The Light of Asia.*

After this I went back to my room, and tried to realise the true position of matters. One by one I thought over the events of the day, and tried to understand their purport. "There's Providence in the fall of a sparrow," said Hamlet, and I, being to a certain extent a believer in this, fancied that everything through which I had gone was an essential part of the drama of my life.

First, there was Ruth's preference for Wilfred and her dislike for me. Well, I must bear that. Besides, I was not sure. It is always the function of a true-hearted woman to speak well of the absent one, especially if he be maligned. I would not yet allow myself to be downcast.

Then there was the light on the great rock, the rock of evil repute, the rock that lured vessels to their destruction. I thought again and again of this. Then there was the appearance of Deborah Teague, who told me the light foreboded evil, while the weird dark form between the prongs told the same story. On other occasions I might have laughed at all this; but that terrible calamity following so soon after the warning impressed me strangely.

Yet what connexion could these dark omens have with the death of my father? What link was there between evil women and one of the purest and best of men. Clearer than all omens and louder than evil words was my father's last message to me, a message repeated by the voice of Heaven, "There is no curse; God is Love."

Thus when daylight came, I was calm, and although I had passed a sleepless night I was not altogether unrefreshed.

Three weary days followed, and then the funeral. Of that time I have not much to say. I was mostly alone, except when I was obliged to attend to the business which now devolved upon me, though I declared that nothing of importance should be dealt with until after my father's burial.

From the members of the family I received only kindness. My mother said nothing that could hurt my feelings; indeed, she seemed considerate and at times almost gentle. Wilfred, too, was more like the Wilfred of olden times when we were on good terms with each other. There was no change in my sisters. They always loved me, and were more than usually loving, while Ruth was the comforting, cheering influence of the house. Never until now did I realize the sweetness of her nature, or her power to cheer and help others when her own heart was almost breaking.

I could not do much; but in my clumsy way I tried to make them all feel my father's loss less.

And thus the time passed until my father was laid in the old family vault, and we returned to our old house on the cliff. Then we came back to the hard material things of life. We had to listen to father's last will and testament, and hear his latest wishes. All the family gathered in the library, together with Mr. Inch, Ruth, our solicitor, who also attended to the legal matters of Ruth's estate, Mr. Tremain, the doctor, and Mr. Polperrow, the vicar.

I need not here state the terms of the will: they have already been hinted at. Everything that a loving father could devise for the welfare of his children my father had done.

Not a word was spoken when the lawyer's voice ceased. If Wilfred was discontented he said nothing at the time, and my sisters were too overcome with grief to trouble about what money was left them. No sooner had the will

been read, however, than Mr. Inch spoke.

"It seems to me that this is the time for the wishes of Mr. Morton and Mr. Trewinion to be made known," he said.

I began to tremble violently, while Ruth evidently wondered what was coming.

The lawyer complied very graciously with Mr. Inch's request. "This seems to be the right time," he said.

I could not help thinking that the matter had been arranged beforehand, especially when Mr. Tremain produced a certain document and began to read therefrom.

The words he read were very plain and distinct. They stated that it was the wish of Mr. Morton that his daughter Ruth should in due time marry the heir of the Trewinion estate, and while he did not enforce it as a condition of her becoming his sole heiress, he still trusted that his daughter's love for him would lead her to obedience. After this the lawyer went on to say that on the night of his death my father had reiterated the same wish.

When he had finished reading and speaking I looked at Ruth. Her face was pale as death, and I saw that she was terribly moved. The revelation had come to her as a great shock, and I could not help seeing that a look of anger and disgust flashed from her eyes.

"My father wish that I should marry Roger!" she exclaimed, huskily. "Never! It cannot be!"

My heart sank like lead; but no further word was spoken. Soon the family conclave broke up, and we adjourned to the dining-hall.

I felt very strange, sitting at the head of the table in my father's chair, and for a time was almost overcome; but I rallied presently, and during the dinner was quietly thinking what was best to do. Although the head of the family, I felt I was quite alone. Everything told me that all in the house, excepting, perhaps my sisters, were in league with my mother against me.

I made up my mind, however, that I would not speak for three days to Ruth concerning her father's wish, and that then I would, if I dared, say the words my heart was burning to make known.

Nothing worthy of mention passed during the dinner-hour, but afterwards, having occasion to go into the library, I found Ruth alone. Instantly I wanted to refer to what had been said concerning us. My blood rushed madly to my head and my hands trembled.

I do not know, but I think she saw what was in my mind, for she turned away her face and walked toward the window.

"Ruth," I said, "why do you go away from me?"

She began to sob violently.

"Ruth," I continued, "something must grieve you to make you cry thus. Is it because of what has been said about us? If so, do not grieve any more. I will never ask you to do what would give you pain."

Her sorrow was terrible to see. Was it because of me that her grief was so bitter?

"Don't give way so," I went on. "Shall I leave you alone? I am sure I do not wish to give you any trouble. After our walk the other night I determined I would never say another word to hurt your feelings, and I'll be true to my determination. I did not mean to speak about the will for some time, but perhaps it would be better if I were to tell you now. Ruth, it is the dearest wish of my life that we should fulfil our fathers' wish in this matter. I have loved you ever since—since that terrible night, when you first came, but I never realized it until the day that Wilfred came home from Oxford. Then I was nearly mad with jealousy. I am afraid I have been very rude to you since, but it was because I love you so, for Ruth, I would do anything to make you happy."

Still she sat leaning forward on a table, her head buried in her hands, and sobbing as though her heart would break.

"It hurts me to hear you cry so," I said, "and I can see now why it is. But cheer up, Ruth. I will not speak of this any more. I will never ask you to obey your father's will. You shall not have the pain of linking your life to mine. I love you too well for that. God bless you, Ruth. I will try and find out what will make you happy, and then you shall see how I love you; for I will do all in my power to give you what you want."

She held up her head. There was an expression of thankfulness on her face; a look of intense relief, as though a burden was taken away.

I knew my fate then; and while it gave me joy to give her one minute's pleasure, yet it was agony to think that the promise of my absence should be the cause of it. So great indeed was the pain that I could not bear it, and stumbled blindly out. In spite of the fact that when I got into the hall I thought I heard her calling "Roger" I rushed away to the cliffs, whither I always fled in my hours of trouble.

But the events of the day were not yet at an end. As I stood alone looking at the sea I saw a great cloud rising in the northern sky. Soon I knew we should be enveloped in it and feel its darkness. In like manner was there a cloud, darker than all the rest, rising in the sky of my life. What it was I could not say; but I felt its coining, and I shuddered. "Coming events cast their shadows before," says the old adage, and looking backward I can see how true it was in this case.

Aimlessly I wandered on while the evening shadows gathered around, and the sea sobbed its sad song, telling me of the storm that was surely coming. As chance or fate would have it, I passed by the cottage of old Deborah Teague, and there in the grey twilight I saw her, with Mally Udy, quietly smoking. They looked up at my approach, but spoke not. A low chuckle escaped both of them, however, but I had no heart to speak to them. Still, their gruesome appearance added to the dark feelings that possessed me, and the dark shadows became more real.

At length I made my way back to the house, and although I was its lawful owner, and although every inch of land for a long distance around was mine, I felt that I was a stranger and an interloper. It was cold, too, cold as a vault, and as I passed along, the stone paved hall made a clanking noise which echoed through the silent rooms. I heard the wind howling too, and the sea began to roar, and when this was so there was always a ghostly, weird feeling about our old grey house.

As if drawn on by a spell, I made my way to the library, and on arriving there found my mother sitting alone.

"I have been waiting for you, Roger," said my mother quietly. "I felt there were some things about which I ought to speak to-night, and so would not retire until I saw you."

"And what about the girls, mother?" I said. "Where are they, and where is Wilfred?"

"They are all gone to bed. It has been a terrible day for them all, especially for Ruth, and so I sent them off. Besides, we must speak alone to-night."

"Speak alone, mother? I thought everything was settled. I am weary, and desire no business to-night. I have had much to do for three days, and have more to do to-morrow. I must rest."

"There is such a thing as duty as well as pleasure," said my mother severely. "You are now Trewinion's lord, and surely it is your duty to care about the happiness of others. Besides, a mother should ever be able to command her son?"

"Just so, mother," I said wearily. "Tell me what you wish, and I will do my best to obey you."

"Roger," she said in an altered tone, "you have had the reputation of being kind-hearted and generous. I know you have often thought me hard upon you; but if I have been so, it was only from the desire to make you gentle as well as generous."

I looked upon her in surprise, and in spite of my sorrow my heart bounded with hope. Perhaps my father's death

had destroyed all hard feelings, and now I should know the meaning of a mother's love.

"Mother," I said, "I have been rough and harsh. I'll try to be a better son, and perhaps we may be happy in the future."

A sharp spasm, as if of pain, crossed her face, but she spoke naturally.

"It may be," she went on, "that what I shall say may hurt you, but I only want to be a kind, loving mother."

My heart warmed more than ever. "I am sure that is your desire, mother," I said.

She was silent for a minute, and again I saw the look of of pain which crossed her face.

"Roger," she burst out, "what I have to say nearly kills me," and she burst into a flood of tears.

I went to her side and soothed her.

"Don't grieve, mother," I said, "and don't say anything that will give you pain."

"No, no, it's not that," she said, and then cried out, "I can't tell him, I can't."

"Don't, mother," I cried. "Wait until you are stronger, and then tell me. These few days have been terrible for you. I have been thinking too much about myself. I have been remembering that I have lost my father, but have forgotten that you have lost your husband. I know it's terrible, mother, but dear father is happy now, and Wilfred and I will take care of you."

At the mention of Wilfred's name her face changed. A look of determination came upon her face, and her hands clenched nervously.

"Roger," she said, "I am calm now, and hard as it is to tell you I will do so."

I sat down before her, wondering what was coming.

"You remember the night of your—your father's—death?"

"Yes, mother."

"He said it was his wish, and the wish of Mr. Morton that you should wed Ruth."

"Yes," I said, my heart beating violently.

"Roger, that must never be!"

"Why?"

I spoke harshly, for my heart became hard as a stone, and yet it seemed to grow too big for my bosom.

"Because," she answered, her voice trembling as she did so, "she loathes, shudders at the thought of marrying you."

"How dare you say this?" I cried angrily, and yet I knew her words were true. Ruth's face had told me the same story only that very evening.

"If you wish to drive her mad, kill her, murder her!" went on my mother, "ask her to do as her father wishes."

"What is there in me to drive her mad, or to murder her?" I cried. "I have always been kind to her."

"Nothing, nothing, Roger. She loves you as a brother. You have been very good to her. None of us forget that twice you saved her life."

"Then why do you say she loathes me?"

"Can you not see what I mean? She does not loathe you as a brother; but she loathes the thought of your being her husband, and were you to insist on a marriage, you would kill her!"

"Why? You say she loves me as a brother; why, then, should the other thought be so terribly abhorrent? Could she not in time learn to give me more than a brother's love?"

"Never!"

"Why?"

"Because she loves another!"

"Another! Who?"

"Can you not guess?"

Guess! Ah, yes; I could indeed. Had I not seen it for weeks? My mother need not tell me more. I knew perfectly well.

"Surely you have seen that they have been lovers from childhood," she went on. "She has been all in all to him, while—well, you must have seen how she regarded him. He did not speak to her about it, however, until he came home from Oxford, and then, on the day of his arrival, he told her what he had felt for years."

"And she?"

"She told him—that—what in short he had been longing to hear, and, although we knew it not, they became betrothed."

It was what I had thought, it did not surprise me, and yet I felt sick and giddy. It was some time before I could speak, and then I could only stammer out:

"And she promised to be his wife?"

My mother nodded.

No words can describe what I felt, for never until then did I realise how I loved her, or what pain it was for me to lose her.

"Do you love Ruth very much, Roger?" asked mother.

"Love her!" I cried, "love her! I would die for her."

"And she loves Wilfred, and would never be happy away from him."

I fought it down after a while; crushed all my envy, jealousy, and hatred—for hate did possess me for a time—and then turned to my mother again.

"Let Ruth and Wilfred be happy," I said, "I shall put in no claim, her happiness is more important than mine."

"They cannot," said my mother.

"Cannot!" I cried. "Why?"

"Because it was her father's wish that she should marry Trewinion's heir, and she will do it, though she dies the next day."

"I do not understand."

"You know how much she has ever thought of her father. No one I ever saw loved a parent, or a parent's memory, as much as she loved her father's. And now, although she would have to sacrifice everything dear to her heart, she will be true to his wish."

"But I will not have it so. I will not call for the sacrifice."

"Then you are hindering her father's wish from being fulfilled, and you will still be keeping Ruth and Wilfred apart."

"But what can I do?"

My mother was silent.

Then I saw her meaning. My very existence was the great evil. I was Trewinion's heir, whom her father wished her to marry, and yet she hated the thought of it; while she could not marry the man she loved because of her father's will. Meanwhile she was suffering a terrible torture—and I was causing it.

I tried to look at the whole matter fairly and boldly. What were the alternatives? I was Roger Trewinion's eldest son, and if I allowed my father's and Mr. Morton's will to be carried out, I doomed my darling to a loathsome life—a living death, while, though I should attain the object most dear to me, I should live in hell, the hell of being with a woman who loved another man. If I refused to marry her, things would be nearly as bad. I should still be dooming her to misery; she would not marry my brother, I should never be free from the thought that I was keeping others from happiness, while the two houses of Trewinion and Morton would not be united.

Slowly it came at first! Then the full meaning of the thought flashed upon me! I could not do it, I could not! And yet it was the only way.

Renounce my name, my possessions, my identity! Go away and never return!

That was the alternative, the only way by which the houses could be united, the only way Ruth could be happy.

"I see what you mean, mother," I cried out at last, "but I must have time, I cannot decide in a moment. I must speak to Ruth, to Wilfred."

"Why speak to Ruth? You will only give her more pain. You spoke this afternoon. Why cause her to bear more than she is already bearing?"

Ruth had told her, then, and doubtless told her, too, what were her feelings towards Wilfred! I saw the truth, the force of her words, and yet it was very hard.

"I must think, mother," I said. "I know you love Wilfred the better; I know you think him far more fit to be the head of the house than I; you think I ought to make the sacrifice, but I must have time to think."

"How long, Roger? The day after to-morrow Ruth leaves Trewinion Manor."

"Leave! Why?"

"Need you ask? She cannot wait here in the house with the man she thinks she has to marry, when the thought of such a thing is terrible."

I was driving Ruth away then. Not only was I giving her pain and sorrow, but because of me she was going to leave the only home wherein she could be happy. It was true she could return to her own home, which had been kept in repair, but I knew she did not intend going there until she came of age.

"She does not wish to be with me longer than she thinks she is forced by her father's will?" I said.

"She knows she is not expected to marry you until she is twenty-one. That will not be for some time, and so she is going away."

This was hardest of all to bear, it drove me to madness. Her detestation of me was so great that she determined to shun me.

"Just one word more, mother. Have you spoken to me because of Ruth's desire, or with her sanction?"

A strange look flashed across my mother's face; then she said, "Roger, never think I can answer that question."

My brain seemed on fire, and I could not tell what to do, I could not decide. I simply rushed out of the room saying, "You will soon know."

I made my way to my room upstairs, and in passing along a corridor I saw a light in Mr. Inch's room. Immediately I knocked at his door, and on receiving permission, entered. I found him busy with a lot of papers.

"Is it correct that you and Miss Morton are going to leave us, Mr. Inch?" I said.

He bowed, and said, quietly but distinctly, "It is so decided."

"Might I ask the reason for this abrupt departure?" I said. "I have heard nothing about it until to-night."

He looked at me for a moment steadily; then he said,

"It is not for me to say; surely you should know that it is next to impossible for her to remain here now."

He also had told me in words as plain as words could tell what she felt. I must think, think alone. I found my way to my bedroom, but my mind would not work there. I must get out under the broad sky, where all was free. So again I left the house, went away towards the highest point on the headland, where, hundreds of feet below, the waves were lashing themselves into foam as they broke upon the great rugged rocks.

CHAPTER XII

NIGHT

"And Esau hated Jacob.… And Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."—*The Book of Genesis.*

It did not rain, but the wind blew a wild hurricane. Now and then it seemed to cease, and I could hear a kind of moaning sound which the sea made, but again it came as though it would sweep away the great rocks that grimly defied the fury of the elements. I did not mind this, everything accorded with my feelings. I found ease in breasting the storm, I breathed more freely when the wind blew its loudest.

By and by the thunders began to roar and the lightnings to flash, still no rain fell, so I did not mind.

But it was terrible to be alone on such a night, and with such a problem to solve. For hours I think I was mad. I am sure that in my frenzy my voice could be heard above the wind and wave. Nothing, however, made me forget what lay before me. The future ever haunted me, and turned the thunderings of the wave into derisive mocking laughter.

Now and then I would stand and look at the old house, which I could dimly see in the stormlight, and when I did so it became dearer than ever to me. It was the home of my fathers, the place wherein they had died, and my heart clave unto it. I felt proud of my name—proud that I was born the representative of my family, and to give it up seemed like pulling at my heart-strings.

And thus I was tempted in the night; I would maintain my position as Trewinion's heir. I would wed Ruth. I would brave everything and carry out the wish of my father. Ruth did not love me now, but she might learn to love me in time, besides, I could not give her up. I loved her—loved her supremely. All the strength of my nature, moulded largely by wild surroundings and an uncultured people, was given to her. I did not love tamely. It was no tender passion I felt, it was a mad, passionate adoration. I can call it nothing less. Fer her I could brave danger, difficulty, death; but I could not give her up.

And I would not!

Why should I? I was master, I would remain so. I would maintain my rights. I would let Wilfred know that I was the elder brother and he the younger. And Ruth should be mine. My father wished it, and so did hers, and so I would claim her. I would take my father's place and reign righteously. I would be a pattern to the neighbouring gentry, and my name should be respected far and wide. This was what every eldest son of my race save one had done—that is, they had all claimed their position, and so would I. Wilfred's happiness! Well, Wilfred had always defied me and treated me as an inferior. Wilfred must take care of himself; he must be thankful that I gave him the annuity my father had mentioned. I could not help being born the first; besides, what had I to do with his happiness? What right had he to seek to win Ruth's affections? Doubtless he who was so friendly with Mr. Inch would know her father's wish. Thus he must have acted like a sneak to have sought what could not be fairly given to him. And Ruth! Did I not love her, would I not humour her every wish, grant her every desire, and devote my life to make her happy?

And mother?

She had never cared for me, never trusted me, never treated me as a son, never told me of her intentions. I did not know, indeed, if she were my mother. Why, then, should I trouble about her? If need be she could go and live with Wilfred; at any rate, I would be Trewinion's lord, and maintain my rights.

Then the other side presented itself. If this were carried out what would be the result? I should see Ruth suffering, pining day by day. She would loathe my presence, she would shudder at my embrace. By my selfishness I should wreck her life. I should be her murderer. Then what happiness should I have? Could I be happy while the woman I loved was being cursed by my presence?

Then I put it this way: If I went away—not that I should, but considering it suppositiously merely—if I went away, what would be the result? Wilfred would claim to be master; he would be Trewinion's heir; he would wed Ruth, who would gladly join her life to his—for were they not affianced lovers?—my mother would rejoice, and all would be happy. My black shadow would be taken from their lives, and they could for ever live in the sunshine.

The picture seemed bright, and for a moment the thought of it gave me pleasure. Then I remembered that I should be leaving Ruth for ever; I should be leaving my old home for ever; I should not die in the great chamber where all my ancestors had died. I should be a wanderer, a vagrant, homeless and friendless.

Besides, what could I do? Strong and hardy I was, as a man could well be, but I had no trade or profession. That is the curse which befalls eldest sons who expect fortunes; if anything happens to them they have no profession on which to rely. What did I know? Something of the management of an estate, but not enough for a steward, nor would anyone hire a steward without an assurance as to his abilities and past career. I was not fit for that, and if I went away the name of Roger Trewinion must be sunk for ever, so that I could not seek such a post. The only thing I could say I was fit for was the post of a sailor. If I went away I must try and get a place in a trading vessel.

I thought of all this, but would not confess to myself that I was seriously thinking of leaving my home, the sacrifice was too great.

Meanwhile the storm was raging, and flakes of foam were blown against my face. Then I felt some raindrops falling, and the sky became more lowering.

I would go in and go to bed, and on the morrow I would speak to Ruth.

Then came the moment of final struggle. Ruth was leaving the house because of me, because she loathed the thought of being my wife, and because she wished to be free from me as long as she could.

This thought took away much of my interest in home, as well as my desire to remain among the scenes of my early childhood. It chilled those warm feelings of attachment for the homestead, and for the people who had become a part of my life.

Ruth leave because of me! And yet it was because of Ruth I wanted to stay. I would look at the matter again. I wanted to make Ruth happy; but what was the course I must take in order to do that? The great hindrance to her happiness was myself. I was the black cloud that hid her sun. If I did not exist her joy would be complete, for then she would be free to wed the man she loved.

And while I was fighting this battle the storm beat furiously upon me. Never shall I forget how the wind blew, nor how the waves became more and more maddened. Dimly I could see the great mountains of waters, as with thundering roars they hurled themselves on the rockbound coast and became churned into foam. How stern and pitiless nature was, how careless of all human joys or sorrows! It was well I had my dying father's assurance that God was love, or I could never have believed it then. To me there was an almighty devil ruling the universe. A being who hated us, and sought our destruction.

I was however glad of the storm. It helped me. I had to resist, to exert myself. It gave play to my active nature; it kept me from succumbing to the dark cloud of sorrow in which I was enveloped.

I know not how, nor can I tell the exact moment when the decision was made; but, in the end, I decided to leave the old homestead and to give Ruth happiness. I claim no virtue for my act. There was not much in it after all. I should never be happy if I remained at home; nay, Trewinion Manor would be hell to me, while spectres that I should constantly be raising would haunt my life. Besides, I might find some relief away. I would go, I would roam the world all over, and, perhaps, away from the scene of my misery, I should find peace. My heart was breaking, and it was not worth while for me to add misery to that which was already felt by those by whom I was surrounded.

It may be said by those who read this that my act was one of great self-denial; but if it was it brought none of that peace and inward satisfaction which are said to come from such deeds. My misery, if possible, became more intense, and the storm seemed to mock me with shrieks and howls of derision.

With a great weight on my heart I crept back to the house, and slowly went to my room. When should I go?

"To-morrow" was the response of my weaker nature. "Get a good night's rest, make an impressive scene before Ruth, and go away with a flourish of trumpets." But that would not do. I doubt whether I could have had the heart to go away in the daylight if I saw Ruth near me. Besides, I did not want to go away openly; I would leave in secret, when no eye should see me, and when no one should be able to trace me. When should I go?

"Now!"

That was the answer of my stronger and sterner nature. Leave in the night, alone, and at once. Never look at the sweet face of Elizabeth and Katherine, never be weakened by the beauty of Ruth, never be shaken in my resolve by the patronising pride of Wilfred or the unloving look of my mother. Delay would be dangerous. On the one hand were influences leading me to stay, by making me defiant, hard, and bitter; on the other, by making me weak and yielding. I would go at once then.

Where?

That mattered not for the time. I would leave the house at once, and decide my course when once away and alone.

Should I let any one know what had become of me, should I write a letter to Ruth, or Wilfred, or mother? I dared not. To do that would weaken me at once. Still, it would be better that I should let them all know that I was gone away, never to return.

I clothed myself in a strong plain suit of clothes, which I had used when shooting on our boggy rough moors, put twenty guineas in my pocket, and then went down into the library again. I did not look around me and think of the hours I had spent there. If I did Ruth could not be happy, for I should not have sufficient courage to remove my black shadow from her life. I went to the writing desk and began to try to say good-bye. That I found I could not do, so I simply wrote the words:

"From this time Roger Trewinion is no more. He ceases to be so that Wilfred can be Trewinion's heir and Ruth can be happy. Let Wilfred do his duty, or Roger Trewinion may come to life again."

That was all, and after I had written it I felt more calm. Then I took a stout oak stick, on which was engraven my father's name, and one which he usually took when out walking and went away from the house, in my heart bidding it good-bye for ever.

I walked rapidly northwards, keeping close to the cliffs. It was now early morning, but the sun had not yet risen. The black clouds had passed away, but the sea forgot not its anger, and still broke furiously upon the shore.

I must have walked five miles when I saw signs of day. The sky changed from nearly black into a sombre grey, while the sea became like unto the sky. The birds creeping from their night resting-places, began to sing, and from the farms by which I passed I heard the sound of the cocks crowing.

On I tramped, anxious to get away from the neighbourhood where I was known, the light becoming clearer and clearer as I went, until I could see the outline of the coast. Then before me I saw a great jutting headland, similar to the one on which our house was built, thence I should be able to see my old home.

By the time I got there it was broad day, I think about five o'clock, and wistfully I scanned the coast. Yes, there was Trewinion clear and plain, although miles away. The grey, rugged walls stood out distinctly and striking, while the tower lifted its head proudly into the sky. And this home I had given up. Back from it stretched broad acres that were mine, and these I had renounced for a woman.

"Treat her well, Wilfred, or by the Creator of us both you shall curse the day on which you were born."

I muttered this between my closed teeth, for at that moment I knew I hated him.

Then I remembered the Trewinion's curse.

Do I believe in supernatural agencies, in witchcraft? Am I prey to superstitious fancies? I cannot answer. The

unseen world is so linked with the seen that they are but one world. I cannot tell where to draw the line between natural and supernatural. To me the two are one. But this I know; the moment I realised that I hated Wilfred, I was cursed with a terrible curse. Evil passions surged within me, I planned dark deeds, murder did not seem hateful, and hell far worse than that which I had felt when I had been struggling on the cliff was now my doom.

A bottomless pit! I was in it. A pit of slavery to evil desire, of savage joy which was not joy, at the thought of evil. This was where I was.

He, the miserable sneak, had robbed me of my love, my all. And yet I could not go back. The house was mine, the lands were mine, yet I could not claim them. I was bound, yet I could not see the fetters which chained me.

Does a curse like unto mine follow the footsteps of men who hate, or does the Trewinion race stand alone. Be that as it may, I felt cursed, the clear fountains of my manhood were gone. Roger Trewinion was more demon than man. For hatred poisons the soul.

And yet I loved Ruth. This, I think, was the power that kept me from going back and doing evil, and yet this love did not make me hate the less. Nay, it made hatred more intense.

Long I stood alone in the grey morning, watching the bleak house that stood in the distance, while the sea moaned and sobbed miserably, as if to add another feeling to the misery of my heart. I seemed riveted there. I looked at the five prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" like one entranced, and thought of their associations. I saw the place where I had saved Ruth, when she had fallen from the cliffs. I fancied I detected the place where the witches' cave stood, and I remembered all that had been said.

"Ah," I cried, "Deborah Teague is indeed a true prophet. Dark omens have a meaning. I am indeed homeless, friendless, forsaken, and the Trewinion curse is come. I go now, never to return, while my love is given to another, and my power is taken by my younger brother. Yet seemingly I have done nothing to merit this."

For a time I was mad. I shook my fist and called down curses upon Wilfred and my mother. I prayed that they should never have rest or joy, and that the ghost of my father should haunt them. And yet I could give no real reason for this, only that my heart was black.

I felt I must go on. I must get farther away from the place where my life had been spent; so I gave one look more, one long hungering look that was full of agony, and as at last I turned my eyes away, my heart strings seemed to snap.

Then I set my teeth together, clasped my stick firmly, and, with lowering brow and a black heart, trudged wearily northward.

CHAPTER XIII

A WANDERER

I went on heedlessly for a mile or so. I was stunned, and felt strange and giddy; but by and by I felt I must come to such decision in regard to my course. So I struck into the main road, and continued my journey northward. By this time I felt the warmth and brightness of the day. The sun was now clear of the horizon, and revealed the glittering dewdrops that hung on grass and flower. The majestic hills rose on either side of me, the waving cornfields presented a rich and beautiful appearance.

The glories of nature did not soften me, however. My heart was still hard with hatred and disappointment, and I was too busy with my sad thoughts to decide what to do, or to what town to steer.

Presently a man met me, the first I had seen since I started. He was a farm labourer, taking his oxen to the fields to plough, and on looking at my watch I found that I had been walking for about six hours, and that I must be at least twenty miles from home. The man touched his hat, although I was sure he did not know me. Evidently my dress was not that of a workman. If I was to get a place as a workman, I must dress like one.

"Where does this road lead to?" I asked of the man.

"Dun knaw, zur, I'm sure, but they do zay as 'ow it do go to Waadbrudge."

"Wadebridge, eh? Do you know how far it is away?"

"No, zur, I doan't, for I never bin more'n vive mile away from Treloggas, which is my home, zur, but my maaster es a bit of a traveller, zur. He've bin to Bodmun, and he do zay as 'ow Waadbrudge es fifteen mile on."

"Fifteen miles. Is it a good road?"

"Oi, iss, zur. You do git into the turnpike dreckly (directly), and then the roads sa smoove as a booard."

"And is there a publichouse anywhere near?"

"Iss, zur, 'bout three mile on thurs a kiddley-wink (beershop) that do belong to Tommy Dain, he as can raise the devil, you do knaw, zur."

This helped me to decide what to do. Wadebridge was a little seaport, and there I should perhaps get on board a vessel that would take me right away from home. Then, perhaps, when I was away on the rolling seas, I should forget my disappointments, and find ease from the gnawing, bitter hatred that had gripped my heart.

Inspired by this thought I hurried on rapidly. I was beginning to feel hungry and faint after my long walk, so was glad to know of the inn, even although Tommy Dean, the landlord, possessed such powers.

Arrived there I had a good breakfast of ham and eggs, after which Tommy brought out a tankard of ale. I was about to drink it when I reflected. But for drink my father's horse would not have been frightened and I should not now have been fatherless. But for drink I should not now be homeless and friendless. Drink had deprived me of my dearest, best friend, and I would have none of it. So much did this impress me at the time that I made up my mind never to touch intoxicant again; at any rate, until I saw sufficient reason to alter my mind.

After breakfast I felt that the twelve miles which lay before me were as nothing. In three hours, if nothing happened, I should be in Wadebridge.

Nothing of importance happened on the way. Milestone after milestone I passed wearily. I had little object or hope in life. I had sacrificed my all for the sake of others, and it brought me no happiness. When I reached Wadebridge my interest was somewhat aroused. My knowledge of towns was very limited. I had only paid two or three visits to our county towns, which are, to say the least of them, small and to some extent uninteresting. Twice I had been to Truro, and once to Falmouth; thus when I came to Wadebridge, I was somewhat excited. Such a thing

seems strange to me now, when I remember the facts of the case. Wadebridge was only a little village composed of one street, which led down to the river Wade, over which a bridge is built, hence the name of the port.

There is a curious story among the Wadebridge people as to how their bridge was built. Many years ago there was a ferry across the river, but it was the frequent custom of farmers to ride their horses or drive their cattle across it when the tide was low, but often men and beasts were lost in the quicksands formed in the rising tide. After one sad accident of this sort, the Rev. Mr. Lovebone, the vicar of Wadebridge, determined that a bridge should be built, and after great pains and struggling it was finished with seventeen arches of stone. But in spite of their great labour, disappointment and defeat followed in their track, for pier after pier was lost in the sands. A "fair structure" was to be seen in the evening, but in the morning nothing was left. Mr. Lovebone was ready to give up in despair; but one night he dreamed that an angel came with a flock of sheep, that he sheared them, let the wool fall in to the water, and speedily built the bridge on the wool. Then the holy man awoke with a new idea. He appealed to the farmers, who sent him all the wool they had, which was put into sacks; these were placed thickly on the sands, and on these piers were built. Thus the wisdom of the angel of the dream was manifest, for the bridge remains to this day.

The harbour is not very wide or large at Wadebridge, and vessels of large dimensions can only come in when the tide is high.

The first thing I did on my arrival was to go to a small shop where seafaring apparel was sold. The owner looked at me curiously, as I asked for a general rig out, but showed me what I wanted nevertheless. I was not long in making a bargain, and then asked for permission to change my attire.

"Ain't bin doin' nothin' wrong, I hope?" he said.

"Not to my knowledge," I replied.

"Cause you do'ant look much like a chap as is used to wearin' a sailor's clothes," he said.

"No," I answered. "What do I look like, then?"

He looked at my hands, then at my shooting suit, and again at my face, and replied slowly:

"Why, you do look look like a passen's son as hev got into trouble and be now runnin' away; ed'n that about right, now?"

"Not exactly," I said, "but I'm sure you'll allow me to change my clothes, won't you?"

He gave an unwilling consent at length, and I confess that, when I had put on a rough suit of seaman's clothes, I hardly knew myself. I went across the bridge to the little village of Egloshayle, and walked towards Slades Bridge, which lay in the direction of Bodmin.

"Now," I said to myself, "you are no longer Roger Trewinion, but a common fisherman, who is desirous of going to sea. Forget the past. Forget that you are the heir to a fine estate, forget that you have given up all for love."

But I could not do this. True, there was a sense in which all seemed like a dream, so that the past was misty; but above all was the fact of my great and burning love for Ruth, a love so intense as to lead me to sacrifice everything that she might be happy with the man whom she loved, and whom I hated, although he was my brother.

The thought was madness. My sacrifice seemed madness, and once I thought of going back again. That, however, was soon banished, for although my coming away might be the action of one who did not know what he was doing, to go back would be to strike despair and anguish into the heart of Ruth, and that would be hell for me.

No, I had fought that battle. I had made Ruth happy. I should soon become as nothing to them, and thus Wilfred and my mother would have their own way, and be joyous because I was no more. That was something, and yet I was sure that Wilfred had schemed for such an end. What definite reason I had for this I could not tell, but I was sure of it, and I hated him. True, I had gone away freely, and yet I had been driven away; things had been so arranged that I could not stay to be a skeleton at the feast, a hindrance to all joy.

I ceased to think about it at length, and tried to bring myself into harmony with my surroundings. What should I call myself? I could not ask for a sailor's position as Roger Trewinion, and yet I did not like to give up my name. Finally I decided to call myself Richard Tretheway. It was a very common name, and by this name I should still retain my initials. Where I came from was a matter of little importance; there were lots of little fishing villages all the way down the coast; so I settled on one near my old home, and made my way to the riverside where some vessels lay. The captain of one of them struck my attention in a minute. He stood quietly watching some men who were loading the boat with corn. He was not swearing or bullying as some of the others were, and I determined to speak to him.

"And what may you want, my lad?" he said as I went up to him.

"A job, sir," I said, with a strong Cornish accent.

He looked at me keenly. "What can you do?" he said.

I named the work I could do on a ship.

"Let's have a look at your hands?" he said.

I showed him my hands. They were not so soft as those of most young men in my position. I had done an amount of harvest work, and thus, with constantly rowing and engaging in other physical exercises, they were almost as hard as an ordinary seaman's.

"What have you been brought up to?" he asked.

"Fishing."

"That's a lie. You are neither a fisherman nor a sailor."

I hung my head.

"Yes, you may hang your head, my lad, for you are not what you seem."

Again in a clumsy way I repeated the duties of both, but the captain would not listen.

"Yes, yes, my young gentleman, you may know about these things as well as I do, but that don't deceive me. You were never brought up to work, you weren't; but you are a strong likely chap for all that."

I tried again to assure him that I could do a sailor's work well.

"Now, look here, young man," he said, "I'm an oldish chap, and have seen a bit of the world, and have learnt to read a little of men and things, and although you are not what you want to pass off to be I like your looks. What you mean by being here I don't know; but that's not my business, and I do want a likely young fellow like you. Answer me square and fair. Are you seeking to get on this vessel because you've done anything wrong, are you in fear of anybody or anything, and is anybody after you now?"

I liked his plain question, and I answered plainly.

"I have done nothing wrong, sir," I said; "I am not afraid of anything or anybody, and no one is after me now."

He looked at me straight in the eyes, but I met his gaze fearlessly.

"What's your name, my lad?"

"Richard Tretheway."

"That is not your real name?"

"No."

"You are sure you are doing nothing wrong in concealing your true name? Be perfectly honest."

"I am doing nothing wrong. I am doing what's right."

"I'll take you," he said.

I thanked him.

"Look you," he said, "expect no favours; you must do your work fair and square like the rest. We go from here to Padstow, then on to Falmouth, from there to Plymouth, then to London. From there, if you behave well, I'll take you to France and down the Mediterranean. Do what you have to do here quickly. It's high tide at six this evening, and then we shall sail."

"Thank you," I said; "I have nothing to do, but I'll go and get some dinner and then come straight back."

As I said this I turned to go; but the captain laughed and called me back.

"Look you, Tretheway," he said, "if I hadn't known you were a greenhorn to this kind of thing before I should know it now. You haven't said anything about wages."

"I'll leave that to you," I said confusedly, and then went back to the town.

I shall not dwell on my experience that evening, nor, indeed, shall I speak of many of my adventures, as I want to relate only those facts of my history which are vitally concerned with the name I bear, with its associations and legends.

The next afternoon we sailed past my old home. Long before we drew near it, I saw the grey tower on the great weather-beaten cliff, and with beating heart I stood on the deck and watched while we drew nearer and nearer. I strained my eyes to catch sight of any of my family, but no one could be seen. Closer and closer we came, the great prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" standing out more clearly as we swept on.

Did anyone there think of me? I wondered. Yes, they would naturally do that. My mother would think of me, and be glad I was gone, for her favourite boy would be master. Wilfred would think of me, and wonder if I should come back, and, perhaps, dread the thought of such a thing happening. My sisters would think of me lovingly, and wonder what had become of Roger. And Ruth—I dared not think of her.

Who had seen my letter? I wondered. My mother was the most likely one to do so, or Wilfred, and they would treasure up the words I had written, they would weigh well their purport. But would it be shown to Ruth or to my sisters?

My dear, dear old home, how I loved it! It was there I was born, it was there my father had died. So near was I to it, and yet so far. Besides, it was mine no longer. I had given it up to make the woman I loved happy, and to keep it from being hell to me.

My thoughts were rudely checked. Two persons stood together on the headland, the headland on which my home stood, and they were evidently looking at the ship in which I was sailing. Who were they? I strained my eyes to see. They looked like Wilfred and—— I dared not think of it, the thought was maddening. I would not believe that Ruth was out walking with Wilfred so soon after my departure, and on the very day when she was reported to be leaving for her home.

Yet why not? By this time they had, perhaps, publicly announced themselves as lovers; and yet they dare not. My departure could not yet be regarded as a settled thing, and my mother had told me that Ruth would be true to her father's wish. As yet I must be regarded among them as Trewinion's heir, and thus she would look upon me as her future husband. How, then, could she be encouraging the man she loved, when she would regard it as a sin to do so?

But was it she, was it Wilfred?

The captain's glass was near me, and I seized it. I brought it to the right focus. I saw them plainly, Ruth and

Wilfred standing side by side, with her hand resting on his arm. There could be no mistake.

Yes, she would know all by this time; she would know that I had given up everything for her happiness, and she had accepted it without a pang. She had come out alone with the man who had stepped into my place.

It was base ingratitude. She was not worthy the sacrifice. I would leave the vessel at Falmouth, go home, and destroy their plans; I would claim my own again. As for Wilfred, I would whip him like a dog, and drive him from the place.

I know my thoughts were confused, and unreasonable, but I think I was mad, for I stamped my foot in my rage.

I heard a noise behind me and turned round. The captain stood coolly watching me. Instantly, my position burst upon me, and I was confused.

"Well, Richard Tretheway," he said, "and what have you been using my glass for?"

"It is a fine old headland, sir, and I wanted to see it."

"Ay, and it's a fine old house on the cliff, eh. Whom does it belong to?"

I was silent.

"Ah, well, lad, I will not pry into your secrets; sometime, perhaps, you may want to tell me," and he walked away.

Still I watched, while the couple on the cliff became more and more indistinct, and the old grey tower seemed to melt away in the steely sky, and as it did so my feelings softened, for I felt I was bidding good-bye to it for ever. My love for Ruth began to exert its power, and although I felt bitter, the thought of going back to wreck her happiness was repugnant.

On, on we swept, until Ruth and Wilfred could no longer be seen, and the old house was hidden by the prongs of the "Devil's Tooth." Then I broke down and sobbed like a child. Now, indeed, I was alone and without a friend. There was no brightness in my sky, no hope for the future. Truly I was sad at heart. With that the words of old Deborah Teague came back to me.

"Mind, mind Trewinion's curse, tes comin', tes comin'. I see Maaster Roger homeless, friendless, despised, disgraced. Mind, Maaster Roger, mind."

CHAPTER XIV

"A HOME ON THE ROLLING DEEP"

I found Luke Miller, the captain of the boat, to be kind and friendly. Not that he took any notice of me for several days. He did not. But when we arrived at Plymouth, and were away from the crew, he began to talk kindly to me.

"Tretheway," he said, "I don't know anything about you, and it may be that in talking freely to you I am in one sense taking a liberty. May be you have been brought up well; fact, I'm sure you have. But all that's no business of mine. What I want to say is this, I like you. I daren't show it at sea, as there'd be jealousy. At the same time, if ever I can show my real friendship to you, or if ever you want a friend, you know where to come."

I thanked him warmly.

"There's just another thing to say, lad. You've had a quiet time on board yet, for the men ain't known what to make of you, but they begin to feel their way. They fancies you are a swell and a sneak, so keep your weather eye open. The best men of the crew are leaving here, too, and I am afraid I shall have to pick up a rough lot, so, as I say, keep a sharp look out."

I found this advice very much to the point a day or two after. Not that I minded much. I was too terribly bitter towards almost everything to care what happened to me. Still, when we were fairly out at sea from Plymouth, and the men began to play practical jokes upon me, I remembered the captain's words and remained cool.

There were one or two discontented men on board who took it into their heads that I had a doubtful past, and, moreover, that I had a secret in my life of the discovery of which I was in constant fear.

It was afternoon, and the men having nothing special to do were standing lazily around. I was making my way to the bowsprit, and was walking rather rapidly, when the biggest bully on the boat put out his foot and threw me head foremost. This was received with a loud guffaw of derisive laughter, and the man who had done it was highly complimented on his achievement. I took no notice, however, doing that which I had set out to do. This, instead of lessening their dislike for me, increased it, and for days after I was subjected to many petty annoyances. A few weeks before, I should not have stood it. I was wild and passionate then, full of life and strength, now I was so bitter that I scarcely felt any interest in anything. Besides that, the men were so low and brutal that I disliked encountering them.

At last I went to them and asked what I had done to make them constantly wish to annoy me.

"Because tha'art a coward and a snaik," said one.

"A spy and a tell-tale," said another.

"Cause you think yourself too good to mix with we, who are a mighty sight better than you," said another.

"Or else you're afraid we'll find out something of your dirty ways," said two or three together.

I felt sick and sad at heart. To mix with these men was bad enough, to come into such relationship with them as would lead to a brawl was worse.

"I'm not a coward, a spy, a sneak or a tell-tale," I said quietly. "I don't think myself too good to mix with any honest man, and I'm not afraid of your finding out anything about me."

With that the bully placed himself before me and spat in my face. In a moment my calmness and self-control were gone, and in a minute more we were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. The devil that my hatred for my brother had aroused now showed itself, and I fought with all the fury of a demon. My opponent was as big as I, and as strong, or would have been had he not abused his strength by evil habits; and in addition to this, he knew many

tricks of fighting unknown to me. Minute after minute we fought, he more for the love of fighting than for hatred for me, I with a mad heart, and with every evil passion aroused. If at that moment I could in no other way have beaten him save by selling my soul to the devil, I am sure I should not have hesitated to make the bargain. I had allowed an evil passion to enter my heart, and it had poisoned my whole being. Thus it was that I determined to die rather than be conquered.

A determined man can do almost anything. A mad man is supernaturally strong. I was both. Thus, at length, by a trick of wrestling, and a blow that would have felled an ox, I laid him bruised, bleeding and senseless on the deck. This did not satisfy me. I turned to another who had been prominent in seeking to quarrel and laid him beside the first. Then like a mad bull I rushed upon the rest.

I don't know what happened after that, save that there was a terrible scuffle, and I found myself struggling in the grasp of brawny arms, after which I felt a heavy stunning blow which rendered me oblivious to all my surroundings.

When I awoke to consciousness I was in chains, and the captain by my side.

"Well, Tretheway," said he, "and this is the way you carry on?"

I was silent.

"I took you for a decent lad, perhaps my better in many things, and yet, here I find you fightin' like th' old Nick himself."

"What have I done?" I said sulkily.

"Done! Why disabled two men, unfitted them for work for a week at least, knocked two more into a cocked hat, and would have killed 'em if the whole crew hadn't seized you and took you below here and put you in irons!"

"Somebody has struck me," I said. "I've a wound on my head."

"A chap said he were obliged to do that or you'd a bin the death of him."

"Captain," I said, "you know the truth about this, and that I sought no quarrel; but now, now—if one of them dares to trifle with me I'll——"

"You won't have the chance, Tretheway, my boy. Every man jack of 'em declares they will not sail with you. They've all given warnin' unless you are dropped at the first port."

"Why?"

"Because they say you are not a man but a devil. They say yer eyes were red, and they see a flame a comin' from yer mouth as you fought, and although they're a bad lot I hain't got time to get a fresh crew to suit you, so you must either be left in irons until we get to London, or be dropped at Dover."

"I'll go to London," I said; "I may stand a better chance there."

The captain left me, and I was again alone. I did not feel at all excited, but a kind of despair possessed me. I was not at all surprised or annoyed at the men. I felt that they were right. I should have done harm to them had I remained at liberty. I was not fit to have my irons knocked off. The spirit of hatred possessed me, hatred that was dark and murderous, and hatred is the devil.

I spoke to no one during the time I remained on the vessel. I spoke not when the irons were knocked off my feet and hands by the captain. I climbed to the deck, and saw the men huddled together as if in fear, and I stood and watched them; then I looked and saw we were anchored in a great tidal river, and that London, great London, was on either side of me. Once it would have aroused all the enthusiasm and excitement of my nature. Now I was unmoved. I was about to leave the boat, when a thought struck me and I turned to the captain.

"Captain Luke Miller," I said, "you know the whole meaning and history of this matter, and that I picked no

quarrel. I don't grumble; but I want you to stretch a point for me. Can you give me a certificate as an able-bodied seaman?"

He did not speak, but put a piece of paper in my hand, and pointed to the board by which I was to leave the boat. I gave him a look of thankfulness and left.

I tramped through the crowded London streets unheedingly. I did not realise the seething surging, masses of people; I forgot that I was in the greatest city of the world, the centre of thought, and power, and learning.

At length I came to London Bridge. I did not know it at the time, but I have since learned that such was the fact. I stood for a little while wondering at the great crowds of busy people, and then I looked at the broad, dirty river. A large vessel was being unloaded of her cargo, and I went straight to the captain.

I asked him for a place among the crew. He looked at me suspiciously and then said, "Who was your last captain?"

I told him.

"Let's have a look at your papers," he said.

Although I had not looked at what Captain Luke Miller had given me, I handed the certificate to this skipper, who read it carefully.

"I'll engage you," he said, giving me back my certificate.

I looked at it afterwards and found the reason of my ready acceptance. Luke Miller had proved a friend indeed, and had spoken very highly of me.

In a few days we set sail, during which time I remained on board. I had no desire to see London; I wished to be away on the broad, deep sea.

I found that we were bound for a long voyage, and that the captain had got together a very motley crew. This did not trouble me; in fact, I was glad on both scores. The journey would take me away—I cared not where, the savagery of the crew accorded with my own wild feelings. They were a poor, degraded set, weak physically, and with the stamp of villainy upon them. Their conversation was degrading, their every thought was steeped with filth. I soon made myself a sort of unofficial captain among them, and by a strong will held them in subjection.

I dropped my pen at the last word, for I found myself beginning to describe in detail my seafaring experience, and I must not do that. It is not necessary, nor will it be interesting. One or two prominent facts I shall relate, the rest must be imagined.

I sailed with this captain and this crew nearly twelve months, then I left them, and for the next seven years I went from ship to ship and from crew to crew.

I need not have done so, but I determined not to set my foot on English ground. I wished to keep away from every association and thought of my past life. There is not much that I need describe. I had the usual experience of seafaring men. I experienced cold, hunger, and storm; but was indifferent to them. I do not think I had any interest in life. Often death stared me in the face, and I did not flinch. I should not have minded had the hand of death struck me down. Indeed, if I ever wished for anything it was that I should die, and still I remained strong, and hearty, and well.

But my love for Ruth died not, my hatred for Wilfred was as strong as it was when I had seen him with Ruth on the great headland watching the ship in which I sailed. Every fact of my early life, and of my relations with Ruth, was as real and vivid as when I had lived at home. The eight years I had been away had destroyed neither my memory, nor my feelings.

It was a wild life I lived. I had no friends, no ties, nothing, in fact, to refine or purify. The hatred in my heart kept me from being loved by my associates, and nothing kept me from sinking to the lowest depths of degradation but my love for Ruth. Often, when I was on the point of yielding to the low and the depraved, my love for her saved me. That was a pure force in my life, and it was my salvation.

Often did I think of the old home life. Often did I imagine what my mother and the rest would be doing. Sometimes I asked myself if ever they thought of me, or if they had any idea as to what had become of me. I tried to comfort myself by believing that they thought about me, or that they mourned me as dead. Then I hoped that they wished me alive and waited for my home-coming; but that hope was speedily dispelled by the remembrance of my last interview with Ruth and my mother.

Strange to say, I never once longed to return home; never once desired that my feet should stand on the spongy turf on the great headland; never wanted to speak to any one of the family. I felt that I was a banished man, homeless and friendless.

It may be that some will say the "Trewinion's curse" is merely an idle tale. I know not; this I know: that ever since I realised my hatred for Wilfred, on the morning of my departure, I lived a new life, a life that was all dark. The skies were black, the earth was black, and, worst of all, my heart was black. Never since then had I known real joy or gladness. A terrible despair gnawed at my heart, and this I carried everywhere. I had thought that by going away from the scenes of my childhood I should escape my sorrow. I was foolish to think so. I discovered that sorrow comes not so much from the outward; it comes from the heart, from the man himself. Wherever I went I could not shake off the shadow of self, and thus I was never free from sorrow and pain.

At the end of eight years there was a change in my life. I was now more than thirty. My softer feelings, all but one, had gone. I was as hard and callous as the cliffs which surround the Cornish coast. At this time we were sailing the Indian seas, and our vessel was laden with a valuable cargo. The men were lazily standing around on the deck, while the captain stood with his glass to his eye eagerly scanning a distant object.

We took no notice for a while, then it was whispered along the deck that the captain had seen a curious, suspicious-looking craft that was evidently bearing down upon us. This whisper was soon confirmed by the fact that our vessel's course was altered, and every stitch of canvas that she could carry was hoisted. In spite of this, however, we saw that the other boat was gaining rapidly upon us, and must in a very few hours overtake us.

I saw that a great fear had seized the crew, for there was but little doubt that our pursuer was a pirate. For myself I did not care. I was indifferent to life, and it mattered not what became of me. It was, however, in my nature to fight for the side on which I found myself, so like the rest I prepared for the struggle. When the two vessels were near each other our pursuer hoisted a black flag, then we were sure of what would follow.

Never was a crew braver than ours; every man fought for dear life, but we were no match for the assailants. They were double our number and armed to the teeth. At length we were overpowered and bound. The vessel was no longer in our possession, and the company to which she belonged would have to suffer a great loss. It was not that of which we were thinking, however. Every man was in terrible dread as to what his own future would be.

The captain of the pirate ship was one of the most striking men I ever saw. He was, perhaps, forty years of age, and was of Spanish extraction. His eyes and hair were as black as the raven's wing, and his skin was of a dark, olive colour. His crew were likewise Spaniards, plainly outlaws of the worst character. But I noticed that they all loved and obeyed their chief. I did not wonder at their obeying him, his personality was so strong, but I did wonder at their loving him. He seemed stern, harsh, and violent.

After we had all been bound, I saw the captain of the pirate ship consulting with his men; evidently they were deciding what to do with us, and there seemed some difference of opinion. Presently the captain inspected us one by one. We were by no means as fine a crew as our conquerors, not simply in numbers, but in kind. We were made up of different nationalities, and I was the only Englishman among the whole number. There were Greeks, Arabs, Turks, and one or two Austrians among us. The captain and the mates were all Greeks, and the ship belonged to a Greek company. Most of the men were small in bone, and while strong and wiry, were by no means striking in appearance.

After he had looked at us some time, there was another consultation, and at length they decided what to do, and we saw that preparations were being made. Eagerly I scanned the sea, but not a sail was in sight, no help was near, and careless as I had been about danger my heart felt heavy.

With blanched faces our men saw a plank which reached a few yards into the sea, placed on the vessel's deck, and with beating hearts we saw the officers of our ship bound.

I will not try and describe the scene. Hard and rough as I was, it was terrible to see men killed in cold blood. In vain the captain pleaded that he had a wife and little ones. No mercy was shown, and, although we dreaded the sight, our eyes were drawn, as if by a magnet, to see the men who had commanded us walking to their death. Even now their awful shrieks as they fell into the sea ring in my ears. And we were all bound, unable to help them, and waiting for a similar doom.

Then we saw what caused us common sailors hope. A good-sized boat was lowered, and provisions were placed in it; and one by one, the men were told to board it, This they gladly did, until I was left alone. I was preparing to follow, when the captain came up to me. He took a long look at me and then spoke to his men. I had picked up enough of Spanish during the years I had been away to understand an ordinary conversation, so I followed every word he said. His opinion was that I should make a splendid addition to their crew, and that it was a pity I should be lost to them.

"Your name?" he said to me abruptly.

"Richard Tretheway!"

"Ah, you are English?"

"Yes."

"How long since you were there?"

"Eight years."

"Why have you kept away from your home so long?"

"For private reasons."

"Ah!" he said eagerly, and he looked at me keenly. "One of us, eh? Stand up, Richard Tretheway."

I stood up. Tall as he was, I was taller, and broader too, for that part. The Trewinions have ever been a race of giants.

"What do you wish us to do with you?" he said at length.

"I'm not anxious."

"Then you don't mind walking the plank?"

"It won't matter much. I must die some time, and I've not much to live for."

The captain's eyes sparkled.

"What do you think of us?" he said at length.

I looked at our crew, who were evidently to be sent away to die. I thought of our officers who had only a few minutes before been condemned to death, and I said savagely:

"I think you are bloodthirsty villains—demons out of hell."

He laughed a mirthless, cruel laugh, while the crew demanded my death.

"What would you do if you had us in your power?"

"Hang you."

"Why?"

"To rid the earth of such a crew."

"Let him walk the plank," cried the men.

But the captain was more forbearing.

"Why, look you," he said, "you are just as bad as we. We sent your officers to Heaven or to the other place for our safety, while you would send us there for the safety of the world. Who has the most reason on his side?"

I was silent at this, and the captain went on: "You fought like a mad bull when we were boarding you. There are three men down under lying half dead because of you."

"Serve them right," I said, "I was defending the party attacked, and, while I don't care a fig for my own life, I would fight to defend those who do."

"Would you like to be one of us?" said the captain.

"What would you have me do?"

"Be a king on the high seas."

In spite of everything I felt a liking for the captain. There was a fascinating power about him, and I wanted to know about him. My eight years on the wave had hardened me, and my hatred had dulled my higher feelings.

"Look you," he went on, "we are not wholly bad. We have freed hundreds of slaves, and while we live by plunder we only take from the strong and the rich. Only last week we set at liberty two hundred slaves who would have been sold to a living death."

He went on speaking in this strain until I was less bitter towards him, but I said:

"All this does not prove that you are not cold-blooded villains. The officers of my ship are now dead through you. Your robbery is bad. Your murder is worse."

Again the men clamoured; but again the captain went on:

"What, are we worse than your English man-of-war vessels? You go to war with a country, you take her vessels, you kill her men, and your crews divide the booty. What, are we worse? Nay, we are better!"

I did not attempt to argue further with him, being maddened at the thought of my captain being killed, and of the wife and children who would have to bewail his loss. So instead of answering him I burst into a torrent of abuse.

"Tie his hands and blindfold him," cried the captain savagely.

In a few seconds this was done!

They placed me on the plank.

"Walk!" cried the captain.

In a second a vision of my old home flashed before me, but I walked straight on. I felt the warp of the plank, and knew I was nearing the end!

Step by step I walked, then my foot went into space, and in a minute more I fell bound into the deep sea,

hearing the savage yell of the pirate crew as I did so!

CHAPTER XV

THE VOICE OF THE SOUL

I had scarcely fallen into the water when I felt myself drawn up again. Unknown to me a rope had been fastened around me, and in another minute I stood upon the deck.

"Good!" cried the captain. "You stood the test well, and are just the sort of fellow we want." I looked at him in astonishment.

"Yes, you may look," he said, "but at heart you are one of us. I can see both discontent and defiance in your eyes, your face. You are out of love with the world, and when you know my history you'll sympathise with me, and won't take much persuading to become one of our crew."

I was thereupon taken to a cabin, where I was supplied with dry clothes, after which the captain came and spoke to me. Evidently, he was desirous of my becoming one of his allies, for without hesitation he told me the history of his life and his reasons for leading such a life.

I will not repeat his story at length. I do not wish to recall in detail the terrible things he related. True to his Spanish nature, he hated intensely and loved intensely. When quite a boy he had loved, and his love had been returned. There were months of happiness, then a rich nobleman appeared, and, fascinated by the beauty of his betrothed sought to win her from him. Defeated in this, he used force. Then followed a succession of plots and cunning intrigue, and, finally, through the avarice and greed of his love's father, through social influence, and through devilry of the worst kind, he, the pirate captain, was robbed of the one for whom he would have died, while she became disgraced and ruined. Then his passion burned to white heat, and revenge was his one object. He did not rest until he had killed his rival, after which he was obliged to fly. Others who had been engaged with him in the fray left with him, and formed themselves into a band, which gradually grew until they became what they were.

I shall never forget the terrible intensity with which he told his story; how at one time his eyeballs were red as fire, and at another his hands trembled with passion; and again, when he told of the beauty of his betrothed, how his voice became gentle, and his eye became moist. In spite of everything I could not help sympathising with him, and, afterwards, when he spoke of his buccaneering career and remembered what led him to it I did not wonder.

Need I tell how, little by little, I fell in with the captain's proposals and vowed allegiance to him? I can scarcely realise what happened now; it seems but as a half-forgotten dream; though real enough then. In those days my better nature was dead, or nearly so. I had allowed one passion to conquer me, and it had poisoned my whole being. I had learnt the meaning of the words of Scripture: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This is more than mere words; it is a principle of life. One passion corrupts the whole being, degrades the whole man, and thus I, because I entertained hate for my brother, lost my finer nature and joined a crew of pirates.

I will not portray the life we led; how by sheer brute force and will power I fought my way up until I was next in power to the captain himself. I could fill a volume in narrating the battles we fought and the hair-breadth escapes we had, but whoever reads these lines must imagine for themselves how we dreaded being taken, and how we vowed a terrible vow to die the most awful death rather than be conquered by any vessel, of whatever nationality. Truly it was a wild life, full of danger and peril; and yet I was happier in it than I had been for years. There was freedom on the wide seas, there were interest and excitement in our constant frays. The life suited my uncouth, rugged nature, and thus for two years I almost forgot my past and lived only in the excitement of the present.

I had been ten years away from home, ten years without ever catching sight of the British shores. Eight years I had served on trading vessels of various nationalities, and two years I had been a pirate, when another change came.

I was sitting one evening alone, watching the setting sun, when I began to think of my old life. I remembered all the legends of our house and name as vividly as if I had been hearing them during the last ten years. I thought of my father's warning that I should never leave the Trewinion estate for six months at a time; if I did the race for three generations would be cursed, while I should be haunted by dark spirits on my deathbed. I remembered how he told

me that if a Trewinion did what was unlawful he brought down the vengeance of Heaven. And I had been away ten years; I had become a pirate and was ever under a sentence of death. I thought again of old Deborah Teague's warning, of the cave full of evil women, and wondered. Then memories of Ruth came back to me, and I saw her at Trewinion Manor as Wilfred's wife. I wondered if I should ever see them all again—wondered, and then tried to forget. I became oblivious of the beauty of the setting sun and of my surroundings. The ship on which I sailed might be a ship of the fancy for all I knew, for all I knew the crew might be spirits or men. I was back again in my old home, and when at length I was aroused from my reverie I could not get rid of the impression that I was wanted, needed amongst the scenes of my childhood.

Presently the captain came near and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Tretheway, I am getting tired of this roving life," he said.

"So am I," was my reply.

"I have been thinking," he went on, "if there may not be happiness and peace for me even yet. I have been wondering if I may not return to the land of my birth, and maybe find someone whom I can love and who can love me."

I looked up into his face. There was a soft expression in his eyes, and his lip was tremulous.

"Perhaps the way may open up soon," I said.

"It shall," he replied, sternly, and walked away.

Soon after this I turned in. I did not expect to sleep, but no sooner had my head been placed on the pillow than I fell asleep and dreamed.

I saw the old home again as plainly as if I were there, and recognised several of the servants. Katherine and Elizabeth I could not see, but my mother was there, and Wilfred. In my dream I wandered from room to room. I felt sure that Ruth was in the house, but I could not find her. At length I entered the library. I thought I could see everything, and yet I was unseen. It appeared to me that while my spirit was there my body was elsewhere. All my thinking powers were supernaturally awake, but my body was asleep.

The room was in darkness, or nearly so, and I thought no one was there until I heard a sigh, and then I saw Ruth. She moved in her chair as if weary. A servant entered bearing a light, and then I saw her face. It was wonderfully changed. It was not that she looked older, but that she was so weary and wan. The old joyous light was gone from her eyes, and she was very thin and fragile.

"Ah!" I thought, "the marriage has not been happy. Perhaps Wilfred has not been kind to her; perhaps she has children, and they are sickly."

I looked at her hand, but could see no wedding ring. Then I heard a noise outside and a whispering, and I saw that her face had a look of terror upon it, as though she dreaded some great calamity.

The door opened, and in walked my mother and Wilfred.

I looked at both their faces and watched their expression. Hers looked somewhat haggard and hard; while his was cunning and yet fascinating.

They sat down beside her, and mother asked her why she looked so troubled and wan; but she was silent. Then Wilfred spoke to her.

"Ruth," he said, "the ten long years have come to an end. You know your promise. Think how patiently I have waited, and how I must have loved you to wait so long. Now, Ruth, let us wed at once, so that we may fulfil our fathers' wishes."

Then I looked at her again, and from her eyes tears fell, and on her face was such a look of misery that her

enemy, had she one, could not help pitying her.

"You are not Trewinion's heir," she murmured.

"How can you say that?" he replied. "Roger is dead, of that we are sure. You know that his body was found a few days after his departure, bruised and battered, 'tis true, but still my mother recognised him, and so did Mr. Inch, and Mr. Polperrow. All believed it was Roger but you, and so when I asked you to fulfil our fathers' wishes you would not. Then the months and years passed on, and Roger came not; so I pleaded with you again, and you said if Roger came not within ten years of his departure you would believe him dead and wed me. Those ten years are complete this very night, and I am come again to claim my promise."

Then I saw Ruth bury her face in her hands and sob bitterly.

Again the door opened, and I saw Mr. Inch enter with a roll of papers in his hand.

"Mr. Inch," cried Ruth, "will you not be my friend, will you not tell me that this need not be?"

Then I saw Mr. Inch and Wilfred change glances, and the former open his roll of papers.

"I am your friend," he said; "and I am also your father's old servant, and I would see his wishes carried out."

Then he began to read:—"'I desire my daughter Ruth to dwell in the house of my friend, Roger Trewinion, and that she shall be wedded to his heir, so that the two estates shall be united. And it is my will that she shall be wedded to him as soon as possible after she comes of age, and to remain at Trewinion Manor until within a month of the wedding day. Then she shall return to Morton Hall to prepare for the marriage ceremony.' This is an extract from the will," he went on, "and I should not be a friend to Miss Ruth if I failed to see this carried out. We have waited now many years beyond the time, and if this be not done soon the bodies of the dead fathers will rise from their graves to know why their wishes have not been fulfilled."

Then I heard Ruth speak again.

"Oh, Roger, Roger," she said, "why did you go away?"

"Why?" said my mother, "because you drove him. He was mad with love for you, and because you scorned him he ended his days. Be careful, or, perchance, you will drive my other son to his death as well."

At this she looked up to the faces of those in the room with an expression of dull despair.

"I will obey my father's will," she said huskily, "make what arrangements you choose."

Then I saw Wilfred move towards her, as if to embrace her; and I thought I went forward too, as if to hinder him, but Ruth looked up and gave a scream, half of joy, half of fear.

"Roger is here!" she cried.

I thought I saw consternation on every face, then all melted away, and I awoke.

I was lying in my cabin in a pirate vessel, was not at home at all; what I had seen was a mocking dream. And yet all was real. I could not believe that I had not been at home, though I knew it could not be. I was away on the broad seas, hundreds of miles from land. My imagination had been excited, and I had dreamed—that was all. I tried to sleep again, but could not, I was constantly thinking of what I had seen in my vision. Then I remembered the day of the month and the year. Yes, ten years ago that very night I had left home. I had not been thinking of that, but in spite of everything it had been revealed to me in my dream. Was it a dream, or was it real? Had my spirit travelled home, the spirit that knows no boundary or limits, had I seen a vision of what really existed?

Such a thing was without precedent in my experience, and yet why should it not be? Our bodies are not ourselves. We are distinct from the flesh, the bone, the sinew, why then might not the spirit have liberty to go home to its early associations?

I could remain in my cabin no longer. I rushed up to the deck, saw two sailors standing at the post of duty. I spoke a word to them, and then went towards the forecastle alone.

The night was as still as death, not a ripple could I see on the waters. I looked around me, and all was smooth, placid sea. I looked upwards and saw a cloudless sky, the full moon was almost as bright as the sun itself, so much so that the stars barely showed themselves. Now and then I could hear the gentle lapping of the water against the vessel's side, but beyond that—nothing.

I stood alone, minute after minute, thinking. I could not forget my dream, for such I had forced myself to believe it was, when——

What was it I heard?

The cry of a woman! A wail of distress!

My heart seemed ready to burst; but I listened.

Then I heard words. I heard my own name uttered by a woman' voice!

And I was alone on a vessel, with nothing but men on board, hundreds of miles from land, and no other vessel near.

"Roger! Roger! where are you?" said the voice.

I answered not, I could not, for my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, but eagerly I listened.

"Come to me, Roger! Come to me, or they will kill me!"

It was Ruth's voice, carried by the power of God to me. I was wanted home. I was sure of it, yet I could make no answer to what I had heard. For years I had forgotten God, but He had not forgotten me. He had revealed Himself in the voice I had heard. He had carried the message of Ruth's heart to me. I was sure now that there was a God in Heaven, and that He was telling me to frustrate evil.

Then something told me that all this was fancy, the result of an excited brain. I had been dreaming, and now I fancied I had heard what only existed in a mind half mad. I rushed to one of the sailors.

"Did you hear a woman's voice, just now?" I said.

"Woman's voice?" said the man, evidently surprised, "why no, sir!"

Had I been mistaken? Was it all delirium?

Again I strained my ears, and again I heard the voice.

"Come, Roger, I am all alone. Oh come to me!"

I answered, but whether articulately or no I cannot say; the words I said in my heart were,

"I am coming, Ruth, I am coming."

Then it seemed to me that the broad waste of waters reiterated my words, until away in the far distance, where the sea lost itself in the sky, I could hear them repeated "I am coming, Ruth, I am coming."

I know that this will seem strange to whoever may read it, but I only speak the truth. Perhaps my sons and my sons' sons may say it was simply the result of an overwrought mind; but I believe otherwise.

For hours I walked the deck, but I heard nothing more. I expected nothing. I weighed what I had seen in my dreams, and connected it with what I had heard in my waking moments. What did it mean? First my fears said it was but the deceitful words of the devil, who would drag me deeper into sin. But my heart cast that off. I felt that there

was no evil agency at work. Then I thought it was only a dream; but how could that be? Why should it come that night, exactly ten years from the time I had left home, and why should I hear the voice afterwards? And so I came to the conclusion that I had been allowed by God to know that I was needed at home.

The thought gave me new life, new energy. The passion of my hatred was stunned by some greater passion. If my dream were indeed true, if the voice were not a mockery, Ruth was not yet married, and she loved me. For hours I lived in blissful ecstasy, the smooth waters were written all over with messages of joy, the sky seemed full of the angels of God.

Then I became possessed of a feverish anxiety to return home. I must not lose a minute, but great difficulties lay in the way. I was thousands of miles from England, and there were no civilised ports we dared enter. Piracy on the high seas is a crime, and so there would be great difficulty in landing at any port from which I could sail for home. But the difficulty must be managed somehow. Ruth wanted me, and I would go home.

I must speak to the captain at once, he could sympathise with me; he would help me.

Then I saw a streak of gold shoot across the waters, and soon the sea was flooded with glory. The king of day rose, triumphant, grand. The night was over, and I felt the light of day in my heart.

I turned to the gangway and saw the captain wistfully watching the glowing sea.

Without hesitation I went to him, and began my story.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER LONG YEARS

"I wish to say a few words to you, captain."

"Say on, Tretheway."

"I have never told you the history of my life, now I wish to do so."

He nodded his head as if ready to listen. Accordingly I began, and related in some detail the story of my life. He listened attentively; evidently, he was interested. Step by step he followed my narrative, until I came to the previous evening. Then as I told him of the dream and the call I had heard, his face became pale as death, and he clenched his hand nervously.

"It is the voice of God, or of the mother of God. You must go, Tretheway," he said.

"Yes, I feel I must, and that soon," I replied. "But how?"

"Last night I told you that I was tired of this life," he said. "This morning I feel I must leave it. I have been a wild, lawless fellow, Tretheway; but I have been more sinned against than sinning, and I want to go home, where, by gifts to the Church, prayers, and penances I shall surely receive forgiveness."

For an hour we talked together.

It was all settled at length. The vessel should sail under his direction with all speed to the coast of France, where we were to make over the whole cargo and ship to the crew, and then leave it for ever. Accordingly we altered the course of the vessel, and after a few days' fast sailing reached the desired position. Then the captain called the crew together and appointed officers to command, ordered a boat and provisions to be lowered, and told them he meant to leave them for ever.

At first the men demurred, they could never agree under another captain they declared, but when Salambo (the captain) told them that the vessel and all its belongings were theirs, and that he should make no claim upon it, they became pacified.

We were now a few miles from land, at the nearest point between France and Spain, and we could see the lights of St. Sebastian in the distance. It wanted but an hour to daybreak, and we wished, if possible, to land without attracting any attention. To me this seemed almost impossible; but the captain was confident, so I trusted him.

We left the pirate vessel at length, I feeling a great load lifted off my mind. All the time I had been with the crew I had seemed to breathe foul atmosphere, and when I was once rid of them a new life opened before me. We had drifted, perhaps, a mile from the vessel when Salambo hoisted a small sail, and the wind being favourable we were wafted quickly towards land. This being done, he opened a box, which he had taken care should be lowered into the boat, and took from it two complete suits of gentlemen's attire.

"I always like to be ready for emergencies," he said, coolly. "If we go on shore dressed as we are we shall be objects of suspicion immediately."

He changed his clothes, which completely altered his appearance, after which he bade me follow his example.

"Now," he said, when I had finished, "you look more like a civilized man; but there is a pirate's fire in your eye even yet. I don't know that I should like having you for an enemy, for I think you would still make short work of the man you disliked."

Involuntarily, I thought of my brother Wilfred, and clenched my hands nervously. Salambo watched me with a curious look on his face, and then continued:

"But we must get rid of these things, or they will not fit in with my story when we land."

"Why, what are you going to say?"

"Say! Why, that I am a Spanish gentleman from Santiago, that you are an English friend of mine, and that we have for a freak come over here. I speak the Spanish language perfectly, of course, while you speak it with an English accent. Leave all to me. I'll manage it."

We landed at St. Sebastian in the early moming without difficulty. The change in Salambo's clothes had not only altered his appearance, but it had apparently made a different man of him. He was no longer the wild sea robber, but a refined, courteous gentleman. Instinctively the peasantry saluted him with respect, and we were soon installed in the best place of accommodation in the town.

I was anxious to get away, and feverishly asked him as to my best means of getting to England.

"I have been thinking whether we shall ever meet again," he said, without answering my question. "We have been together nearly two years, and we have come to regard each other as friends. Should we ever settle down, which I doubt in spite of our desires, I hope we shall be able to meet—meet in peace as brothers."

"Why not?" I said, boldly and confidently, "nothing would give me more joy than to welcome you in my old Cornish home."

"Ah, Señor Trewinion," he said, for I had told him my true name, "we have both been away ten years, and when we get to our respective birthplaces we shall find things much changed. And—well, my heart is sad, and I have many doubts."

"I feel that my Ruth is alive," I said, confidently, though my heart sank within me.

"She may be alive, and yet who knows if she loves you? Ah! Señor, do not build your hopes too high. A woman is for ever a woman, a puzzle to themselves, and an unfathomable mystery to men."

"Well, I'm going to see if all is well, anyhow," I said. "What are you going to do?"

"Trewinion, I feel I have acted wrongly," he said. "I came away leaving my Inez unprotected. The man who stole her from me is dead; but what has become of her I know not. Methinks I never loved her well, or I should not have left her because of fear of pursuit. She was guilty of nothing, and she loved me, and I have left her all these long years."

I was silent, for I felt it would be useless to speak.

"But I shall try to find her," he went on, "and—who knows?—it may be that she will forgive me and we shall be happy. I trust so, I pray it may be so."

"And if you do, how shall I know?" I said.

"I have been thinking of this ever since we decided to leave," he replied, "and this is the plan I have marked out. You had better go first to Bordeaux. From there you will be easily able to get a vessel for England. I, on the other hand, shall go across The Pyrenees to my home at Barcelona. If I am alive, this address will find me," and he put a piece of paper in my hand.

"Will you be safe there?" I asked.

"I think so. You know my people are wild and passionate. They easily forgive such sins as mine when they remember my provocation. Indeed, I have known the perpetrators of similar deeds lauded as heroes. My only thought is, if I shall find Inez—if I do not I shall not care to live; but if I do, the past will be forgotten, and I shall be happy."

The tears stood in his eyes as he spoke, and then I realised that all his sinful deeds had not destroyed his heart.

I left that same afternoon for Bordeaux, while Salambo made preparations to go to Barcelona, where he hoped to find his Inez.

In spite of all my eagerness and anxiety it was one month from the night on which I received my summons home to the time I landed at Falmouth. Without waiting an hour I made preparations to hurry on to Trewinion Manor. I shall never forget my feelings when, after ten years of absence, I first saw the Cornish cliffs. At one time it seemed as though the past ten years were only a dream, and that I had never left Cornwall at all, and again I felt as though my life prior to my leaving home was an unreality.

I found a coach at Falmouth that would take me within a few miles of my home, so I quickly took my place, and then fretted and fumed as we slowly rumbled on. It was towards afternoon when the coach arrived at the spot where I could be set down, and there with fast beating heart I watched the retreating conveyance, while I stood not far from my birthplace.

How quiet it was to be sure! There were no houses near, save one little wayside cottage and a small farmhouse among the fields. All the features were as familiar as if I had never left them. Hill and dale alike were known to me, I had roamed over them all long years since. All these rich green meadows were mine. I, who had been an alien and a wanderer on the face of the earth, was the lawful master of all I saw, and yet nothing was mine, for had I not renounced them long years ago, renounced them for the sake of the woman I loved?

I set out for the old homestead and walked rapidly. Eagerly I passed by every landmark which told me I was nearer home, and when at last only one little hillock stood between me and the sight of the place that was ever dear to me I almost lost control over my actions.

Up I rushed, heedless of everything, until nothing hid it from my gaze. I was like the old Israelites who travelled towards Jerusalem, and anxiously waited for the last hill to be reached in order that they might see the place they loved best in the world.

And this was the place I loved best. There it stood, grey, rugged and stern as in the olden days, its sturdy tower still braving the wind and weather. Long I stood and looked at it. My home! The place where my father had taught me to love him, the place where he had died, blessing me! Eagerly I watched for signs of life, but I could seen none; all was silent and lonely. I looked seaward and saw the smooth, glittering waters as they played around the base of the "Devil's Tooth;" I watched the yellow beach, which sloped up towards the witches' cave; I saw the rugged cliffs and the rocks over which I had helped Ruth years before, when Wilfred had left her alone. And, as I stood, memory after memory flashed through my mind, old sayings came back to me, and scenes which I had not thought about for years excited my mind, until my whole being was moved to the very centre, and in spite of all my hardships and buffetings I sobbed like a child.

I was surprised that no signs of life appeared. I looked at the fields and saw not a single soul. I looked at the little cove. A few boats were rocking idly on the waters, but no human being was near. Was the place deserted? Then I began to think. The day of the week was Monday, and it was the third Monday in September. Yes, that was the feast day of Trewinion parish. Yesterday the parish church would be crowded; to-day the parishioners would meet at the Churchtown, where there would be great festivities. It was a general holiday for the whole parish, and the people had congregated on the village green over by the church.

Still, I expected a few servants would be at home, and mother, and, perchance, Wilfred. He would never mix with the rowdy villagers, as he called them, and would probably be in the library following some favourite literary pursuit. What should I do? Go home and proclaim myself as Roger Trewinion, owner and master of everything? No, I did not like to do that—yet I must know how things stood. I must know about everything, where Ruth was, and what position she held!

And still I stood gazing on the old house on the cliff until I saw a man come out and slowly saunter down the drive.

It was Wilfred.

I started to go forward and speak to him, but stopped immediately after. Long years of foreign travel and

passing through dangerous scenes had made me careful. I knew not how I should be received, and I must not give Wilfred the whip hand of me. No, I would find out what had happened at home during the intervening years. I would go on to the village green, and there, perchance, I should see those who knew me in the past, and should give them a chance of recognising me.

Passing near the church, however, I could not resist the temptation to enter. To an ordinary sightseer, it would doubtless possess small attraction, but to me who accompanied my father there more than twenty years before, and where I had received what little religious instruction I possessed, it was of more than ordinary interest. Besides, my father was buried beneath the altar steps, and I longed to see the place again. Accordingly I entered the churchyard, and finding the church door open, entered the sacred building. Instinctively I found my way to the eastern end of the church, and there experienced one of the strangest sensations of my life. On the wall just above my father's tomb was a tablet erected to the memory of my father, giving not only the year of his birth, but the manner of his death. But this was not what affected me. I had expected to see some memorial of my father, but what startled me was the sight of another tablet immediately beneath it, on which were written these words:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

ROGER TREWINION

ELDEST SON OF THE ABOVE

WHO MET HIS DEATH BY DROWNING, AND WHOSE BODY WAS DISCOVERED ON THE SANDS.

"*Thy brother shall rise again!*"

THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY HIS LOVING MOTHER AND BROTHER.

Whether wonder or anger were strongest within me I know not, but both strove mightily. For first of all it is a strange experience for any man to see his own tombstone, and in spite of myself I could not help shivering. But strong as was this feeling, anger well-nigh overcame it. It seemed to me that both my mother and brother were so eager for me to be dead, that they were glad of any excuse for making me appear so, and I determined that I would understand what it all meant.

Accordingly I walked towards the village and soon found myself in the midst of about two hundred people, which was regarded as a great crowd in that neighbourhood. In one corner of the green was a wrestling ring, and in another was a group of young folk dancing to the music of two or three instruments, which had evidently been specially obtained for the occasion. Some very coarse sweetmeats were being sold at the sweet stalls and a general holiday air pervaded the scene. I saw as I came up that I was curiously regarded. My dress was of foreign make, and I was bronzed by years of exposure. My beard, too, was long, and my whole appearance was different from those whom the people would be likely to see. Moreover, it was very seldom a stranger visited that neighbourhood, and thus naturally I was regarded as a sort of curiosity.

I looked from face to face, but could see no one that I knew. During these years middle-aged men seemed to have grown old, and children to have sprung into men and women. I made my way towards the wrestling ring, where two youths struggled with each other, while the people looked at them with open mouths. Here I saw two or three farmers whom I knew, but I did not care to enter into conversation.

It was very strange. I was home, and yet no one knew me. The parish was called by my name, the church was

called Trewinion Church, and yet I, Roger, the oldest male member of the house, was a stranger, and looked at curiously by the people. Eleven years before I had been at the feast, and then everyone had paid respect to "Maaster Roger"; but now, the bronzed, bearded, foreign-looking man, was an alien.

At length one of the two men who had been wrestling was thrown, and then I heard a voice which I thought I knew, saying, "That's a feir vall." It was spoken by the man who had been selected as umpire, and when I caught sight of his face I recognised Bill Tregargus, the man who climbed the "Devil's Tooth" on the stormy night when Ruth was rescued. I had always remained friendly with Bill up to the time I left. I determined I would speak to him.

As this was the last "hitch" of the day, the ring was broken up, and I saw Bill going with the rest towards the village alehouse.

I went up to him and touched him upon the arm.

"You seem to be a man of some importance here," I said.

Bill looked very modest, but nodded.

"I want to have a little talk with some respectable man in the parish," I said: "one who knows the worth of land and one who knows the people."

"Wal, I think as 'ow I knaws everybody," said Bill; "I've bin ere oal my life, and don't owe nobody nothin'. I've got three booats, and a daicent little farm."

"I can quite fancy that," I said, "by the way people regard you. Is your farm your own land now, or do you rent it?"

"Nobody farms their own land in this ere parish," replied Bill, "it do oal belong to Squire Trewinion, but who be you and what do you want to knaw about the parish for?"

"I'm a stranger," I said, "and I used to know young Roger Trewinion; can you tell me anything about him?"

"Knaw young Maaster Roger, did 'ee?" cried Bill, "why he was a friend to me; ain't 'ee 'eard un spaik of Bill Tregargus?"

"Bill Tregargus?" I said; "many a time! why, did you not go out with him one night and rescue a young lady whose ship was wrecked upon a great rock?"

"Why, iss," said Bill excitedly, "ded a ever tell 'ee 'bout that?"

"How should I know it else?" I said; "but now I want to know about him and the family."

He took me away from the people by a pathway that led through a meadow.

"You was a friend of Maaster Roger's," said Bill, "zo I can tell 'ee. He's dead, and there's been foul play."

"Foul play? How?"

"It's my belief 'ow 'e've bin murdered, zur."

"Murdered! Why should you think that?"

"When did you knaw Maaster Roger, sur?"

"Oh, twelve years ago, just before he came of age, I think."

"Well, sur, ther've bin awful doin's up at th' House since then, things, sur, as I'm amooast 'fraid to tell 'ee, 'cause ____"

Then a frightened look came into Bill's eyes, and he looked round nervously.

CHAPTER XVII

REVENGE!

"You doan't belong to this neighbourhood, do 'ee?" said Bill, at length.

"I have not been in England for years," was my reply.

"Well, sur, I'll tell 'ee oal about it. Perhaps you knaw that the young lady who was saved was stayin' at the house?"

"Yes, I've heard of it. Miss Morton was her name, wasn't it?"

"Iss, that's it. Well, Maaster Roger and Maaster Wilfred was boath in love wi' her; and Maaster Wilfred he stood the best chance 'cause Mrs. Trewinion dedn't like Roger, and she amoast worshipped Wilfred. Of course, we doan't know all about it, but we've heerd as 'ow there was somethin' in Squire Morton's will which made Miss Ruth marry the Squire of Trewinion. Anyhow the ou'll squire got killed, and jist after that, altho' Maaster Roger wur maaster of everything, he runned away and left Wilfred to be the squire. Of course, everybody wondered at that, and grieved too, for Maaster Roger wur a fav'rit' with us all. Then we heerd from the sarvents that Mrs. Trewinion and Maaster Wilfred had worked it out. She had tould Miss Ruth that young Roger had been boasting that she would 'ave to marry him, although 'ee didn't care anything 'bout 'er, and we heerd as 'ow she tould Maaster Roger that Miss Ruth loved his brother, but couldn't marry him 'cause he was in the way, and that the thought of marryin' him, that is Maaster Roger, was drivin' her mad. We doan't knaw 'bout oal these things, sur, but anyhow, Maaster Roger was missin' dreckly after his father's funerl, and hev never bin seed alive since. Well, after he was gone, Miss Ruth nearly broke her heart. You never see such a pale thing as she went to."

"But I think I heard that she liked Wilfred best; at least, Roger told me so."

"Ded Maaster Roger tell 'ee that, sur? Well, everybody thought so. She would go out a walking with Wilfred, but 'ardly ever with Roger; but wimmin be curus critters, and it 'pears that all the time she wur a dyin' for 'im, only she wur too proud to let 'im know it."

In spite of myself my heart gave a great bound. I saw it now. I had been the tool of my mother and Wilfred. I had spent long years of grief because of them; my life was perhaps wrecked, but I kept calm before Bill, and bade him go on with his story.

"Well, sur," Bill continued, "while everyone was talkin' 'bout Maaster Roger, and was wonderin' what 'ad become ov him, the body of a man wur found at the bottom of the headland oal bruised and battered. Of course, everybody said 'twas Maaster Roger. In fact, Mrs. Trewinion, and the passon, and Maaster Inch swore to him, an' 'cordingly it was took into the house, and in a day or two was buried in the Trewinion vault, under the Communion in the church there," pointing to the grey tower, which we could just see between the trees.

"But were proper steps taken to indentify it?" I asked.

"Well, sur, you see, when a young fella's mawther sweers to 'im there can't be much more zed. Anyhow, everybody believed it but Miss Ruth. She stuck out that 'twadn' Maaster Roger, and wudd'n go to the funeral. Of course, there were a lot of talk, but we people only heerd jist bits of gossip like. For my oan paart, I 'greed with her. I knawed that Maaster Roger knawed too much 'bout the cliffs not to vall over um, while as fur killin' hisself, he wadn't the sort of chap to do that."

"Did you say so?"

"'Course I did, but people laughed at me, and zed I worshipped Maaster Roger, which wur purty nigh true. But what vollied wur strange. People zed as ow a strange figure wur seed in the churchyard, and that it went wailin' up an' down, and then went in through the church door, and then up to the Trewinion vault, where it vanished."

"But how could anyone see it go through the door, and then up to the vault?"

"Dunnaw, sir; but sperrits be curse things. Any-rate, thur wur lots of talk, fur 'twas seed not only in the church, and churchyard, but up at the house."

"Who was it supposed to be?"

"Well, some do say as 'twas this man that was buried that wasn't Maaster Roger. Some do say as 'twas th' oull squire hisself, who come back to tell un that they didn' bury his son; while others do say that the squire com back to tell Miss Ruth to marry Wilfred. Anyhow, things went on like that for a week till the passon was called up to the house, and was tould to lay the ghost."

"How do you know if that is true?"

"Well, sur, that es what people do say. They say that Mrs. Trewinion and the passon went first into the library and then to the church, and there the passon ded read the funeral service over again, and took care to turn the Prayer-book upside down so that the ghost couldn't rise any more."

"And was it seen afterwards?"

"No sur, it weren't; but some don't think 'twas the passon laid the ghost, but 'cause Debrah Teague had summin to do wi' it, and the passon had a row wi' her."

"Well, what happened afterwards?"

"Things went on quiet for a bit, sur; then we heerd as 'ow Maaster Wilfred, who took 'pon him the place ov squire, was plagin' Miss Ruth to marry un, and she wudden, then it laiked out that she said she wudden marry un 'till ten year after Maaster Roger 'ad gone."

"My dream, my dream!" I thought. Surely the hand of God was in this; but I did not know all then!

"Well, are the ten years up yet?" I said, as quietly as I could.

"'Twas up 'bout a month ago, sur; and then, sur we've heerd as 'ow a strange thing happened."

"What?"

"I have to go up to the house a goodish bit, sur. I take fish there, and I'm friendly weth the sarvents, too, and so I heer more'n anybody else."

"Well?"

"They do say as 'ow Mrs. Trewinion and Maaster Wilfred went botherin' 'er again to marry 'im, tellin' her that the ten years was up. They say, too, that Maaster Wilfred got Miss Ruth's old steward Inch into some scrapes, and can make un do moast what he've got a mind to. Anyhow they oal got at her, and got her to promise, when she screeches out 'Roger es ere; I see un!' There were a sarvent in the 'all that eerd her and she tould me!"

"Merciful God," I thought, my dream again.

"What happened afterwards?" I said, excitedly.

"Why, sur, Miss Ruth she fented away, and lyed like one dead for a long time, and when she came to she looked oal dazed."

"And then?"

"The next day she went to her own house."

"What for?"

"To prepare for the weddin'. She believed, so she tould her maid, that Roger must be dead, and so she went home tu fulfil her father's will, and prepare for the weddin'."

"What, did Wil—, that is, the other brother, persist in her marrying him, though he knew she didn't like him?"

"That he did, sur. You see, he've bin livin' wild, and people do zay that the whole estate es mortgaged up to its eyes, and he ded want to get Miss Ruth so as to kep Trewinion."

My heart grew hot with anger, but I only urged the man to go on with his story.

"Well, I do'ant knaw much after that 'ow things went on; but I've heerd that she pined and pined, and still Maaster Wilfred kept her to her promise. The banes (banns) was called in church, and the day fixed; but she got thinner and thinner, till 'bout a week ago she—she——"

"She what? Tell me?"

"She died. Goodness gracious, who be you?"

"Ruth dead! Died of a broken heart! Wilfred, your cup is full! You shall die for this!" I cried wildly. My brain was on fire, my heart was breaking. I had come home for this! The message was a mockery, nothing was before me but despair and—revenge.

"Look you!" cried Bill, "you be—iss, good Lord—you be Maaster Roger!"

"Yes, Roger," I said, "come home for this!"

"Oa, Maaster Roger, I wish I 'ad'n tould 'ee. I'd a bite my tongue out fust; but I ded'n knaw, and yet I thought you was somebody I'd seed before. Oa, Maaster Roger, do'ant 'ee give way so. Oa, to think you should 'ev bin dead, and come back livin', and that Bill Tregargus shud hev bin the fust to tell 'ee the bad news. Ef I'd only knaw'd I'd ev altered it; but I ded'n."

I conquered myself at last. I had been in a hard school during the last ten years, living almost without hope in life, and so I felt it less than if I buoyed myself up with joyful hopes. Still, it was terrible, terrible. If I had come home a month before it might have been different, but I was too late. Ah, I was cursed, cursed with the Trewinion's curse!

"Bill," I said, after many wild questions on my part, and excited exclamations on his, for he could not realise that I was alive, "tell me all about it, all about her death, and everything."

"Well, Maaster Roger," said Bill, "what I knaw is through Jane Treloar, who was Miss Ruth's maid, and she came back yesterday by the coach. She do live here, you do knaw, sur. Well, she tould me and the cook that she only made one request when she got very ill, and that was that Maaster Wilfred shouldn't see her. She got weaker, sur, very fast, and never spoke to anybody, and died without a murmur."

"When was she buried?"

"Two days agone, sur."

"Where?"

"In the church, sur, near her house, in the vault under the Communion, so Jane Treloar said."

For a long time Bill and I remained together, until I saw the evening shadows fall, then I made up my mind I would go to the Hall.

"Bill," I said, "did you know me at all while we were talking?"

"Not until you got wild, sur, then it struck me who you was. Nobody would recognise you at once, sur, you've

so altered."

"I don't want you to tell anyone you've seen me until you hear from me again, Bill."

"All right, sur, I won't do nothin' you do'ant want me to do; you be'ant goin' away, be 'ee, sur, y'll stay and be squire!"

"I don't know what I shall do yet," I said, "I'm almost mad; but you'll know by and by."

Then I went away towards the house. I knew Wilfred was home, and I determined that we should meet, and that he should give an account of his dealings with the woman for whom I had left my home.

Daylight was nearly gone when I reached the headland so I went to a spot near the house, where I could watch. It was a glorious September evening, and nature was on every hand beautiful. The flush of summer had gone; but the decay of winter had not set in, and the cornfields which had been shorn of their crops were by no means destitute of loveliness. The fruit trees were laden with their crimson and golden clusters, and the first tinge of brown that was just beginning to appear only added to the beauty of the foliage I felt this rather than saw it. The spell of the night exists more in my consciousness than in my memory. The music of the waters comes back to me rather as a half-forgotten dream than as anything I distinctly remember. My mind was then too busy with other things. I was thinking of Ruth, Ruth loving me through long years, and then dying of a broken heart. Through the wilful deception of my brother and mother I had been bereft of everything I loved. Through them I had sacrificed love, hope and comforts; through them my darling—who loved me all the time—was murdered. Oh! If I had but known. If I had but known we might have been happy—so happy! But no, they had remorselessly pursued their course, until they had killed my darling.

If I felt hatred on the morning I left home, I felt it ten times more now. Then my hatred was blind hatred without knowing the reason, now I knew that it only foreshadowed what should come after. It was a prophetic power in my soul, which told me vaguely perhaps, but truly, what my brother would do; now I realised it. Then, if I may so speak, it was abstract, now it was concrete. What I had only dimly feared was become a fact. Ruth, who had loved me, loved me without my knowledge, had been killed, murdered, as truly as if an assassin had used a knife or cudgel for his devilish work. Nay, it was worse, it was a slower and more cruel death. She had died because of the fear that her life was to be linked to a man she did not love.

I was very calm I remember, even though the fires of hell burnt in my heart. After all, the anger which is most dangerous is not that which raves and cries aloud, but that which makes no noise. Calm as I was, I felt my muscles grow hard, and I had a kind of savage joy within me as I pictured the death agony on his face and heard the death rattle in his throat. Nevertheless, I would not act foolishly, and I set myself to thinking how I could bring my desires to pass.

How should I enter the house? How should I be able to get Wilfred away alone?

Surely, the powers of darkness were on my side, for while I waited and watched I saw him come out of the tower entrance, and walk in the direction of the gate that led out to the headland where I was.

"Ah!" said I, "God is going to give you into my hands. He is a just God! He will not grant me love, but He will grant me hate, and He will find a means of vengeance."

He came out of the gate and wandered slowly on. I was too far away to see his face clearly in the evening light, but could see he moved with the old, careless swing. Ten years had scarcely altered his appearance. He was still the elegant, handsome Wilfred.

He walked towards the vicarage, and took the coast path. So much the better—it was the most lonely path in the countryside. It suited my purpose exactly. I followed silently. No sound of footsteps could be heard, for the grass was soft and spongy; the grass on which we had often played together as boys.

He wandered along aimlessly as though he had come out to be alone. He did not look back; but every now and then stopped and gazed at the "Devil's Tooth," the five great prongs of which could be clearly seen in the evening light.

Presently I thought we had gone far enough for my purpose, and so I went up to him.

"I desire to speak to you," I said.

He turned round sharply, and looked straight at me.

"Who are you?" he cried.

"Look and see," I said.

The moon had risen, the sky was clear, and my features could be plainly seen.

He looked at me steadily with his sharp brilliant eyes, and spoke again.

"I do not know you."

"I think you do," I said. "You and I have often played on yonder headland, often wrestled there; look again."

Then he gave a great start, and trembled.

"My God, it is Roger!" he cried.

"Ah, you remember at last, do you? Yes, it is Roger."

He seemed to detect something fearful in my voice, for he asked harshly:

"Where do you come from, and why are you here?"

"I am come from silence, and from mystery, as far as you are concerned," I replied, "and I am here in the name of righteousness and justice."

Something in my answer seemed to startle him.

"Alive?" he said, with a gasp.

"Yes, alive," I said. "When I left I told you to be careful, or Roger might come to life again. I told you to be kind to the one for whom I sacrificed my all, or the dead would arise. Let your own memory answer the question whether there is cause for me to come back."

He caught my meaning, and began to stammer.

"But, Roger, I—I have done nothing, and——"

"Stop," I cried, "I know all. You know that I was deceived into believing that Ruth loved you, and that I was the hindrance to her happiness. And I know now that it was a lie concocted by my mother and you. I know how you have imposed upon and deceived her. I know that you have tried to frighten her into marrying you, and I know, too, that by keeping her to a promise that her soul abhorred, you have murdered her! I know all this, and now I have come back for revenge."

"What will you do?"

"I do not know as yet. First of all confess to me this; did not you and my mother deceive both Ruth and me to get me away, so that you might have what was mine?"

"You said you knew, why do you ask?"

"I wish to hear what you say; answer me!"

"Mother put in into my mind, and I thought that—that—you didn't care, so I—I——" he stopped in confusion.

"Coward! to put the fault on your mother. Now another question. Did you villify me to Ruth, did you wear away her life by trying to get her to marry you, even when you knew she loved me?"

"Roger, I wanted her so, and you were gone, and we thought you dead, and our affairs got entangled so——"

"You killed her," I said savagely. "But for your accursed cunning and greed she would be alive now."

"I didn't know, Roger. I knew she didn't like me after—after—you went away, but I didn't think I should——"

"Did you hold her to her promise to the last?"

"Yes—that is, I thought she might get better again and so——"

"You drove her to her death, and now my turn has come."

"But you will not hurt me, Roger; you will not hurt your brother! What will you do?"

This touched me to the quick, and for a time I felt I could not hurt him.

Is there unspoken communication of thought? Is there a subtle interchange of mind which is instinctively felt? I think so, for no sooner did I feel that I could not harm Wilfred than his evident fear left him. He acted on the aggressive immediately, and spoke boldly.

"Yes, what will you do?" he said. "I refuse to know you. I refuse to recognise you. My brother Roger is dead, and was buried long years since. You are some impostor come here to claim what is not your own, under the paltry pretence of revenge."

My brother's villainy was now manifest, and my old hatred came surging back.

"Roger is not dead, and that you will soon find out," I said. "All your authority and power are gone, the son and heir has come; but Ruth's avenger is come too! 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' You shall suffer as she has suffered, you shall die as she died. I have a long score to pay. I have ten years of misery in the past to account for. I have a blackened future from which you are not free."

We were standing near the cliff as I said this, but I had my eye upon him, and it is well it was so, for he jumped at me savagely, and, had I not been prepared I should have fallen from the dizzy height to the ragged rocks below.

"Curse you," he cried; "but you have not a child to deal with, or the puny boy whose weakness you used to take advantage of. I am not going to let Trewinion go. I have not enjoyed it for ten years to lose it now. If Roger did not die ten years ago he shall die now."

With that he sought to drag me nearer the cliff, while I gripped him firmly. He did not fight defensively now. For him, everything depended on the struggle. To rob me of my love, and to rob me of my money, he had schemed to get me away, and now that I had come back he determined to hold by all he had stolen. Nor did I fight defensively. I felt I had lost Ruth, ay, I had lost my life itself through him, and I gripped him with a grip of iron. I thought of misery, and revenge; he of disgrace and the loss of what he held dear.

I soon found out that, as he had said, I had not a child or a puny boy to deal with. His muscles seemed of iron, and he coiled around me like a serpent. If I hated, he hated still more, and with the malignity of a demon he sought to master me. I was, however, the bigger and the stronger man, while the past ten years of my life had developed my physical strength greatly. Toil and exposure had given me power of endurance unknown to him, and soon I felt his grasp weaken. Little by little I mastered him, until with the grip of a giant I crushed him in my arms.

He looked up at me despairingly.

"You will not kill me, Roger?" he gasped.

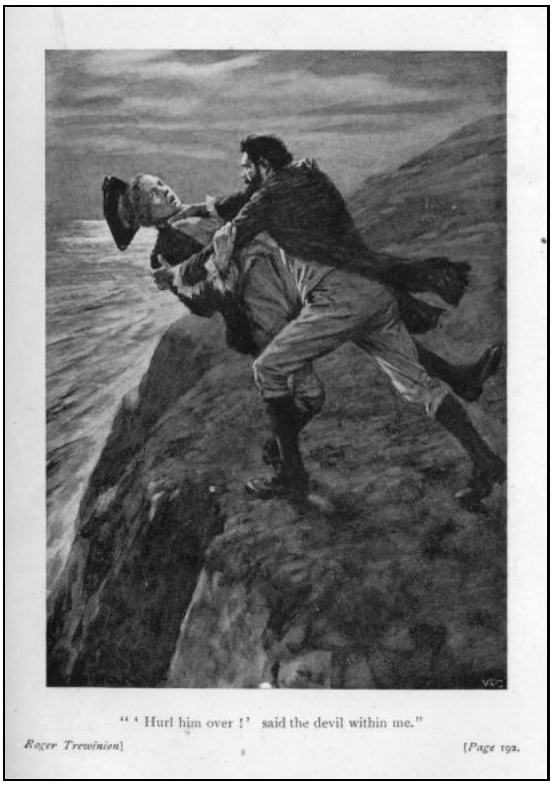
"Would you not have killed me if you could?" I said, for there was murder in my heart. "You have killed my

Ruth, and now——"

I did not finish the sentence, for, in spite of myself, I felt him dragging me nearer the edge of the cliff, nor was I able to stop him until we were within a foot or so from the awful precipice. Then I lifted him from the ground and held him. His strength seemed gone, while mine was unabated.

What should I do with him? He was the destroyer of my life's happiness, he had killed my love, he had filled me with despair; but he was my brother. Should I destroy the venomous life that wrought only evil? or——

"Hurl him over!" said the devil within me, "he is your blight, your curse! Show him no mercy, let him be dashed to pieces, and thus you will avenge your misery, and avenge Ruth's death!"



" 'Hurl him over!' said the devil within me."

Roger Trewinion] [*Page 192.*

"'Hurl him over!' said the devil within me."

"No, no, he's your brother, forgive him!" said another voice.

All this passed through my mind in the moment, that I felt him struggle again, then, with an awful shriek, he fell from me.

I stood alone on that dizzy height—alone! I was the conqueror. I was avenged. Ruth's murderer was dead.

I looked around me, and I remembered where I stood.

Long years before I had gone to the vicarage, and on this spot I had seen a shadowy, shapeless figure in white!

On the night my father had died I was standing on this place when I saw between the prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" the omen of darkness.

Now, standing there alone, I realised what had been done on this place of evil memory.

I stood on the edge of the cliff and looked down I could see nothing, but below me I heard the waves break upon the rocks, and they seemed to laugh with fiendish glee, and mock me in my black despair.

CHAPTER XVIII

HELL!

I cried to God, "Oh, I am so weary."

God said, "You have not seen half hell."

I said, "I cannot see more, I am afraid. In my own narrow little path I dare not walk, because I think that one has dug a pit for me; and if I put my hand to take a fruit I draw it back again, because I think it has been kissed. If I look out across the plains the mounds are covered houses; and when I pass among the stones I hear them crying. The time of the dance is beaten in with sobs, and the wind is alive. Oh, I cannot bear hell."—OLIVE SCHREINER.

For some time I was conscious of nothing, but by degrees I realised what I had done. An awful crime rested upon my soul, a crime only the shadow of which had rested upon me before.

The hatred of years had found expression at last. The serpent that had lain in my heart, writhing and turning, and growing for years, had at last lifted its head, the latent devil had asserted itself, and I was a murderer.

A murderer!

The ghastly, terrible truth pressed itself upon me more and more. I was alone on the weather-beaten cliff, around me all was still; beneath me was the ever sobbing sea telling me of what I had done.

A murderer?

Oh! The terror of that thought. Even now, after long years, I trembled at what I then realised. I, Roger Trewinion, trained by a godly father, surrounded during my early life with every good influence, was a murderer. In my madness I had arisen like Cain and taken away my brother's life; in my hatred I had wrought desolation.

Alone! alone; with only the mocking sea to speak to me from without; while within I felt the fires of hell.

I saw, as in a lightning flash, the events of the past twenty years. I saw myself and Wilfred playing, rollicking on the cliffs, I saw us rushing home from school, and nutting among the woods. Again we were together in the waving cornfields, or swimming in the shining seas. We were reared in the same home, and had through our childhood slept in the same room. We both bore the same name, and the same blood ran in our veins.

And I remembered more than that. Thousands of incidents concerning the happy days of childhood flashed through my memory. Then we had few cares and many joys. I saw us sitting in the old family pew in church, and the lines of the old hymns we had sung came back to me, hymns about the love of God and the Cross of Christ.

And I had murdered him! Never, in my wildest moments, did I dream that my hatred of Wilfred would ever take outward form in actual killing. I did not mean to kill him when we stood together, and held him in my arms. But he fell from me—fell from that awful height, down, down, among the cruel jagged rocks, and would be dashed to pieces, while the mocking waves would sweep over him.

Now, where was the purpose of my hate, my revenge? They had not won back the lost years of my life, they had not given Ruth back to me. My evil deed had only made the evil more evil; had poisoned my own soul with a poison more deadly. What right had I to visit vengeance upon my brother's wrong-doing? Was I perfect? Had not hatred mastered my life for years? Had I not allowed my lower nature to conquer my higher? Yet I had dared to avenge my wrong. I had dared to take the work of God into my own hands. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," said the Lord.

Bitterly now did I feel the truth of this, for God was taking His vengeance on me! I—I had broken His laws, I had yielded to the devil, I had hurled the crown of my manhood from me.

And I still stood alone, with bare head and burning eyes, while in my heart burned a scorching, tormenting, yet

non-consuming fire.

Then a more terrible thought came. What I had done could never be undone. Never! Age upon age might pass away, but that fact, ghastly and black, would remain! It might be possible, I did not think He ever would, but it might be possible that in the far-off future God would forgive me. But then, even God could not undo the fact that I had killed my brother.

But I had not intended to throw him over the cliff. His death was due to an accident; I had not altogether yielded to the strivings of the devil. True, true, and yet murder was in my heart, for did I not hate him and had I not hated him for years.

"Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." So said the disciple of the Son of God, and I had hated him, and now neither God nor eternity could undo what I had done.

I thought of my mother. Soon she would learn that Wilfred was dead, and then her sky would be black, and it would be I, Roger, who had blackened it. The deed which would bring her grey hair with sorrow to the grave, had been done by me.

"Ah," I thought, "if I could only cease to be, cease to think," but that, I knew, could never be. Had I hurled myself from that dizzy height, so that my battered body might be beside my brother's, the awful thing I had done would remain, and I should remain. I might kill the body, but I could not kill the soul; and self-murder would make my crime greater, not less.

Oh, how desolate the world was. The summer sky had no beauty; the fields, which I could still dimly see, were shorn of every loveliness.

Then I looked seaward, and the only visible object was the ghastly rock which was ever a nightmare to my soul.

What was it I saw there? It was a light, like the light I had seen on the night of my father's death, a weird, ghostly light, moving between the great grey prongs.

I remembered then of what that light was supposed to be the omen, and my senses seemed to leave me. Everywhere, everywhere, I could hear taunting voices crying "Murderer! Murderer!" The winds as they swept by said it, the sea playing with the pebbles on the beach said it, and thousands of voices all around me uttered the same dread word. I put my fingers in my ears to keep away the hideous sound; but not so could I silence conscience. The word came not from without, but from within. It was my guilty soul that repeated it, until I longed to have the power to flee from the self which I loathed.

Not only did my ears hear the word; my eyes saw it. Everywhere it was written. On the broad sky I could see it written from end to end. I turned to the sea, and on its silvery waters the same awful word was traced, in letters that were black as the blackest night. I turned my eyes landward, and it was there, and when I closed them I saw it still.

Yet I was not sorry for what I had done! I suffered the pains of hell, but I was not sorry, nor did I hate my brother the less. Could I have shed one bitter tear or realised one true feeling of repentance I should have suffered less; but I could not, and this made my hell harder to bear, it made my hell a hell of the blackest kind. Dives did not feel the burning so keenly as I, for in his pain he could still love his brothers and long for their salvation; but I was in worse straits than he. I hated all, because of my hatred of one.

And all the time I felt this, I stood on the verge of the cliffs hundreds of feet above the ever-sounding sea. My loneliness was terrible! I longed to hear some voice, to feel the grasp of some friendly hand, yet I dreaded the approach of any one.

My eyes and ears were, after a while, delivered from the terrible word, and looking again I saw the mysterious light moving among the prongs of the "Devil's Tooth," then I saw a form approaching me, a grey, bent, ungainly form.

Trembling I waited as it approached, until it stood close by my side.

"What do 'ee zee?" said a croaking voice.

I did not reply. I felt that I could not.

"Es it the light you be lookin' at? That's Betsey Fraddam's lantern, that es, and that do'ant tell'ee of any good luck."

I knew now that it was old Deborah Teague who spoke. The years had not softened her harsh features, nor did she seem older than when I had left Trewinion, save that she stooped more. My blood curdled when I knew it was she. When I stood on this place last she had come to me and had repeated some lines of the Trewinion's curse; she had told me of the darkness that was approaching, and now on the night that I had come back, the night on which I had been engaged in a deed of darkest dark on this same dread spot, she had come to me again.

Yet did I not reply.

"Who be you?" she continued.

I remained silent, looking again towards the "Devil's Tooth," where angry flames leaped up.

The old dame laughed when she saw my evident fear, and continued in her hoarse, croaking voice:

"That's ou'll Betsey cookin' her broth, that es; and it was made where you do'ant want to go. I shudn't stay there much longer or ou'll Betsey 'll bring'ee some, and nobody ever refuses her."

With that she hobbled away, leaving me again alone. But I did not stay long. A maddening desire came into my heart to get away, and with eager feet I rushed landward.

Where should I go? Somewhere, anywhere away from Trewinion, away from this dark deed of my life. For a mile I rushed blindly on. Then I stopped. I must make up my mind what was to be my destination.

Morton Hall! I had not been thinking of it, but that was the place that impressed itself on my thought and memory. I would go there. For what purpose I did not know, but in my misery that one place seemed to invite me. I could do no good, for Ruth was dead, and laid in the cold tomb. Dead, dead, and she had died loving me! The thought softened my hell, and yet it made it harder to bear, for while it put tenderness into my heart, it made me feel more than ever unworthy even to mention her name.

I stopped in my journey again, for I had started in the direction of Ruth's home, and, looking upward, I saw a star that was nearer to me than any other, and it seemed to look lovingly upon me; then my heart was subdued, and I sobbed like a child.

Again a mad frenzy possessed me, and I rushed away in the direction of Ruth's home as though the powers of darkness pursued me.

CHAPTER XIX

TOWARDS RUTH'S GRAVE

> But if you look into it, the balance is perfectly adjusted, even here. God has made His world much better than you and I could make it. Everything reaps its own harvest; every act has its own reward. And before you covet the enjoyment which another possesses, you must first calculate the cost at which it was procured.—FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON.

Morton Hall was about thirty-five miles from Trewinion, in a south-easterly direction. It lay on the opposite side of the county, and the country between was hilly, but fertile. I did not know the road well, but I knew it well enough for my purpose. By travelling at the rate of four miles an hour I could reach the Hall in nine hours. I could give no reason for going thither except that I was drawn by an irresistible power, a power by means of which I hoped to quench the awful fires in my soul.

The night was clear, and the stars shone brightly overhead. These I had studied through the long years of my seafaring life and so knew their location well. Fixing on one which lay in the direction in which I desired to go, I followed it as my guide.

To analyse the feelings that possessed me that night would be impossible. One hears sometimes of a murderer "escaping." That may never be. The officers of the law may not suspect him, the hangman's rope may never come near him, but no murderer escapes. He never escapes the terrible undefinable fear which constantly dogs him, the ghastly gnawing which eats at his heart.

At every step I saw my brother Wilfred. I constantly heard his voice, and every footfall spoke of what I had done. The hedges were full of grinning devils, which mocked me, while the stars that spangled the sky spelt the word that was dragging me deeper into hell.

Time after time I tried to comfort myself with the thought that I did not intentionally kill him, that it was an accident which caused him to fall upon those cruel rocks hundreds of feet below, but I found no comfort in the thought. I could not get rid of the fact that I hated my brother, and that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. Even had I not done the deed, even had Wilfred been alive, I was still a murderer at heart. I had hated him alive, I hated him still, and even now I had no sorrow at what I had done.

On, on I went, wildly yet wearily; tired I was, but I never rested, nor abated my speed, and ever as I went ghastly thoughts tormented me. Now I pictured him lying bruised and bleeding among the rocks, alive yet helpless; and as he lay I saw the tide rising all around him, and laughing at his cries for help. Then I saw him a ghastly, misshapen mass, crushed and battered beyond all recognition, with eyes red as blood and bursting from their sockets. Again I saw him, and the scene was more terrible still. He was entering a great gulf which I knew to be the mouth of hell, and as he went I saw that he was attended by ghastly, pallid creatures, who were cold and clammy in spite of the fires that burned in their breasts.

"Who sent you here?" they cried, in harshly grating voices.

"My brother Roger!" he answered.

"Breathe the prayer dearest to your heart!" they grinned.

"May he wallow in a hell a thousand times blacker and more painful than this," he said.

"Your prayer shall be granted," they screamed.

Then I lost him amidst gloomy caverns, that burned with fires giving no light, and I realised that I was still tramping madly on towards the south-east, but I knew his prayer was answered—my hell was blacker than his.

Oh! the length of that awful night. Every second seemed a minute, every minute seemed a day, nay, a night, a

thousand dark nights! I was in eternal punishment! I had died into eternal death!

How many hours I had tramped on I knew not, when I saw in the eastern sky a red tinge which made the whole horizon seem a wall of heated steel, set in diamonds. North and south the sky appeared more blue because of the brighter colour in the east, and it looked more distant, more unfathomable. Of what moment was this earth of ours in this vast space which separated it from the nearest star? It was but as the fine dust of the balance, and yet I, the loathsome thing that walked the earth, could feel—could suffer—I was something more than the earth!

Slowly the day dawned, brighter and brighter became the flush in the east, one by one the stars sank out of sight, and suddenly I saw a golden streak of light flash across the hills, then another, and still others, until a disc of the king of day became visible. A minute more and it was day! Day! and yet I was still in night, the gloomy fires of my heart were still unquenched, the darkness of my soul was still unillumined.

I now began to think about what my mother would say, what she would feel. When Wilfred did not come home a search would naturally be made, and in time he would be found. And what then? I dared not think of that!

Presently I saw a labourer with hedging tools on his shoulder. I would speak to him, it would relieve my feelings to hear the sound of a human voice.

Closer and closer we came until we were within a few yards of each other. I could not speak to him. I was ashamed. I was a guilty wretch, and could not look an honest man in the face, so I passed by without looking at him or speaking a word. Another mile I tramped, then I saw a farmer coming in his cart; evidently he was going to some distant market. I would speak to him. I had now got over the shock which the sight of the other man had given me.

"Could you tell me," I said as he came near, "how far Morton Hall is from here?"

"Morton Hall," he replied, "I' sh' think I cud. I ain't a lived in this ere neberhood for vive and vorty year wiout knawin' that?"

I waited for him to go on, but he did not speak another word, and then, looking at me strangely, prepared to drive on.

"*Will* you tell me, then?" I said.

"You asked me if I *cud*," he said, "not ef I *wud*. Es, I'll tell 'ee, tes nine mile'n haaf," and the farmer drove on.

Nine miles and a half! I had walked twenty-five miles then, and more. I was very tired, and I knew not why I should go there; but, impelled by a strong power, I hurried on.

By this time the day was quite warm, and soon I began to feel the perspiration ooze from my forehead, so seeing a stream of clear water running by the roadside I stooped down and washed myself. It helped and refreshed me much, and enabled me to think more calmly. Then I remembered that many a long hour had passed since I had tasted food. I felt hungry and faint, but I walked on, for there seemed small hope of obtaining food for some time. Happening, however, to pass near a farmhouse I heard some one singing. It was a milkmaid sitting among her cows, singing as she worked, and her song was the expression of a light heart free from guilt. Jumping over a stile I made my way towards her, and seeing me coming she stood up and curtsied.

"Can you sell me some milk, Mary?" I said.

"No sur, I can't sell any, and my name edn't Mary but Em'ly, but I can give 'ee zum."

With that she ran to the house, and soon appeared with a quart jug, which she dipped into the bucket and filled, then handed it to me. I drank it greedily, and I did not take my lips from the jug until I had nearly emptied it. To me it was both meat and drink, and it gave me new life. I offered the girl money, but she refused it indignantly.

"As thoa," she said, "anybody cud taake money vur a drap a milk."

I had no difficulty in accomplishing the remaining distance after this, and soon after I came to the park gates of

Morton Hall. Then the real difficulty of my position was revealed to me. What should I do now I had travelled these thirty-five long miles? what object could I have in visiting the house? what should I say if any one asked me my business?

Although I could not settle this in my mind, I opened the gate and strode up the long drive. It was a fine house, and had been kept in good repair. Great trees bordered the way, but hid not the colossal pile that was plainly to be seen at the end of the widening avenue.

Without waiting a second, or being able to give a reason for what I was doing, I went to the main entrance and rang the heavy bell.

An old, grey-headed servant appeared, looking exceedingly solemn, and asked my business.

"I want to see the owner of this place," I said, speaking on the impulse of the moment.

"There is no owner," was the reply.

"How is that?" I asked, abruptly.

He looked at me keenly for a minute, as though to sum up my social position and qualities before answering. Evidently he was an old and trusted servant.

"It is not a matter for strangers," he said, "but if you have any business I will convey it to the person who is at present in charge."

"My business is of importance," I said, speaking from secret impulse, and not knowing what I should have to say next. "I can only entrust it to the owner."

"But the owner is dead," he replied, "and who the new owner will be is not known yet. There are many claiming to be next-of-kin, and Mr. Inch and the lawyers are busy at work."

"Mr. Inch is the steward, I suppose?"

The man nodded, but did not speak.

"The late owner was a lady," I said, speaking more calmly than I had thought myself capable. "I used to know her. Miss Ruth Morton was her name. I have a message of great importance; but you say she's dead."

Again the servant looked at me keenly.

"I know Mr. Inch too," I went on, "and I must see him. Perhaps he was not as faithful to his mistress as he should have been; he must answer me that."

This I said as one in a dream, for I had not thought of it before. It caused a light to flash from the man's eyes, however, and he spoke more freely.

"I will tell Mr. Inch you are here," he said, "and I will answer any question I can. I have been a servant in this house all my life, and I loved Miss Ruth like as if she were my own child."

"Did she ever live here after her father's death?" I asked.

"Not until she came of age; then she used to come here through the summer months, but returned to Trewinion, I believe, because of her father's wish."

"What did your mistress die of?" I asked, abruptly.

The old man was silent.

"Can you not tell me?" I urged.

"I cannot," he said, stiffly. "I dare say you could know by applying to the doctor."

I could not help noticing a strange look in his eyes as he spoke, but I said quietly.

"Then you will, perhaps, tell Mr. Inch I wish to see him."

"Yes sir. What name?"

"No name."

"No name? He will not see you."

"Tell him a friend of the Trewinion family wishes to see him."

He gave me a searching look and then went away, and in a minute more came back and showed me into a room, telling me that Mr. Inch would see me immediately.

I had not to wait long. Soon I heard a slow, measured step along the hall; then the handle of the door turned, and Mr. Inch and I were gazing steadily into each other's face.

CHAPTER XX

"VISIT HER TOMB"

O, how blest are ye whose toils are ended!
Who through death have to God ascended!
Ye have risen
From the cares which keep us still in prison.
—LONGFELLOW.

"I am at your service for a few minutes," he said stiffly; "but our interview must be short, for I have much to do."

"And I have much to speak to you about," I said, still confused as to the issues of our interview, but dimly feeling that he was in some way responsible for Ruth's death.

"I am ignorant as to what it can be," he said, looking at me curiously, "for certainly I do not remember ever seeing you before."

"You do not remember," I said, "but you have nevertheless seen me."

"Yes?" he said, still questioningly.

"Yes!" I replied. "I am at present travelling like that ancient god of night whom men call Nemesis. I was for years lost to the earth, now I am come back, if not to restore the righteous to their true position, at any rate to punish betrayers and oppressors, and you are both a betrayer and an oppressor."

"Do you know to whom you are speaking?"

"Yes."

"Then I will call a servant and see that you are shown off the premises."

"No, you will not."

He looked at me strangely. "A friend of the Trewinions," he murmured, "surely he must be mad."

"Yes, I am nearly mad," I replied, "but I am sane enough to know that Ruth Morton was not fairly treated, and although there is nothing but darkness for me in the world, and although every deed I do leads me further into the thick darkness, it shall be my work to unmask villainy."

"Unmask villainy?" he said, as if in surprise, and then made a movement towards the door.

"No," I said. "Think one minute before you call a servant. Let your mind go back a few years. Remember a dark, wild night many years ago, when you and your mistress were shipwrecked upon a rock on the northern coast. Think of who saved you."

"It cannot be!" he said, staring amazedly at me.

"You did not like him, did you?" I said. "You cared more for the younger brother, and played on the elder's trusting nature and helped to get him away. You swore that a body which was washed on the shore was his, although in your heart you knew it was not. You persecuted your mistress by constantly trying to make her marry the man she did not love, and on the tenth anniversary of his departure you appeared armed with her father's will and drove her to the promise which killed her."

He grew as pale as a sheet.

"You are Roger!" he gasped.

"I am Roger," I said.

"But what will you do?" he said, his face ashy pale.

"Do?" I cried. "I will destroy Ruth's destroyers, and then destroy myself. I will sift your dealings to the bottom and then——"

"Stop, Roger," he cried; "stop! I have sinned, but I have also been sinned against. I loved Ruth, ay, loved her like my own child; but Wilfred got me into his power, and then, like the devil he was, he made me do his will. Oh, I have suffered as well as you, more than you! He found out the one weak place in my life, as he found out everything else, and then he held me fast. Oh, I have waded through the blackest slime for him. But for his power over me I should have scorned to do what I did; I would have died before I would have taken advantage of her loyalty to her father's slightest wish; and now——"

"Now, because you had no mercy on her or on me, I shall have no mercy on you," I said. "Everything shall be made known, all your deeds shall be dragged into the light of day."

"No, no, Roger; she would not have done that. She forgave me everything, for at the last I confessed to her all that had been done. She suffered terribly at your departure, and more, I believe at the thought of wedding Wilfred, and yet she forgave me. Oh, I wish you had seen her at the last, so calm, so patient, and so beautiful. She loved you to the last, Roger, and one thought that cheered her in the hour of death was that she would soon see you again."

"Did she think I was dead?"

"She believed you died soon after you left home," he replied. But I did not believe him.

"And she loved me; did she confess it?"

"Not to me, but to the maid who was with her; her whole life and being seemed to be gone over to you; and thus it was that the thought of obeying her father's will killed her."

And I had been away from her all these years; I had been robbed of what was most dear. I was glad I had been revenged on Wilfred now, and the gladness was fiendish. This man, too, should reap as he had sown; as he had helped to make me suffer I would make him suffer. I knew that sooner or later my struggle with Wilfred would be made known, and that I should be suspected of his death; but I did not care, madness was in my heart again.

I burst forth with expressions of hatred and determinations of revenge, the old man still cowering meanwhile before me. Then he spoke.

"Roger, who are you that you should seek revenge? Is your life wholly pure and free from stain? Think, you, if you ruin my life by bringing me to disgrace, or if you destroy your brother Wilfred, that Ruth could welcome you to Heaven, if God should even allow you to go there? She died with the look of a glorified angel on her face; I wish you had seen her, you would not talk of revenge."

All the time I had been living as in a dream. A vague feeling of darkness and revenge possessed me. I felt drawn on by unknown influences—whither, I could not say.

These words of the old steward and friend to the Morton family aroused me. Who was I, indeed, that I should seek revenge? I was the murderer of my brother, I had yielded to as low impulses as they, and yet I talked of myself as Nemesis. How, indeed, should I dare to meet Ruth again with such a sin on my soul?

Without a word I left the house, Mr. Inch staring amazedly after me. I strode down the drive towards the park gates, and had gone, perhaps, half the distance, when I was chained to the earth by the memory of the old man's words:—"She died with the look of a glorified angel on her face; I wish you had seen her."

No sooner had these sounded in my memory than another voice seemed to speak.

"Go and see her," it said. "Visit her tomb."

At first I was almost stunned by the thought. To see my Ruth again would indeed be ecstasy, but even as I so thought I heard another voice speaking in cruel mockery. That which I should see would not be Ruth, she would be far away, where I might never go. Yet the idea still haunted me. I would go. It might ease the terrible madness of my soul if I could see even in death the lips that had confessed their love for me.

How should I accomplish my object? I remembered Bill Tregargus's words, "She was buried in the vault under the Communion." To the church then I would go, and I would see her face again, although it was the face of the dead.

My first work was to go to the village sexton and get the church keys, so when I arrived at the village I enquired for his house. I discovered that he was a bachelor, and lived alone on the outskirts of the village. I quickly made my way thither, and, on arriving, found the door locked. Evidently he was out. On making further enquiries, I found that he had that day gone to the nearest market town, and probably would not be home until dark. It was now about noon, and, faint and hungry, I found my way to the village alehouse, where, after having had something to eat, I tried to think.

Since yesterday, I had lived a lifetime. Yesterday at that time I had not arrived home, I had not seen Bill Tregargus, I knew nothing of what had occurred. Now I was branded with the brand of a murderer. The wild deeds I had done when I sailed the seas as a pirate scarcely weighed on my conscience at all; but this deed, though I did not repent, and though my hatred remained unabated, made life unendurable.

Hour after hour I sat in the parlour of the village inn, thinking, wondering and fearing. Would the landlord be so obliging, I wondered, if he knew what I had done; would he not loathe my presence, and deliver me to the justice of man?

Yet who are the murderers of the world? Are they to be found among those only who do actual murder, or are murderers a class of people who are capable of murder? Is not every man who is not filled with Divine love capable of murder, and are not many free from the stain of murderous deeds merely because they have never been provoked, tempted? Who shall judge as to who are real murderers? None but God alone!

Night drew on at length, and full of the thought which became dearer each hour, I found again my way to the sexton's house. This time he was at home. He stared at me in astonishment when I told him what I wanted.

"Want to go in th' oul church after dark!" he said. "You must be mazed."

"Why?"

"Why! You cudden git more'n two people in the parish to do it. Me and the passen be the only two that be'ant afraid."

"But I don't want you to go with me," I said. "I simply want you to lend me the keys, and I'll bring them back to you again."

"And you we'ant want me to go in the churchyard nuther?"

"No."

"I must'n do it," he said. "The passen 'ud give me the sack straight off ef 'ee was to knaw it."

"No one need know," I said.

For a long time he held out. I could see that he would willingly have let me enter the church at daylight, and would himself have gone with me; but at night he was afraid to do so, and was also afraid to let me have the keys.

"I ca'ant 'ford to lose my place," he said; "not that the burryin' es wuth much. I ain't a berried a livin' soul for a long time, so times es bad in that way; but I git a goodish bit for clainin' the church."

"How much do you get a year?"

"I make so much as ten shillen a week oal the year round," he said. "I do'ant knaw how much that es a year."

I took fifteen guineas from my pocket, and put them before him.

"There is more money than you would get in a whole year," I said. "If I don't bring back the keys in safety, you'll have that money to take you where you like to go, and if I bring back the keys you shall have five of them for your trouble in lending them to me."

"You'm sure you won't do no harm."

"Perfectly."

"Then take 'em," and going to a little recess in the room he took the keys from a nail and gave them to me.

"I expect you to be waiting for me here when I come back," I said.

"Oa, never fear, I sha'ant steer out of the 'ouse," was his reply.

I took a lantern, in which the old man had placed a candle, and prepared to start.

"You'm sure you beant goin' to do nothin' wrong," he said.

"Perfectly," I replied. "You will not regret it for an instant."

He looked at me again, then, as if they were an enormous fortune, at the guineas that lay on the table, and seemed reconciled.

"Tha's the kay of the church," he said, pointing to the biggest in the bunch, "the churchyard gates is allays left unlocked. And I'll be waitin for 'ee when you come back. How long shall 'ee be?"

"I don't know; perhaps an hour," and with a beating heart I went away towards the church. It was a great, grey, gloomy pile, the four steeples on the square tower at the western end reminding me of the prongs of the "Devil's Tooth."

I entered the churchyard gates. All was silent as death. I had expected it to be so; no one ever dared to enter there after dark, unless it was a cluster of worshippers gathered together in church time. Even this did not happen often, for rarely was an evening service held there. Like many other country churches in Cornwall, the time of worship was morning and afternoon. Had I got into the church in the afternoon I should not have been free from observation, for the country folk are courageous in the daytime, and often prowl around the churchyard; but at night I knew if I entered I should be left unmolested.

Slowly I wended my way down the churchyard path. I began to realise now what I was going to do, and for the first time the thought struck terror. Yet did I not hesitate in my purpose. I remembered every superstitious association of my early childhood. Stories of the troubled dead roaming around their graves came back to my mind. I saw the grey tombstones grim and lonely, as if inviting those in whose memory they were erected to bear them company through the silent night.

A lonely churchyard is an awful place, and this one seemed more awful than others to me, who was about to visit the dead!

How plainly my footsteps sounded as I went down the gravelled footpath. I felt as though I were disturbing the dead in their graves.

What was that dark grey form moving among the tombstones? Was it the village witch gathering the nettles that grew on the suicide's grave, in order to work her mystic spells and secret charms? Was that sound I heard her dark laughter, as she plucked the mugwort of evil repute?

No; it was only my excited imagination conjuring up dread objects and noises.

I stood at the door of the belfry tower. It was grey, and iron studded. Should I enter this way? No; my passage among the bell-ropes might set the bells jangling in ghastly discord, and quickly I hurried to the church porch.

I stood and listened; but could hear no sound. The stone seats around the porch looked very cold, and the parish notices that were pasted around its walls looked to me like the letters of departed spirits.

I lit the candle in my lantern, and fumbled among the keys, my hands trembling as I did so. I found the right key at length, and placed it in the door. I tried to turn it, but it would not move. I pushed it a little farther and tried again. The lock was very stiff, it was but seldom moved—once or twice a week at most, and even more seldom oiled. In spite of the rust, it at length yielded to the strength of my hand, the bolt shot back with a rough grating sound, the great door swung back on its rusty hinges, and I entered the silent church.

I withdrew the keys and shut the door. It closed with a bang that sounded terrible in the great building, but I did not heed. I went eastward towards the Communion, under which was the tomb of the Mortons.

CHAPTER XXI

THE VAULT UNDER THE COMMUNION

There are certain themes of which the interest is all-absorbing, but which are too entirely horrible for the purposes of legitimate fiction. These the mere romancist must eschew, if he do not wish to offend or disgust. They are with propriety handled only when the severity and majesty of truth sanctify and maintain them. We thrill, for example, with the most intense of "pleasurable pain" over the accounts of the Passage of the Beresina, of the Earthquake at Lisbon, of the Plague of London, of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, or of the 123 prisoners in the Black Hole at Calcutta. But in these accounts it is the fact—it is the reality—it is the history which excites. As inventions we should regard them with simple abhorrence.—EDGAR A. POE'S *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*.

I stood alone in the old church. How silent everything was! The great grey granite pillars, surmounted by circling arches, appeared in ghostly array before me; the high-backed pews seemed to be peopled by dim, shadowy figures, who had come back to watch me as I looked on the face of my loved. Everyone of the tablets on the wall was to me a face of warning. My footfall echoed and re-echoed, until I fancied the silent church peopled by innumerable visitants from the spirit land.

A dim light which caused weird shadows to fall across the old building, came in through the small windows, while the light of my lantern made other shadows more dark, more forbidding.

I wended my way towards the Communion, for even there Bill Tregargus's words came back to me. "She was buried in the vault under the Communion," and there I should see all that remained of the only woman I had ever loved. I passed by the reading desk, then came to the pulpit, but I did not pause either to examine the curious carvings on its front or the ancient worm-eaten wood of which it was made.

At length I stood by the Communion, and a great fear laid hold of me. Tremblingly I looked around the church. All was silent save the night winds as they moaned in the tower at the western end. Then an owl hooted dismally, and soon after I heard three distinct raps at a window, as though a large bird had tried to break the glass and thus enter the church.

What did it mean? Deborah Teague had spoken of three raps as a sign of death. To whom could it apply? To me? I was not anxious to live, and yet I shuddered.

"Perhaps I shall die," I thought, "and see my darling again; but how can I meet her? Have I not a murderer's hand and a murderer's heart?"

I turned the light of my lantern upon the altar table. and on it I saw a cloth, on which was embroidered a cross, the symbol of the Saviour's death, and this made me remember how He had spoken to a dying thief. For a moment the thought gave me comfort, but in the next I recollected that the thief was penitent, and that I had no proof he was, as I was, a murderer. And I was not penitent; I still hated Wilfred. He had robbed me of earthly happiness here and Heaven hereafter. I hated him; and I was a murderer. After that the cross brought me no comfort.

Before going to the sexton's I had provided myself with a short pointed piece of iron. It was the only instrument I could procure with which to open the vault without attracting suspicion.

I quickly found the burial place of the Mortons. A tablet was on the wall, on which were written these words:—

"Under this stone, and waiting for a joyful resurrection, lie buried all the mortal remains of

JOHN MORTON,

OF MORTON HALL,

Who lived and died in the fear of the Lord.
He was hated by none, and beloved by all."

Then followed a eulogy of his life and works, his gifts to the church, his kindness to the poor, together with many other things.

I looked beneath the tablet on the floor of the Communion, and saw that a large slab had been lately moved. No doubt, then, that Ruth had been buried in the family vault.

With trembling hands I placed my piece of iron beneath the joints of the floor, and with but little difficulty lifted it up; then I slipped my hands beneath the stone and lifted it still higher.

Air, stifling, unwholesome, came from underneath, and again I felt like leaving my purpose unfulfilled; but a stronger impulse urged me to proceed, and I moved the stone still farther. A minute later I had turned it back, and Ruth's grave was opened.

For a minute my heart ceased to beat; then it seemed as though my bosom were not large enough to contain it. Not that I feared the dead, at any rate not Ruth. Had I not been guilty of that awful deed the night before I do not think I should have been so moved; but with murder on my heart, to look on the face of my beloved was terrible. And yet I felt I could never rest until I had seen her.

I stared into the vault.

At one end were steps by which I could descend. At the other was a dark object.

My blood seemed to freeze in my veins, yet I went down the steps, slowly and steadily, until I stood in the abode of the dead.

Never shall I forget how I felt. Never while consciousness remains will the awful sensations that possessed me be altogether taken away.

Around me was the dust of departed generations of the Morton family, while close to me was the face of one whom ten years before I had seen a bright and beautiful maiden. Ruth, whom I had ever loved, and who had died of love for me, was there!

Vague thoughts of how she would look floated in my brain, and in my delirium I fancied that her spirit had come back to watch me as I took one last look at her dead face.

The coffin was placed in a recess in the tomb. I knew it was hers, for it was new, and had been only lately placed there.

I thought I had heard a sound above. I listened for a second, but could hear nothing save the wild beatings of my almost breaking heart. Then I placed my hand on the coffin.

It was fastened with what looked like golden clasps, large and strong, which pressed closely on the grey oak of which the coffin was made. Mechanically I moved the clasps, and then lifted my lantern nearer.

Again I listened, but all was silent. If the spirits of the dead were there they made no sound.

I lifted the coffin lid.

For a second I held it in my hand, then I turned it back.

Even then I could not bear to look in and see my darling's dead face, and stood trying to gather together sufficient courage.

I let the light fall upon the head of the coffin and looked.

Yes, it was Ruth, little altered from when I had seen her last, except that she looked thin and pale, oh! so pale.

She was not like anyone dead; in spite of her stony stillness, there was the shadow of colour upon her thin cheeks.

I looked at her like one entranced, then glanced fearfully around the vault, which was only faintly lit by the flickering candle burning in my lantern.

A longing came over me to get away, but I felt I dare not, I must remain longer with Ruth. I felt that she was glad I was there, and would not have me leave her so soon.

Yet she lay like a beautiful piece of marble. Her hands were folded on her breast, and she looked peaceful, so peaceful.

How I loved her, and how I longed for one word, one movement whereby I could know she loved me!

I do not know how long I stayed there. I lost all thought of time as I stood gazing at the face of my darling. Everything like fear passed, for in spirit I was with her.

I kissed her cold lips, as if to bid her good-bye, then seeing the candle in my lantern had burnt low, I began to think in a dazed kind of way that I must go. But it was so hard, so terrible! If I could only have some memento to take, something I might aways keep until I, too, should be laid under the cold sod!

What was that?

Flashing from her finger that lay on her heart I saw a ring. Dare I take it?

At first I shuddered at the thought. Robbing the dead seemed sacrilege, yet it did not seem like robbery. And was I not sure that she would wish me to take it? It might comfort me during the little time I had to live, for I could carry it everywhere with me.

I took her hand in mine.

Slowly I began to remove the ornament. It was a thick gold circle, and three large diamonds had been inlaid and flashed brightly.

It was rather hard to pass over the joint, but I was determined to possess it. Then I stopped as if stunned, and trembled like an aspen leaf.

I felt the hand move!

Yet I did not drop it. I could not, it seemed welded to mine.

Was it the judgment of God for seeking to rob the dead? I looked at her face, as if expecting a curse, and my heart seemed to come into my mouth.

Her eyelids began to quiver, her mouth to twitch,[*] and her whole body to give signs of life.

To say that I was awed would be but to hint at my feelings. At first I thought it was her ghost rising to denounce me, but soon I saw it was physical life, and then I thought God was working a miracle.

Almost unconsciously I went on rubbing her hands, while evidence of returning life became plainer and plainer.

Then I trembled lest the shock of seeing me there in that silent vault should kill her, or do her serious injury,

and yet I longed to hear her speak, I longed for expressions of her love.

Still more plainly did life appear, until I saw her open her eyes. They were dull and had a blank expression, but by and by they became brighter. She looked around the vault as if in wonder, then her eyes rested on the lantern, and again she turned them towards me. For a minute she gazed, then with a cry she sat upright.

* Although the reader may regard the foregoing as wild and impossible, I can vouch for the truth of a story identical in many points with that told by Roger Trewinion. The wife of a nobleman of the West of England, whose name is well-known in Cornwall, was supposed to be dead, and was buried in the family vault situated in the old parish church. A valuable ring which was on her finger when she died was allowed to remain, and it was known by the servants and villagers that this ornament was in the tomb with her. The sexton determined to get it, and accordingly at midnight made his way to the church. In seeking to remove the ring he caused the latent life to assert itself, and seeing the lady move he ran out of the church, leaving the lantern behind him. She became conscious, took the sexton's lantern, and found her way back to the hall. She lived long enough to become the mother of a son, who afterwards became the heir of his father's estates.—*Note by the* EDITOR.

CHAPTER XXII

THE VOICE OF THE DEAD

Oh, one more kiss from your lily-white lips,
One kiss is all I crave;
Oh, one more kiss from your lily-white lips
And return back to your grave.
—*Old Cornish Song*.

Long years have passed since the events I am now narrating, yet my flesh creeps as I write. Imagine, if you can, the circumstances that surrounded me; think of the position in which I was placed. I had learnt amidst anguish and despair that the woman I loved, and who I thought had called me home, was dead, and I had determined to visit her grave and to see her dead face. Then when I had found my way to her tomb, and uncovered her resting-place, I had seen the one whom I had thought dead move, and give other signs of life. When she sat up in her coffin my blood froze in my veins.

Was it my Ruth who lived? Was her death only fancied after all? Now I saw a purpose in all my blind wanderings! Now I understood the cry which I had heard sweeping across the weary waste of waters, "Come home and save me, Roger!" Now I saw meaning in my mad impulse to come to Morton Hall, even when the fires of hell burnt in my soul! Now I knew why I had heard the strange words, "Visit her tomb!"

Merciful Heaven, from what had I saved her? Suppose she had regained consciousness while within the narrow confines of that narrow coffin! No air, no room, no light! The horror of the thought is enough to drive one mad; what then must the reality be?

This flashed through my mind in a moment, but I did not stay to think of it. How could I? The dread "might be" had not become a reality, and my Ruth—the Ruth that I had been mourning as dead, Ruth for whom my heart had been weeping tears of blood—was alive; she was sitting up in her coffin, she uttered a cry. Ruth was not lost for ever.

And still I did not know what to do; still I could not act or speak! My mind was confused, my head was dizzy; the very vault in which I stood seemed to whirl around.

For a second we gazed into each other eyes; she with a fearful, yet curious, wondering look, I with a look of madness, at once of joy, of fear, of dread!

Then she spoke, slowly, tremblingly, but still clearly, and I remembered the voice.

"What is this? Where am I? Is this Heaven?"

"All is well!" I whispered.

"It must be," she said, in a dazed kind of way. "I am so rested, so free from pain, and then your voice is so familiar. Where am I, and who are you?"

"Think," I said; "but do not be afraid; remember where you were last, and then know that all is well."

"All is well," she repeated slowly, as if trying to impress the thought on her half-awakened mind, "I am so glad."

"You are safe here," I went on, "no one shall harm you in any way. Do not be afraid whatever you may see."

She looked around the vault, then a look of horror came into her eyes as she saw where she sat.

"I am in a coffin!" she gasped. "Am I dead?"

"No," I said, "it is all a mistake; but all is well. Think, try and remember the past."

I saw that she made a mental effort, and then slowly light came into her eyes.

"I was very ill," she said, "and so weak and weary. I wanted to die because—because—what was it? Oh, I remember now—because I was to wed—Wilfred, and I did not love him, and my wedding robe was made, and the wedding day was fixed, and I gave up hope that he was ever coming home."

My heart began to beat with joy. Life and light came back to my heart. That "he" meant me—Roger.

"And then?" I said, almost unconsciously.

"And then I thought I was going to die, and I was glad, for I felt I could not endure being wedded to another."

She spoke as if dreaming, or as if she unknowingly expressed the thoughts that dimly passed through her mind.

"Well," I said, "you wanted to die; you grew weaker and weaker, until your friends thought you were dead, and you were brought here."

"Here! Here!" and she looked eagerly around. "Where am I? The light is so dim that I cannot see."

The candle was now very low in the socket of the lantern, and I scarcely knew what to do, but I tried to assure her that all was well.

"You need not be afraid," I said, "It was all a mistake. You were thought to be dead, and you were brought to the grave of your family."

"The grave, the family vault," she said, "in the church, under the Communion! But how came you here, and who are you?"

The time had come for me to tell her, and I trembled lest I should say a mistaken word, or arouse a harmful feeling. I felt that the slightest thing might unhinge her delicately-balanced mind, and I scarcely knew what to say.

"Can't you think who I am?" I said at length. "You called me home when I was away on the distant seas. I heard you say 'Roger, come home,' and I came, for I knew that you needed me."

"Roger! Roger!" she said; "what! my Roger?"

The words came out apparently unthinkingly. She did not know what she was saying.

"Yes, Roger," I said, "your Roger. I came back to find you, I heard you were dead, and it drove me nearly mad. I felt I must come and see your dead face, so I came here and found you, not dead, but only asleep, and I—I awoke you."

I watched her face as I spoke, still holding her hand in mine. Slowly she realised things as they were; slowly one fact after another passed through her mind, until she saw clearly.

At first there was an expression of horror on her face, then she looked eagerly at me and I saw tenderness—love in her eyes.

I dropped her hand and opened my arms. She did not hesitate a moment, but struggled to come to me, so I took her in my arms and pressed her to my heart!

Oh, how she clung to me, while I held her fast, my heart trembling for joy as I heard her whisper, "My Roger come home to me!" Then I realised how cold she was, and saw too, that she was wrapped only in a shroud.

"You are cold, Ruth," I said.

"So cold, Roger; but I do not mind now!"

The light in the lantern became dimmer, and I had no more candle. I thought of the candles in the church, and wondered how I could get at them.

"Ruth," I said, "could you bear to stay here while I go into the church for another light? Our candle is nearly out."

"No, Roger," she said, clinging to me, "I could not bear for you to leave me," and she clung to me more closely.

I lifted her out of her narrow bed and prepared to carry her. I had not much difficulty in this. She was very light, very thin.

Taking the lantern in my hand I bore her away from her dread resting-place. With what a sense of relief I lifted my darling through the narrow entrance! With what gladness I realised that she was not dead! When I went down my heart was cold and heavy as lead; now it was warm; it beat with new life. I went down in what seemed to be the darkness of death; I came out into the light of Heaven!

I seized a candle which stood on the Communion table and lit it from the one in my lantern which had almost gone out.

Then I tried to take off my coat to wrap her in, but this she would not allow me to do. She was still unselfish Ruth, suffering herself rather than let another suffer. So I took the cloth that lay on the table, the doth which was marked with a cross. I wrapped her in that, and surely I committed no sacrilege in doing so. It was large and warm, and entirely covered her, all but her white feet that peeped out from under her shroud.

I took another look at her, a longing, loving look. Her old beauty was coming back; she was losing all fear as she realised my presence.

"Ruth," I said, "it is your Roger who asks you, may I kiss you?"

A faint smile came into her face, something like the smile I had seen in the olden days.

"Dare you kiss me in my shroud, Roger?" she said.

Even then she could not repress the quaint, quiet humour I had loved years before.

Dare I! I covered her face with kisses, and as I did so I forgot everything, forgot all I had done, forgot where I was. I only knew that I held Ruth in my arms, and that her lips met mine!

Then, in spite of her protests, I took off my coat and wrapped it around her little feet.

"What are you going to do with me, Roger?" she said.

"I am going to carry you home," I said.

"Home! Home where?"

"Home to Morton Hall."

"Can you?" she said. "It is a long way.

"Can I?" I said with a laugh.

She looked at me as though she gloried in my strength, and was glad she could trust herself to me.

I carried her down the silent church; but no longer did my lantern throw weird shadows on the floor; no longer were the pews filled with forbidding spectres. For now the church was full of bright rejoicing angels.

When I came to the church door, and saw the heavy clanging keys, I wondered what I was to do with them.

The old sexton would lose his senses if he were to see the precious burden I bore. I locked the great door and took her out into the silent night.

I no longer needed the lantern; the light of the moon was clear and bright. It was indeed a relief. To me, after being immured in the church, the clear, pure air was welcome beyond expression. And if it was welcome to me, it was a thousand times more so to Ruth. I do not think she fully realised from what she had escaped until now. She gave a cry of gladness, such as a bird gives when freed from a cage. Behind her were suspense, cruelty, doubt, despair, death and the grave; before her—ah, what?

I bore her on, feeling no weariness, no pain, no sorrow. The gravestones told me no sad stories, the shadows of the trees were only beautiful pictures painted on the green grass.

When I came to the churchyard gate I saw the old sexton.

"What have 'ee got there?" he gasped.

" 'What have 'ee got there?' he gasped."
Roger Trewinion) [*Page 227.*

"'What have 'ee got there?' he gasped."

"Take your keys and lantern," I said.

He took them both mechanically, and then looked at Ruth awestruck.

"Where did 'ee take et from?" he said, in a hoarse whisper.

"Her grave," I said.

He took a look at Ruth's face, which was clearly to be seen in the moonlight, and immediately recognised it.

"Great Loard!" he cried, "'tes our dead lady's face, 'tes our dead lady, and the devil have got her."

With a cry which showed how real were both his fear and belief, he rushed away from us.

I did not stop him: I did not think it necessary; soon the truth must come out, and then all his fears would be allayed.

Never shall I forget the journey from the village church to the home of the Mortons. My joy was so great that I did not feel Ruth's weight at all, and when she asked me anxiously, yet lovingly, if she wearied me, I only pressed her more closely to my heart, while she only nestled more contentedly. And small wonder? Had I not brought her back from the dead, and had she not found herself free from the terrible chain that bound her, free to speak to the man she loved?

Nearer and nearer we came to her home, the home which all thought she had left for ever. We came within a few yards of the front entrance, when a great dog came bounding up with a furious growl. I wondered how I should get rid of him; but Ruth spoke only one word, and he did not know how to express his joy; he walked by our side and licked the shroud she wore.

I seized the great bell, the bell I had rung that morning. Soon its clanging voice echoed through the hall, and soon after we heard the sound of voices, and footsteps echoed along the corridors.

A minute later we heard the bolts shoot back from the door at which we stood.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHADOW OF EVIL'S REWARD

> Avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.…
>
> Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.
>
> —*The Epistle to the Romans.*

When the door opened, I saw two men-servants, each bearing a candle, each looking as frightened as men could well look. One I recognised as the man to whom I had spoken in the morning, the other was evidently an under-servant.

Each stared at me and at the burden I bore in amazement. The one recognised me, the other evidently wondered who I was.

"May I ask what you want," said the old servant, "and why you arouse the house at this time of the night?"

"Show me a room where your mistress can rest," I said.

"My mistress?" said the man. "Great God, who are you?"

As he said this he took a look at Ruth's face, and then with a shriek of fear he rushed away from us.

"Come back," I said, "there is nothing of which you need be afraid."

"Afraid!" he gasped, "that is the dead body of my mistress."

"Your mistress is not dead," I said; "she is alive; show me a room where I may rest her, and she will speak to you."

Tremblingly he led the way to a room, where I laid her down, and then, at my command, he went away to get food and drink for her.

Soon after the other servants appeared. The shriek of horror given by the man when he caught sight of Ruth's face had aroused the household. Never shall I forget the expression on their faces as they looked at me as I sat by the side of the precious burden I had borne. Evidently the younger of the two servants had told them what I had said, for they were afraid to speak, and kept gazing at us fearfully, yet wonderingly.

Ruth was now becoming exhausted. After the scene in the church the journey home had been too much for her. Perhaps, also, the awfulness of her position together with dread memories, were too great for her to bear, so I bade the servants hurry in getting refreshments for her.

After taking some food she was, however, strong enough to sit up and to talk.

I will not describe what followed, nor how the servants crowded around her, weeping and trembling. Some I found were on the point of leaving, having received their discharge, while others wondered what their future would be. There had been every probability that the household would be broken up, and those who had grown grey-headed in the service of the family grieved much at the thought of leaving. And now, when all hope was gone, their mistress had come back, and their joy and their astonishment knew no bounds.

Presently we heard a tottering step outside the door, and in another second Mr. Inch appeared on the scene. For a minute I thought he would have fainted; but by a great effort he mastered himself, and came slowly to the place where Ruth sat, looking at her steadily in the face for, I should think, a minute. Then he heaved a great sigh, and said; "Great God, Thy ways are wonderful!"

I had been holding Ruth's hand all the while, and I felt her shudder as Mr. Inch approached. I was sure that she felt that he had not acted as her friend, and now, in spite of herself, she feared him, and unconsciously she came nearer to me.

I think the old man saw this, for a strange look passed over his face, and he did not take her hand, as I was sure he had intended to do. He turned towards me, however, and said:

"Tell me, Roger Trewinion—tell us all, how this great miracle has been accomplished."

A look of intelligence passed over the servants' faces as my name was mentioned. Apparently, it was well known to them, and all listened eagerly for my answer.

Then I told how, in leaving the house that morning, I had heard the voice telling me to visit her tomb, and had determined to do so. I will not describe the excitement and wonder of those who heard my experiences. It would take a pen far more able than mine to convey to the minds of my readers the terrible interest that was taken.

Perhaps I ought not to have told the story before the servants; but we were too excited to know what was right and seemly. Indeed, so overwrought were we that Ruth had not been divested of her strange garments, and soon after I had finished my narrative I felt how thoughtless I had been, and how neglectful of her comforts.

When Ruth was taken to her room, however, with two of the maids to attend her, the excitement began to pass away, and the servants, with the exception of the old man whom I had seen at my first visit, returned to their rooms.

For a few minutes Mr. Inch and I were left alone; he still trembled with fear and wonder, perhaps also because of a troubled conscience, I with a strange joy surging in my heart, thinking only of the blissful present.

"This will cause much talk, and necessitate much investigation," said the old steward.

"I suppose so," said I, absently.

"A great lawsuit would have come on," he said. "Two parties were claiming the property. Lawyers are preparing the case on either side, and the matter has already become public."

"That will all come to an end now," I said.

"I suppose so; but it will be the wonder of the countryside. I wonder what Wilfred will say?"

I had forgotten Wilfred. The feelings aroused by seeing Ruth alive had for the time quieted all my bitter memories of my struggle with Wilfred, together with its awful ending.

"I wonder what Wilfred will say!"

The words struck terror into my soul. Wilfred, unless now discovered, was lying bruised, battered, dead, on the great rocks beneath the cliffs. Perhaps the fishes might know of his presence, and the great sad sea would sweep remorselessly over his lifeless body; but Wilfred would never know of what had been done.

My heaven of joyful thoughts was gone now. The hell of bitter memories, the hell of a murderer possessed me.

The old man's remark was left unanswered. It had dashed me down into a great gulf; it had led me to make what was to me a terrible resolve.

A little while later Ruth came back to the room again. The servants had tried to persuade her to retire; but she declared that she could not sleep and she wished to come to me.

She was Ruth again now, Ruth as I had seen her last. She had got rid of her terrible garments, and except that she looked very pale, and was a little older, I saw no difference in her. But there was a difference. Love was shining out of her eyes, and she did not hide from me the fact that I was the king of her heart.

But this gave me no joy now, no heaven. The ghastly form of my brother Wilfred stood between us. I took her hand as she came in, and tried to soothe her, for I felt that she was still trembling, that she felt safe with no one but me. Then the old steward rose up and left us, and the servants likewise retired from the room. They saw our relations to each other, and although it was night we were left in the room together.

Again for a time I banished my dark thoughts, for a time I allowed love, rather than duty, to fill my world, and I yielded to the gentle witchery of her presence. I had made up my mind to tell her all; but I postponed it for a while. "Time enough yet," I said; "let me have some happiness before eternal night sets in."

How gentle, how kind, how loving she was! Her every word told of the love she bore me, and had borne me for long years, every word told me how she believed in my goodness and purity.

What we talked of, I may not recount. I only know that for a few short minutes we lived in the blissful present. The thought of her great love was more powerful than the dread remorse which had possessed me a little while before.

And was it any wonder? Think, if you can, how I must have felt! Ten long years before I had left her, thinking she loved another, and all those years I had roamed the world in misery and hopeless despair. I had come back at the summons of a voice which I had heard, or thought I had heard, sweeping across the wide seas, and when I had arrived at the place where I had hoped to see her I had heard she was dead. Then, after grief that amounted to madness, I had discovered her alive, and had found that she loved me. More than that, she was with me, we were alone, and I felt her hands in mine. Was it to be wondered at then, that darkness should, for the time, be driven away?

Swiftly the time passed, sweetly her gentle voice sounded as she told me how happy, how safe, how contented she was, and, in spite of her terrible experience, how little weakness she felt; and then she asked me to relate to her my adventure since the night on which I left the Trewinion Manor.

Again I remembered what I had done, again the agonies of remorse, which had been awakened by memory, began to eat into my soul. But I would tell her all. I would faithfully relate the tale of the years that had passed, I would faithfully tell her what I had done.

And so I cast my mind back and told her what I have written in these pages. How I had gone away to sea, and how, for years, I had sailed in every clime, and with men of different nationalities. I recounted how I had been taken by the pirates, and how for two years I had been with them. I kept back nothing from her. I told her of many wild deeds that I had done, and of the wild life I had led. By and by I came to the night on which I had such a strange dream, or else had seen such a strange vision, and here I hesitated. It seemed so wonderful, and withal so unreal. I told it her, however, while she listened with wonder-lit eyes.

"Yes, Roger," she said, "it all happened just as you saw it."

"And did you cry out, Ruth. Did you say, 'Roger is here?'"

"I did. I felt you were there, although I could not see you."

"And then, Ruth; what did you do?"

"I went out into the night. I knew your habit of going out on to the headland when you desired to be alone, and I felt I must go somewhere where you had been."

"Yes, Ruth, and afterwards?"

"I went out and wandered for a long time, until I felt my heart was breaking. I seemed all alone in the world, with no one to help me, and I cried out in anguish, 'Roger, come home.'"

"And I heard you, Ruth. After I had seen you in my dream, or whatever it was, I went on deck, and while there I heard your cry, and I answered back. Did you not hear me?"

"No, Roger, I heard nothing in answer to my cry, save a kind of wail, which, as it mingled with the splash of the waves seemed to be only a mocking echo of my words."

"And yet your words called me home."

"Thank God—and then?"

I told her how I had come home, and had met with the fisherman who had informed me of her death, and how she had died because of Wilfred and Mr. Inch, who had goaded her to do what was death to her.

"And what followed, Roger?" she said, anxiously, as I hesitated a minute.

"I hated Wilfred as I never hated man before. I felt that he was deserving of the worst that could befall any man, and I determined to be revenged."

Again I hesitated, and again she told me to go on.

Should I tell her? Should I with a few words blacken her life, should I destroy her every hope? Yet the truth must out. It always does, and I should but put off the evil day by refraining from telling her. Yet it was terribly hard, the man must have a steady hand who writes his own death-warrant without shaking.

She saw, I think, how terrible was the ordeal, for she nestled closer to me and spoke gently.

"Dear Roger," she said, "it must have nearly driven you mad to meet him."

I think this gave me strength, for I clenched my hands nervously, and began to tell her of our meeting and of the darkest deed that ever blighted my life, wondering in my heart what she would say and do when she knew what I had done.

CHAPTER XXIV

CAIN

> And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.… A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.
>
> And Cain said to the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.—*The Book of Genesis.*

At last, I had told her. The dread truth which I had trembled for her to know was made known. Word by word, sentence by sentence, often hesitating, often stammering, I related our meeting, the awful struggle on the cliff with its terrible ending.

Then I felt her tremble.

"And Wilfred is dead?" she gasped.

"Dead," I repeated.

"And you killed him?"

"I—I killed him."

"Then you are a—a——"

"Yes, I am. My God, I am a murderer!"

I felt her shrink from me, I saw the blood recede from her face, and in another second she lay motionless in my arms.

I laid her gently down in an old settle, and ran into the hall shouting for help. The two women servants who had attended upon lier quickly appeared.

"Your mistress!" I gasped. "Make haste."

They hurried to the room and found Ruth lying as one dead.

I could not stay there while they tried to restore her. I felt I had killed her, and my head whirled so that I could scarcely stand. Until then I did not know what a man could bear and still live. No tongue or pen can describe what I suffered. I had been in hell the night before; it was worse now. Then only the death of the man whom I had hated pressed on my conscience, now, I feared, I had by the same deed killed my darling, whom only a few hours before, I had taken from a living grave.

Presently I heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel outside the house, and in another minute the village doctor entered. Unknown to me, Mr. Inch had sent for him, thinking Ruth might need his advice. Evidently, too, the servant who had been to fetch him had told him of the strange event that had happened, for when he saw me he exclaimed:

"Great heavens, you did it, did you? Well, its the most wonderful thing that ever happened."

I think he would have stayed a few minutes with me had I allowed him, but I hurried him quickly to the room where Ruth was, while I stayed at the door and listened.

At length I heard a woman's voice say, "She's coming to," and a great burden rolled away from my heart. At all events, Ruth's death would not lie at my door, and so far my mind was at rest. By and by I heard more whispering, and then I heard Ruth speak. Was she not asking for me? I thought so; certainly, I heard my own name.

I entered the room, and found Ruth sitting up, while the doctor was walking excitedly round the room, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

She looked up and our eyes met. Then I knew that a great gulf was between us, as great as the gulf that lies between Heaven and hell. She could not come to me, I could not go to her. We were divided, not by distance, but by my guilt. We were in the same room, and yet, now that she knew what I had done we could not be as we were.

In spite of this, however, I made a step towards Ruth as if to take her hand, but I saw as I came nearer a look of terror came into her eyes, and she shrunk from me with a cry of pain. Now I knew my doom was sealed, and without a word I turned and walked away from her. I loved her still; God only knows how; but I could not stay with her when my presence caused her so much pain. Nay, I felt that if my love were worthy the name, she must never see me again. Would she not feel that she had loved a man whose hands were stained by his brother's blood?

I did not even say "good-bye." I do not think I could have done so, for weights seemed to hang upon my lips. Yet it was terribly hard to go. We had been separated for more than ten long years, and then we had met, as perhaps lovers never met before, met for a few brief hours only to be again divided.

I stood alone in the hall, as if waiting for some voice to recall me, but I heard none, so I placed my hat upon my head to go out alone. As I walked towards the door I thought of the sweet hours we had spent together, and of the Heaven of which my sin had deprived me. But nothing could undo the past. I must reap the harvest of my sin. Before I had gone far, however, Mr. Inch stepped out of one of the rooms and met me.

"Are you going out," he said in astonishment.

"Yes."

"But why? Surely there is no reason."

"Yes there is."

"But you are not going far? You will soon return?"

"I do not know how far I shall go; but I shall never return."

He looked at me in wonder; then a look of intelligence came into his face as though he had guessed the reason of my departure.

"Perhaps you do not know Miss Morton's feelings toward you," he said, with a smile. "This wonderful night has doubtless made us all half-mad; but don't forget what it was that caused her illness and, as we thought, her death."

"I know all," I said, "but I must go."

I placed my hand on the door handle when a thought struck me, and I turned to him again.

"But remember for all that," I said, "that Miss Morton is not without a friend. Remember that I know how false have been your dealings with her, and now, if she be defrauded of one penny in the future, or if you in any way seek to take advantage of her, you shall be thrown into a felon's cell. Your past shall only be forgiven on the condition that your future be blameless."

"Roger Trewinion!" he cried, "I know it may sound cowardly to shift a sin upon another's shoulders, but your brother is guilty of all the real wrong. I was only a weak tool in his hands. But for the future, so help me God, I will serve my mistress faithfully."

"See that you do," I said, and then, leaving him half dazed, I went out of the house.

Thus I was alone again, alone in the night! My sin had driven me away, and now I was cast upon the world again, with no one to help me, no one to love me. For I could not for a minute think that Ruth could love me now that she knew what I was, and of what I had been guilty.

Down the long avenue I tramped, thinking all the time of what might have been, and hating myself for what I had done. For a time I went heedlessly, and then I began to decide which course I should take.

I have heard it said that murderers are always possessed by the ghastly desire to look on the face of their victim, to visit the scenes which are associated with the deed that cursed them for ever. Whether this be true or not I cannot say, but I had not gone far, before I was filled with the dread longing to go back to the spot where Wilfred and I had struggled, and yielding to it I started to retrace the weary steps which I had trodden only a few hours before.

After walking two or three miles in a vague, half conscious sort of way, I felt a great desire to sleep, and seeing by the light of the moon a haystack in a field close by, I clambered over the hedge and walked, towards it. I found it to be only half-built; evidently, there was a late crop of hay being carried, and most likely the stack would be finished the next day. A pile of hay was lying on one side, waiting to be thrown on the stack, and on this I threw myself, and quickly fell asleep.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, and from the sound of voices near me, the haymakers were evidently at work. I rose up from my resting-place, and as I did so, those who had been partaking of croust[1] gazed at me in astonishment.

I was not dressed like an ordinary tramp, however, and so was treated civilly.

"Will you tell me what time it is," I said, after some remarks had been passed.

"Nearly leben o'clock in the vorenoon," said one of the men. "'Ave 'ee bin slaipin' here oal night?"

I nodded.

"Then you must be awful ungry."

"Yes," I said, "have you anything to eat?"

For reply, a basket containing a good deal of wholesome food was placed before me. I ate heartily, for I was hungry, and after making a good meal prepared to go on.

The men did not ask me who I was, or where I was going, but looked smilingly on the few coins I gave them, and wished me a good journey.

I went on in a dazed way the whole of the day, stopping only once for refreshment at a little wayside alehouse. I inquired of the landlord if he had heard any news, but he said, No, nothing had happened except that his sister-in-law had got another, her eleventh baby. As I did not regard this of much importance, I trudged on again as soon as I had finished my meal. That I might be going in the teeth of danger did not occur to me; in fact, I never troubled about any punishment for my deed, except the terrible punishment of my conscience.

About eight o'clock in the evening, I entered the parish of Trewinion, and soon, as if drawn by a magnet, I found my way to the place where Wilfred and I had met.

How vividly everything came back to me, and yet I seemed to have lived long years since we met. Only two days had elapsed; and I had seemed to have grown old in that time. In my excited imagination I pictured him coming towards me again; but soon my illusions were dispelled.

I looked up towards my old home, wondering if I should see any signs of what had happened, but the house was quiet, and, except for a few lights that flashed from the windows, I saw no signs of life. The prongs of the "Devil's Tooth" still lifted themselves in the air, but no light was there; evidently Betsey Fraddam was not visiting her old haunt that night.

Again I stood on the place on which we had wrestled, again I looked from the dizzy heights on the rocks below, as if trying to see Wilfred, but nothing was visible. The rocks told no stories; the moaning sea did not recount what had become of my brother's body.

Had he been found, I wondered? It could scarcely be otherwise. Fisherman were constantly tramping along the beach, and when he was missed search would certainly be made. Still it might not have so happened; I would go down to the beach to see. The tide was ebbing out, and I could easily walk along the sands at the foot of the cliffs.

I went to the place where a rough track had been made, and soon got on the beach. It was a glorious night; the sea shone beneath the silvery light of the moon, and had I any melody in my heart the splash of the water on the beach must have made music to me; but there was nothing but remorse and despair within me, thus, what would have otherwise have been a song of gladness was only a wail of misery.

When I came to the place beneath the point where we had wrestled, I looked for a sign of Wilfred's body, but there was nothing to be seen, nor was there any marks on the sand, not even a footmark was visible. This was not altogether strange, for the tide would have washed away any such marks, and yet I wondered at none being visible when such a terrible tragedy had taken place.

Near here was a cave, and, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I entered it. I spoke, but was frightened by the echo of my own voice. I dared not stay there long. Every sound was magnified so, and as the waves broke upon the shore their echo thundered around the walls of my grim resting-place, until it seemed filled with thousands of dark spirits of the dead.

I went out again into the night, and wandered on until I came to the witches' cave. I seemed drawn, as if by a charm, and for a minute I had a strong desire to go where I had gone long years before, when Deborah Teague tried to make me promise ever to be her friend; but fancying I heard sounds within the dark confines of the cavern, I hurried away filled with superstitious fears.

Then a new feeling possessed me. I must get away from England and never return. There was no hope; no peace for me here. Wilfred was dead—destroyed by my hand, and Ruth loathed me. I would go away on the wild seas again, and perhaps, although I could never know happiness, I might find forgetfulness. Here I should be ever haunted by fears; here, too, I was in danger of the law, once away I should be safe.

The thought brought relief, it gave me something to do. It was an escape valve for my feelings, and without waiting a second I started on the road to Falmouth.

A few days later I was sailing down the Bay of Biscay, bound for Barcelona, where I hoped I might find Salambo, who had been captain of the pirate ship.

[1] "Croust" is a corruption of the word "carouse." This designates a meal which harvesters and haymakers have between ordinary meals on account of specially hard work.—EDITOR.

CHAPTER XXV

THE VOICE OF A FRIEND

The journey to Barcelona was uneventful, at any rate for me. During the whole time I lived in a kind of hideous dream. I was ever thinking of what I had seen and done during the little time I had been in England, but nothing was real save a horrible weight that oppressed me. I know that the captain sought to be friendly, while some of the passengers seemed to be interested in the sad, silent man who ever sought to be alone, but I paid little heed to their overtures. How could I when two ghastly passions, hatred and remorse, possessed me?

Sometimes I caught myself thinking of what Ruth had told me during those two or three sweet hours we were together. I remember asking her why she had seemed to love Wilfred the better, and why, when she saw how I loved her, she did not in some way let me know that she cared for me. And blushingly she told me that, besides the reports about my boasting that she would have to marry me, which she only half believed, she was afraid I would think her forward and immodest. This set me thinking how it had all ended. How through misunderstandings our lives had been ruined, until life seemed a tragedy, and Providence only a dream. But no relief came to me, the burdens which I had myself made still crushed me to the earth, and I could see no brightness in the future.

We reached Barcelona at length, and I set out to find Salambo. I knew that if all had gone well with him I should have little difficulty in this. He had given me instructions which were unmistakable as to his whereabouts, so I started at once for the house at which he told me to inquire.

I found that this house was occupied by his own parents, and no welcome could be warmer than mine when I told them my name.

I asked them if their son was well, and I quickly found that he was well and happy, that he had found Inez, that they had been wedded, and were living not far away from them.

Quickly I found my way thither, and soon Salambo and I stood face to face. Only one look at him was enough to convince me that his parents had told me the truth.

"All is well with you, Salambo?" I said.

"Ah, all is well," he cried, "the saints have been good to me. You must see my Inez, she will be here directly."

This gave me a little hope. Salambo had committed a sin similar to mine, and yet he was happy. He had become wedded to the woman he loved, in spite of the terrible past. Might there then be some chance for me? Not that I expected to wed Ruth, I gave up all thoughts of seeing her again; but I might find rest from the terrible pangs which now made life almost unbearable. I resolved before the day was over to have a long talk with my old captain, and, if possible, to seek the same means to obtain ease and happiness.

Presently his wife came into the room. They had only been wedded a short time, and she blushed at being introduced as his wife; but I saw, in spite of everything, that she was happy. Not that she looked free from pain. There was a look in her great black eyes which told me that she had suffered terribly in the past, and the silver streaks in her raven black hair told the same story.

She was very beautiful, and I did not wonder that Salambo loved her. From the way her eyes rested on him I knew that he reigned king of her heart.

We sat together during the evening, sometimes talking and sometimes listening to Inez—for such Salambo would have me call her—as she sung some sweet Spanish love songs, until the time came for her to retire, and then we two men, who had passed through many strange scenes, were left together.

"You are very happy," I said, when she had left the room.

"Happy as man can be," he replied. "My Inez through all these long years was faithful to me, and has ever been

as pure as an angel. And you, Tretheway, or rather, Trewinion, how did you find affairs at home? not well, I fear."

I told him, just as I have written it in these pages, all that had happened since I left him. When I described my meeting with Bill Tregargus, and how I had heard that Ruth had died of a broken heart, driven to death by Wilfred, I saw the tears start to Salambo's eyes, and he eagerly asked what followed next. Then I told him of my meeting with Wilfred, what we had said to each other, and how we had engaged in a deadly struggle on the cliff.

"And didn't you kill him?" he cried, clenching his hands nervously; "didn't you hurl the viper on the rocks beneath?"

"Would you?" I said.

"Would I?" he cried, "ay, and be proud that I had rid the world of such a one. The saints would sanction such a deed."

I told him what had happened, at which he gave a great sigh as if of relief, after which a scornful smile played around his mouth as I told him of the terrible sufferings I had endured.

He did not speak a word during the recital of the visit to Ruth's home, but gave a start as I told him of my determination to visit her grave. Then he sat like one entranced as I described my entrance into the church, and related how I lifted back the stone from the vault. Breathlessly he sat while I narrated how I had removed the clasps from the coffin and looked on the still face of my darling; and then leapt like a madman from his chair as I told how I felt her hand move. After that, while I related the remainder of my story, he walked up and down the room excitedly, sometimes laughing and again giving a cry of gladness, until I came to that part where I told Ruth of my sins, whereupon he sat down again, still staring at me wildly.

"And you left her because of that?" he said in astonishment, when I had finished.

"I could do no other," I replied.

"Ah, but you could," he cried.

"How?" I asked.

"Why, that action of hers did not express her aversion of you, or if it did it could be easily overcome. You should have remained with her and she would soon have forgiven you."

"How could she when I could not forgive myself? Besides, if I had stayed in England I should have been arrested as a murderer, and that would have brought her worse sorrow still."

"That need not have been," he replied. "You could have brought her here, ay, and she would have gladly come, too."

I dismissed this suggestion, for I knew it was not possible.

For three weeks I remained with Salambo, then I felt that I could stay in Barcelona no longer, and must be on the move. Bitter memories still urged me to go somewhere, it mattered not where, in search of peace.

I told Salambo this, and he did his best to persuade me to stay with him, Inez adding her entreaties to his; but I felt I could not. Something, I knew not what, impelled me to leave them, so I got a berth on board a vessel, and went away again to follow the calling I had followed so many years.

We shook hands at the vessel's side; he to go back to his home and to happiness, and I to sail down the Mediterranean, still in search of rest and peace.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE VOICE OF GOD

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.
—*The Ancient Mariner.*

For a year I sailed the Mediterranean as a common seaman. I thought, or rather, I hoped, that by hard work and mixing in the society of men who had borne something of the brunt of life, besides visiting different towns at which we had to call along the coast, I should banish from my mind what became more and more terrible to me. It was a vain hope.

At the end of the year I despaired of finding happiness or peace again. "There is no such thing as forgiveness of sins!" I said, "and life is but a bitter mockery."

Ofttimes I wondered what had become of them at home. At night time especially I found myself thinking of Ruth and how she bore her terrible trials, and this led me to wonder what had become of Wilfred—had he ever been found, and, if so, had I been suspected of his death? Naturally, Bill Tregargus would think of me; but would he tell of his meeting with me? Then again, would Ruth feel it her duty to denounce me as a murderer, even though I had saved her from the most horrible fate imaginable? I knew how great was her sense of right; I knew, too, how much she had loved me, and I did not know what course she would take.

But never one ray of light, or hope, or comfort came in the thick darkness. Sometimes I was tempted to drown my troubles in drink, but I remembered my father's death, and refrained from doing so. Again I was tempted to seek forgetfulness in what was unworthy, but I remembered Ruth and was saved from that.

One day, about a year after I had left Salambo, the vessel in which I was sailing arrived at Smyrna, where we had to stay some days. Towards evening we were at liberty to go into the town, and I as usual strolled away alone. I had not gone far, when, lying on the side of the street, I saw a little crippled child who had apparently lost its way, or was in some trouble, for it was sobbing bitterly. I came close and lifted the child to its feet, and as I did so caught sight of its face. It was a little girl about five years old. She was by no means pretty, on the contrary, her face was almost evil, and for a moment I felt like passing on without taking further notice, when the prayer which had constantly been on my lips of late came to my mind. Hitherto I had received no answer to it, but now I felt that I loved this little crippled, ugly child.

In my constant visits to this coast I had picked up a smattering of Greek, so I spoke to the little maiden, and asked her where she lived, and without hesitation she told me. With a strange feeling in my heart I took her in my arms, and carried her in the direction of her home. As I walked on I met some of my crew, who laughed to see me with my strange burden, but I did not mind, nay, rather, I rejoiced because of what I was able to do. And all the while I continued to breathe this prayer, "Lord, help me to love."

We reached her home at length. A miserable place it was, and I found out that the little maiden had no father. He had died a few months before, but she had a brother and sister, both younger than herself, who lived with their mother. I did not stay long, although I felt a strange feeling of pity for the poor desolate ones, but I left some money with them and walked away alone.

As I did so I remembered the words I had heard often in our old church. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My little ones, ye have done it unto Me." "Unto Me"—unto whom? I called to mind that they were the words of our Lord, and I asked myself what it meant. "Ye have done it unto Me." I repeated again and again. "How have I done it unto the Lord?"

One day while I had been in Barcelona, I had gone into a church, and had made confession of my sins to a

priest. I remembered that Salambo was a Catholic, and I wondered if by making confession peace would come to my heart. The priest had told me that I must forgive every one, and do penance. But I was not able to forgive; as for penance, it seemed to me that no man could suffer worse penance than I had already suffered. Besides, I remembered that the priest was an enemy to the faith which I had been taught to believe, and so, perhaps, prejudice hindered him from helping me.

His words returned to me that night, however, and I asked myself for the hundredth time how it was possible for me to forgive Wilfred.

"He is dead, and I have killed him!" I said to myself, "and yet I cannot forgive him. I hate him still. He has robbed me of everything I hold dear. How can I forgive him? How can I find peace?" Then, as if in answer to my cry, came the words, "Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I do not know how, but the message of our Lord had a new meaning. I had heard it read a hundred times without ever thinking of its meaning, but now my heart throbbed with a new hope as I thought of it, "Come unto Me, Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." I kept repeating the passage.

"Lord, how can I come!" I cried, "and how can'st Thou hear my voice, the voice of a murderer?" and then, as if in answer to my cry, I seemed to hear the words, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out!"

That night for the first time for years I truly prayed. I prayed for light, for penitence, for forgiveness. Ay, I did come to Christ as a poor penitent wayward sinner, and even as I prayed, I caught myself thinking of my brother Wilfred. Without realising what I was doing, I remembered some of our boyish freaks. I thought of the happy days we had spent together and of the times we had knelt side by side and prayed; and then, I know not how, I realised that the hatred I had felt for Wilfred was gone. God had answered my prayer; I had learned to love, and to love my enemy.

Do not imagine that my burden was gone when I felt this. The memory of that terrible night became more vivid; but I was changed. I was not the man I was on the night when I madly wrestled with my brother. God had answered my prayer, and in doing so He had changed me.

I went back to the vessel a new man, with new feelings, new desires, new aspirations.

Night came on again, and still the vessel remained in the harbour at Smyrna. I sat on the deck alone, looking sometimes at the lights of the town, and again at the moonlit sea, still longing and praying for rest. Hour after hour I remained, until my heart grew so sad that I began to realise a misery as great almost as that I had known before the hatred I had for my brother was taken away.

"Oh, God, what shall I do?" I cried at length.

What was it that answered me? A voice from Heaven, or was it my own heart? All I know is that, sounding from I know not where, I heard the words, "Go home."

I felt I could not do this. I could not bear to go back to the scenes of my misery and sin. I should be ever seeing the dead face of my brother; there would be less rest for me there than here. Nor it would not be safe to do so. Perhaps even now the officers of the law were in— But I would not think of that.

All through the night I struggled and prayed, but ever in answer came the same dread message:

"Go home. Confess your sins."

At length strength came; at length the battle was fought. I made up my mind to go home, to give myself up to the officers of the law as my brother's murderer, and in a moment the burden was gone, and I was a free man.

I will not try to describe with what feverish anxiety I made my way back to England. I only know that some secret power seemed to be urging me back, and although I felt I was going to my death, I was glad when I landed in Falmouth harbour.

Once on my native soil my love for life became strong, and I had to fight my battle over again, or I should have had to do so if I had allowed myself time to think of it; but I stifled all thoughts of escape, and hurried on to my old home.

When I arrived within a mile or so of Trewinion, I paused, and began to ponder as to what course would be best. Should I go to the village constable, Philip Pinch? I knew him well as a lad, and had seen him when I had been home the year before. Or should I go straight to the old house on the cliff, and there, before my mother and servants, confess my sins.

The desire to see the old place was so strong that I determined to take the latter course. If I surrendered myself to Philip Pinch I should be taken at once to the lock-up, and thence to Bodmin gaol, while if I went home I should have one more sight of the old rooms which I had not seen for more than eleven years.

And so, with fast-beating heart and limbs trembling, I hurried onward. Feverishly I opened the postern door which admitted me into the grounds surrounding the house, and then, with a pain at my heart which no words can describe, I went up to the tower entrance and rang the bell.

CHAPTER XXVII

WITHIN THE OLD HOME

Eleven long years. Yes, it was that since I had last stood by the hall door. I had left it with a mad passion in my heart, with fierce grief raging within me; I returned saddened by sin, stained by crime, yet subdued and repentant and hopeful.

I could not help thinking of this as the bell clanged within the wide hall and echoed through the silent house, while memories of the old days flashed like lightning through my excited brain.

How singular it was, that I, the rightful owner, should stand ringing for admission like a stranger, and more singular still it seemed at the time, that I should for long years have been a wanderer away from the home of my fathers. And I stood there as a culprit. I was about to enter my home, only to come out a prisoner, a man accused of an awful crime. I was not sure if they would hang me, for his death was an accident. I did not hurl him from me; he slipped from my hands in spite of me, and yet murder was in my heart.

And thus I stood at my own door after eleven years of weary wandering, of lonely agony, of God-forsaken life, waiting excitedly, yet with a numbing pain at my heart, for the meeting with my mother. Ah, how should I look her in her face when she asked me for her son; how should I withstand her withering scorn, her terrible wrath? It was eventime, and the October winds had shorn much of the foliage from the trees, what remained being russet brown. The wind, too, as it played amongst the shivering leaves, told only a tale of decay and death.

At length I heard a step along the stone, corridor, an aged step, as though the one who came was weary and tired. All this I noted as I stood waiting while the door opened.

It was Peter Polperrow, who had been servant of Trewinion long before I was born. He looked at me with some astonishment, not unmixed with fear.

"Whom do you want to see, sir?" he asked.

"Mrs. Trewinion," I said.

He eyed me from head to foot, as if afraid that by admitting me, he should be doing wrong.

"I cannot admit a stranger," he said at length, "and I cannot let you see my mistress until I know who you are."

"Is she well?" I asked.

Again he seemed to wonder why I should ask such a question, and he answered sadly:

"Yes, considering all things; but what is that to you? Who are you and what do you want?"

I suppose I was not of a very prepossessing appearance. Like most of my race, I was large and strong, but my clothes were somewhat coarse, and my hands were brown and bare. Then my face was covered with a huge brown beard, and I was tanned by long years of exposure to sea air.

"Take me to some room where we can talk together, Peter Polperrow," I said.

"Peter Polperrow!" repeated the old man; "Who are you that you know my name?"

"I will tell you soon, Peter," I answered; "meanwhile lead me to Mr. Roger's old room. I will promise you no harm."

"Master Roger!" repeated the old man; "he has not been here for long years. He has gone away, God only knows where for that matter; nearly everybody believes him to be dead, and so I suppose he'll never return any more. But what do you know of Master Roger?"

"Lead me there and I'll tell you. I can tell you many things you would like to know."

He seemed to be staggered at my words.

"Do you know him?" he asked.

"Yes; I have seen him, and spoken with him."

"What! Seen Mr. Roger!"

"Yes."

New life seemed to come into his withered, aged form, a new interest came into his aged face.

"Seen him! When, oh when did you see Mr. Roger?"

"I have been with him to-day."

Still the simple old man did not catch my meaning. He evidently could not think that I was Roger.

"Where did you see him? Is he coming home?" he asked anxiously.

"Take me to his room and I'll tell you."

Without another word he led me to the room I used to call mine, I feeling a kind of shiver as I stood within the walls of the old house.

At length we were alone, but it was dark there; we could scarcely see each other's faces.

"Get a light, Peter," I said.

He hobbled away, and soon returned with a candle, revealing the furniture of the room just as I left it years before.

"No one has slept here since Mr. Roger left," said Peter tremulously. "I don't think that anyone dare that knew him, and certainly no one should with my consent."

"No one but me, Peter," I said.

"What do you mean? Who are you, and—and when did you see Mr. Roger? Tell me quickly."

"Peter," I said, "does nothing tell you? Hold the light to my face and then think. Have you never seen me before?"

The old man held the candle as I had desired him, and looked steadily at me, but there was no flash of recognition, no look of joyful surprise.

"I doan't remember; I never seed 'ee before."

He said this dreamily, and in so doing relapsed into the old Cornish vernacular.

"Look again, Peter. Remember how Wilfred and I used to wrestle on the headland. Remember how I frightened you by telling you that Deborah Teague had ill-wished you. Think of an awful storm, and that wreck on the 'Devil's Tooth,' and of the young lady I saved. Can't you recognise me now?"

Then old Peter knew me, and tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, Master Roger," he said, "thank God you've come home; but to come like this, to come home as a——" But he could say no more, he sobbed like a child.

He had heard then. Somehow it must have been rumoured abroad that I had killed my brother, and so my presence was painful to him. Perhaps Bill Tregargus had told that he had seen me, and heard me vow vengeance. Perhaps Ruth had in a moment of madness revealed the terrible truth!

"Do you think my mother will see me, Peter?" I said to the faithful old servant as gently as I could.

"Oh, Mr. Roger," he sobbed, "you was so young, so beautiful, so happy in the old days, and I always looked forward to you becoming master, and servin' you till I died, and now to see you come home like this, a ringin' at the door, when you should have walked straight in, and to be asked questions by me when——when——"

"Never mind, Peter," I said, "it cannot be undone now, but still you won't mind doing something for me now, for the sake of old days."

"Do! I'll do anything," he cried.

"I'm going down to the library," I said; "will you go and tell my mother to come there? but don't tell her it is I who want to see her. Simply say that a stranger is asking for her."

I found my way into the library. Candles which cast a flickering light were placed on the table, making the room ghostly enough.

How well I remembered the old place, and how memory after memory came back to me as I waited there. I often thought of the time my father had led me there on my fifteenth birthday, and told me of the curse of my race, and many other things which seemed to have cast a shadow over my life. Then I thought of how terribly his words had been fulfilled. The story of the curse was no meaningless jargon. It contained awful truths, which had been fulfilled in me. And yet I was not sure. Perhaps what had happened was the simple outcome of broken laws; perhaps Trewinion's curse was an old wives' fable. Still, the truth that my life was cursed was ever before me. I felt that even then I was, humanly speaking, branded with the hand of Cain. God had forgiven me, but man never would; the sin of my life could only be wiped out by yielding myself up to the hands of justice.

And this I had come home to do. I was waiting there to tell my mother that I had murdered her dearest son, that I had taken all joy and brightness from her life, and then, having brought the greatest sorrow a son can bring upon a mother, I would go to meet my righteous judgment.

Presently I heard the sound of footsteps, and soon my mother entered the room.

I had no difficulty in recognising her. Ten years had worked but little change in her appearance. Certainly her hair was tinged with grey, and the lines on her face were deeper, but otherwise there was no difference. There was still the cold expression—which was ever the same, except when her eyes rested on Wilfred—still the same stately carriage.

She glanced at me for a second, and then asked my business.

"Mother," I said, standing up.

She looked at me keenly for a few seconds, then she cried hoarsely, "My God, what brought you here?"

"Mother, forgive me," I said.

I thought she recoiled from me as if in abhorrence. I know that she stepped back from me.

"Why have you come?" she said, and I saw fierce hate gleaming from her eyes. "Have you not caused misery enough? Are you not content with the lives you have poisoned? You went away; why did you ever come back?"

"I could not rest, mother," I said, humbly, for I felt I deserved her reproach. "I wanted to tell you all; I wanted your forgiveness."

"Tell me!" she cried, "as though I did not know. Forgive you, how can I forgive you when but for you my boy

might have been——"

"Let me tell you everything, mother," I cried. "God knows I have suffered much for what I have done, but He has forgiven me, and I wanted your forgiveness before I die."

"Do I not know? Have I not heard?" she went on. "Has it not been the talk of the neighbourhood? Have you not ever been my son's enemy? When you were children it was you who had your father's affections, it was you who saved the life of the only one my Wilfred loved, it was you who stood between Wilfred and his right position. It was you who kept Ruth from loving him, and although you went away you were ever the black blot on his life. And now you have come back again. Why? To breathe more poison, to carry out more of your murderous designs."

"No, mother, I have come to atone for the wrong I have done rather than to do more wrong."

"That can never be. You can never atone for the wrong you have done. You were born to curse my son's life, and you have done it. You have stripped my life of happiness, and now you come again, to take away what paltry right, I suppose, you claim."

"But, mother!"

"Call me not 'mother,' you are no son of mine."

"Not your son!" I cried, "how can that be?"

She did not answer me, and my memory flashed back to the time when Deborah Teague had hinted that she was not my mother. Now her mad jealousy of my position was explained. Now I knew why Wilfred was all and I was nothing. This woman was not my mother, and as a consequence true affection had not existed between us.

"Whose son am I, then?" I continued, after a pause, "and who is my mother."

"I shall not say," she said, "it is enough that you are not my son."

"And my sisters, Elizabeth and Katherine, are they not really my sisters? If not, who are they, and who are you?"

"I shall not tell you," she said, and then stopped, as if in doubt. "Yes, I will though," she continued. "You are not my son, for you are the son of your father's first wife. No one here knew that he was married before he married me, I made him promise none should. He never brought his first wife home here, for he married her privately. He would have brought her home when you were born had she not died. A few months afterwards he married me, and I came home as his wife, and you passed as my child, it being given out that we had been married more than a year. When I had a child of my own I hated you, and when I saw your father loved you best I hated you more. Now you know why I have always been your enemy." This information stunned me. I had not expected this kind of meeting. As yet no definite word had been spoken concerning the real object of my coming all the way from Asia. I determined, however, to do my duty and to confess my sin. Only when I had realised strength to do the right had I realised ease of conscience, and because Wilfred was only my half-brother was no reason why I should keep back the words that seemed to burn my lips.

I was about to speak again and tell all when I saw a form in the doorway which made me think my senses must have left me, and I had become a madman.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TREWINION'S CURSE

I rose from the chair on which I had been sitting during the latter part of my conversation with my mother, and made one step forward.

"Wilfred!"

"Roger!"

"You here!" I exclaimed bewildered.

"Ah, my presence surprises you, does it?" he said, and every tone of his voice told of vindictiveness—hatred.

For a moment I could not think; my head whirled and I staggered to my seat as though I were a drunken man. Wilfred was not dead, the guilt of his murder did not rest upon me, I was free—free! I had not hurled him to his death on that awful night; my gloomy forebodings had no real foundation.

How had he managed to escape? I had stood with him alone on that dizzy height, and as far as I remembered the cliff was perpendicular there; he had I felt slipped from me, and I had heard the sound of a falling body.

"What do you here?" he exclaimed, after a minute of silence; "how dared you return to your native shore thinking as you did."

"I thought you dead," I gasped, "dead by my hand, and I could not rest. I wandered from place to place, but I found no peace, until I determined to confess what I thought I had done."

"And you came home for that?"

"For that."

"Fool, fool that I was not to think of the idiot's conscientiousness," he muttered, "then all might have been arranged even yet; but now he knows all, and I am undone."

"But how did you manage to escape?" I asked, still in a dazed kind of way.

"I will tell you," he replied, with a bitter, mocking laugh, "for nothing can be altered now. You thought you knew more than anyone about our coast, but I had found a place of which you knew nothing. There is a crevice and a broad ledge beneath that place where we wrestled, and finding that you were stronger than I, I determined to do by cunning what I could not do by brute force. So dragging you to this place I slipped from you, fell down upon this ledge, and allowed you to think you had murdered me!"

He spoke with all the bitterness and cruelty of which any one could be capable, and as I thought of what I had suffered, of the hell in which I had lived through long months, I realised something of the old feeling which I had entertained for him on that awful night.

"And after all, I have served you out," he went on. "I have enjoyed Trewinion's wealth for eleven years, and I have made the most of it. You may claim possession if you will; but precious little you will have. I have mortgaged it up to every farthing it is worth, and if you hadn't come soon you would have found another family here. Even now you will have a difficulty in keeping the house above your head," and he laughed mockingly.

As he said this, it struck me that he was trying to make me angry, and as I saw the wickedness and meanness of his heart, I felt a great bitterness rising within me. Then I remembered what I felt at Smyrna—how I had prayed that God would help me to love, and in a second the bitterness was gone, and all harsh feelings were turned to pity. I saw the veil torn aside, and I knew that, much as I had suffered, he had suffered more; that deep as I had been in hell, he had been in a hell yet deeper. I did not remember the deceit, the fraud, the treachery he had practised towards me, I

only thought of the possible Wilfred, the Wilfred as he might have been, and as God intended he should be.

"And what do you intend to do?" said my mother, for such I shall continue to call her.

"Do, mother," I said. "I shall do nothing."

"Do! What can he do?" laughed Wilfred. "His hands are tied. I am glad on the whole that he has come, for the place is accursed. It has never given me anything but misery. I have been in a constant fever. And Roger will suffer more, I am glad to say. As for you, mother, serve you right if you never have another day's happiness."

"Wilfred, my boy," said mother, "how can you say so?"

"Say so," repeated Wilfred, "because you have been my real curse. Who taught me first to envy Roger? You. Who taught me to hate him afterwards? You. Who was ever at my elbow seeking to make me misrepresent his every action? You. Who taught me how to deceive Ruth? You. But for you I should have been content to be the younger son, content to be the vicar of the parish; but bitterness was instilled into my heart as a child, until I hated him as I hate all the world. I wish he had killed me a year ago, for then I would have haunted him until life should be such a ghastly possession that he should seek death. But, never mind. Trewinion's curse is fulfilled in him; he has suffered, and he will have to suffer."

"How?" I said, with pain at my heart.

"How?" he said, "You have broken every condition of happiness, you have violated every law of our people. It is a law that Trewinion's heir should never be away from the homestead for more than six months at a time, and you have been away eleven years. It is written in the curse, at which you have reason to tremble, that if you stray from God's pure laws you shall be cursed and crushed by a younger brother. The curse of our people ever rests upon the heir who hates, and you hate me."

I did not believe in the "curse" at this time; I felt that Wilfred had a purpose in speaking thus, and yet a strange awesome feeling crept around my heart as he spoke. Did Wilfred really believe in this legend of our people? I did not know. Certainly all our family had believed it in the past, and strange things had happened to our race. Was ill-luck ever to follow me? Was a dark pall ever to rest upon my life?

All this time I had been living in a sort of dream. I had as yet scarcely realised that Wilfred was not dead, as yet the awful weight that had so long rested upon my shoulders was scarcely lifted.

"Wilfred," I said at length, "why you speak thus I do not know. For my own part I have ceased to believe in that old story which has been handed down from generation to generation. Or if I believe it, I believe that it is as applicable to the rest of the world as to me. If we sin we suffer, if we hate we live in hell. I have sinned, and I have suffered, I have hated and I have been in hell. But I trust it is over now. I have repented of my sin, and I believe God has forgiven me. I do not believe a curse can rest upon those whose hearts are full of love."

"But that does not free you, for you hate—you hate me."

"No, Wilfred, no, I love you."

"Love me! You do not know. I have always schemed to ruin you. All my life I have hated you; all my life I have sought to thwart your every purpose. All the misery you have had has been through me, your years of homeless wandering have been due to me. It was I who sought to take away the love of the woman to whom you had given your heart, and since you left the last time, and she believed that you did not intend to kill me, I have been to her and told her that you used the basest means to kill me, and that I only escaped by a miracle. I tell you I have blackened your life at every possible opportunity, I have robbed you of the best part of your manhood, through me you will die lonely, forsaken, despairing; do you hate me now?"

"And does Ruth believe you?" I said.

"Yes," he shrieked, "and she shudders at the mention of your name. You are the terror of her life, and I have made you so."

Again I had to struggle or I should have hated him again. Ay, I began to hate him in spite of my trouble, and then I prayed as I had prayed away in Smyrna, "Lord, help me to love," and even as I prayed all my bitter feelings passed away, as they had passed away then.

"Brother Wilfred, I love you still," I said.

He seemed staggered at my words, and he turned to his mother as though in astonishment.

"Are you going to be a fool?" cried she, "are you going to yield to his folly? Surely, if he is a fool you need not be one. He believes that Trewinion's curse is an old wives' fable—let him believe it. But you are the younger brother, and according to it you have the power to curse him. Curse him, then; let all the darkness that can befall a Trewinion fall on him. If he be married, let curses fall on him and his wife. If he has children, let curses rest upon them. While he lives let darkness ever be in him and around him, and when he dies may powers of darkness attend him even as they attended his father's father."

My mother spoke in a voice full of passion, and I knew if such a curse could take effect she would hurl it at me. Her words, too, seemed to fan Wilfred's hate into a flame, a hatred which, I thought, lessened when I told him I loved him.

"Ah, yes," he cried, "you do not believe in those lines our father showed you on your fifteenth birthday They have become to you but an idle tale, but you will know they are true, and you will know, too, that Wilfred cannot be thwarted without making you suffer. Listen to them:—

> If from God's pure laws he stray,
> Trewinion's power shall die away,
> His glory given to another,
> And he be cursed by younger brother.
> Then this son, though born the first,
> By the people shall be cursed;
> And for generations three,
> Trewinion's heirs shall cursed be.

I tell you you cannot escape, and if there is any power in the curse of the younger brother, I call it upon you now."

"Doan't'ee be a vool no longer," said a voice at the door; "Stop!" said a strange, croaking voice, and turning, I saw the form of Deborah Teague, more bent and more wrinkled than when I last saw her.

"I seed Maaster Roger comin' up here," said the old dame, "and I vollied un. You've a gived me a good dail of liberty in this ere 'ouse, and so no noatice was took of me when I stopped and 'arkened at the door. I knaw every word that ev bin zed, and this I can tell 'ee, no curse can hurt Maaster Roger now."

"Why?" asked my mother.

"Why? Because you ca'ant hurt nobody who's heart es vull of love. Curse hes cheldren you may if ever he do 'ave any, ay even to the third generation; because you be a Trewinion, but he you ca'ant curse, for 'ee do love hes enemies, and he do bless them that do curse him. Ef he were ere with hes heart full of revenge and hatred, then 'twould be defferent, but you ca'ant hurt un now."

"Then," cried Wilfred, "if there is truth in this story, I curse his children and his children's children, for he has robbed me of everything that makes life worth the living."

When the old woman had gone I turned and looked at my mother's face. A marked change had come over it in the last few minutes. She seemed to be making a great resolve.

"Mother," said Wilfred, "what are we to do?"

But she did not speak; a stony stare had settled on her face.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Wilfred, anxiously; "tell me?"

Still she did not answer him, but instead stepped out into the hall, where old Peter Polperrow stood waiting as if he expected some wonderful transformation.

"Tell every servant to come at once into the library," she said quietly.

Meanwhile Wilfred and I waited, wondering what she intended to do when her order was obeyed.

CHAPTER XXIX

MOTHER AND SON

A few minutes later all the servants assembled in the library. Most of them were old and trusted, and had been in the house for many years. There was a look of eager expectancy on their faces, as though they had heard strange news.

"Do you know who this is?" said my mother, pointing towards me.

Evidently Peter Polperrow had told them of my arrival, for without a moment's hesitation they answered:

"It's Mr. Roger."

"You recognise him, then?"

"Ay, that we do."

My mother looked at Wilfred with a yearning look, and then turning towards them said,

"Mr. Roger left this house eleven years ago. Many of you were servants here then, and since then you have served my son and me faithfully; but your rightful master has come home, and now I resign all authority and command to him."

"But mother——" I interrupted.

"Stop," she went on, "I must do my duty. It will not be much longer"—turning to the servants—"that I shall be with you, but this I must confess; I have been the means of Mr. Roger being away from you; through me you have been deprived of your rightful master."

It must have cost her a terrible struggle to say this, for she was a proud woman, and regarded servants as inferior beings to herself, and, as with blanched face and trembling step she left the room immediately after, I realised that she had come to some resolution which as yet was unknown to me.

Meanwhile all the older servants crowded around me, each expressing gladness because of my return, and gladly acknowledging me as master. And all the while Wilfred sat like one entranced, never moving, never uttering a word.

They left us at length and thus Wilfred and I were alone together. For a time neither spoke, then I held out my hand to him.

"Wilfred," I said, "let us shake hands and be brothers once more."

"You are no brother of mine," he said, without moving.

"We are both blessed with the same father, Wilfred," I said.

"But not with the same mother. You know that. Has she told you?"

I nodded.

For a minute he did not speak, but looked at me with such a stony stare that his face seemed entirely changed; then he said slowly, but distinctly:

"I hate you."

"Come, Wilfred," I said, "let the dark past be buried. We can make some arrangement about the property, if any

remains, that will be agreeable to us both. I have no heart to quarrel about money."

"Share with you, when I have been master and have had entire control?" he said. "Never!"

"Nay, Wilfred, be not so hard. Don't let us remember those things that will cause bitter feelings, but think of what is bright and pleasant."

"Bright and pleasant," he answered; "what is there bright and pleasant for me now you have returned? Nay, nay, I am accursed; but, by heavens, so are you."

"And you will not shake hands?"

"Never."

At this moment a servant entered the room with the message that our mother wanted to see us both in her private sitting room.

Neither of us delayed in answering her summons, and in a minute more we were seated near her. I thought I detected a change in her face as I entered; something of her harshness had gone, and a look of tender longing had taken its place.

"Mother," I said, as naturally as I could, "I have been very forgetful and unbrotherly, but I have heard nothing of my sisters, are they well and happy, can you tell me anything about them?"

"Both are married and both are happy and well," she replied absently; "but we can talk of them on some other occasion. I want us to speak of something else just now."

"Yes, mother."

"Roger, will you give us an account of what you were doing and where you went during those years you were absent from us."

I told her all, not in such great detail as I have written it here, but I told her enough to give her the information she desired to know. It took me a long while, but she sat patiently during the whole time, listening attentively to every word, while Wilfred sat with the same stony stare upon his handsome face.

When I had finished she rose and took Wilfred's right hand in her left hand, and my right hand in hers and tried to draw us together.

"Roger and Wilfred, shake hands," she said.

"Gladly," I replied.

"Never," cried Wilfred, drawing his hand away. "Mother, do not think that the hatred of a lifetime can be destroyed in a moment of weakness. It took you years to teach me to hate Roger; you cannot make me love him in a minute. I will never take his hand. I will be his enemy as long as I live. In my heart of hearts I have cursed him, and I will not be friendly now because of a whim of yours."

"Wilfred," she said, "as you value my happiness, as you value your own happiness, here and hereafter, do not refuse. Roger," she continued, turning to me, "great as has been your misery and loneliness, it has not been nearly as great as mine. Oh, if you have suffered for your sin, I have suffered a thousand times more for mine. Morning, noon and night, I have had no rest, no comfort. When I married your father I promised that, God helping me, I would do my duty by you, but as soon as Wilfred was born I hated you, and I vowed that he should be Trewinion's heir and not you. No one but Wilfred knows how I have schemed, deceived, sinned for him, and now, when I am getting old and am yearning for love, he, my only son, has turned against me. Oh, I might have known that the harvest of my sin could not bring happiness; but I loved him so, and trusted him so fully. Oh, Wilfred, you can never have anything but misery while you are your brother's enemy. Learn to love him, Wilfred, and even yet all may be well."

"No, I cannot, and I would not if I could," he cried, savagely. "Both of you have helped to blacken my life. You taught me to hate and deceive, and he, in spite of all we have done together, has thwarted our every purpose. And now why should I love him, or you either. Nay, I hate you both."

Never shall I forget the cry she gave, so full of anguish and despair.

"Hate me, Wilfred!" she gasped.

"Yes!" he cried, harshly. "You taught me to be greedy, and selfish, and deceitful, but you did not tell me of the futility of money and position to satisfy, nor yet of the terrible power which they have, no not even when you knew they would mock me. But for you I should have been poor perhaps, but still happy, while now there's nothing but misery for me here, and hereafter. I tell you I believe we both sold our souls to the devil to get rid of Roger and obtain Trewinion, and now he is chuckling over his bargain."

"But have you no love for me, your mother?" she cried in anguish.

"None," cried he, cruelly, "I love nothing but myself."

Never before have I witnessed the payment in full of the ghastly wages of sin as I did then. Never shall I erase from my memory the awful look upon her face.

"Then, Wilfred, for your own sake, if not for mine, learn to love, to forgive. Naught but misery can come from sin, I know it too, too well."

"I care not," he answered. "There was only one that I ever really loved, and that love you cankered. But I did love her, more than aught else, and she has been taken from me, and he has done it. With her by my side I could have forgiven you, I could have learned to forget my greed; but now it can never be, and although I believe that I have at last made her hate Roger, she still despises me. And now what have I left to live for? Nothing but this; I will be a curse to him. Roger says he believes that the old stories about our house are false, but strange things have happened, and they say that the younger brother can curse the elder. I know what Deborah Teague said; but I repeat it, if I cannot curse him I will curse his children and his children's children. If ever I wed and have children I will teach them to hate all that is near and dear to him. You told me to do so this very night, and although you have suddenly changed your wishes, I will abide by your command."

"Oh, God," my mother cried out in agony, "my punishment is greater than I can bear. My own son, for whom I have sacrificed everything, has discarded me, spurned me. My daughters have left me, no one loves me now."

No man with any manhood left in him could have refrained from pitying her, so helpless, so forsaken. My heart was strangely stirred within me, and tears started to my eyes.

"Mother," I said, "I love you, will you let me be your son?"

"You, Roger! Why I have always been your enemy, it is I who has caused you all your misery and pain. You cannot really love me?"

How fondly she looked at Wilfred even yet, as though she hoped for some tender word or look, but he only walked up and down the room, muttering savagely, yet casting furtive looks towards us.

"I cannot love you as I love Wilfred," she said; "he has discarded me, but I shall love him as long as I live. I am a poor, weak, selfish woman, but I want your love, Roger, and your care; if you can forgive me, and love me."

I laid her poor, weary, aching head upon my breast, where she seemed to find ease in sobbing out her grief.

No sooner did Wilfred see this than, with a mocking laugh, he walked out of the room, leaving us together.

"Will you kiss me, Roger, my son?" she said, presently.

I kissed her, while the tears trickled down my cheeks, and I wondered much to see her who had been so

haughty, so cold, become subdued and penitent.

CHAPTER XXX

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

No words can describe how strange I felt when I stood again in my own bedroom alone. There was the old bed at the corner of the room, just as I had left it long years before. Indeed, nothing in the room had been changed, and it seemed at times as though I had never been away at all, that the past eleven years were only a long dream, and that I was still the gay young Roger who sported on the headland with his younger brother.

I was very excited, and although I had not slept for many hours, I did not feel at all like retiring to rest. I was glad to sit alone, and listen to the roll of the waves on the beach, and think of the strange events which had taken place.

And then there was Ruth. Although I had scarcely mentioned her name since I had arrived she was ever in my mind. Could I now ask her to wed me? My hands were free from the stain of blood, and hatred was no longer in my heart. Surely I might go boldly to her now, and tell her all I desired her to know, yet on the other hand I remembered her look when I last saw her face, the shudder with which I was sure she had recoiled from me. Besides, Wilfred had told me that he had more than ever poisoned her mind against me. And yet I loved her so much! All the experiences during the eleven years of my wandering life had but strengthened my love for her, and that love for her was, I believe, the only link that held me to Heaven, the only power that saved me from falling into hell. And thus I mused on, when—

What was that I heard?

At first it seemed like a stealthy step, but I was not sure; then a few seconds later I thought I heard someone whispering. I opened my door and listened, but could detect nothing.

"It is my fancy," I said, "or else the servants are preparing to get up."

I did not know the time, but I knew that morning must soon be breaking. A drowsy sensation was now creeping over me, so I prepared for a few hours' rest, but as I lay down on the old bed I had used as a boy I distinctly heard the sound of horses' hoofs; They seemed a good way off, but I was not sure, as the night was still, and the sound would travel far and fast; but there was nothing to trouble about, so with a sweet feeling of restfulness I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, and with a glad feeling at heart I dressed quickly and looked out of the window. Yes! I was home at last. The long bitter years of hatred and remorse were behind, the future, though cloudy, could never be as dark as the past had been.

I heard a knock at the door, and on opening it found my mother standing with a look of expectancy on her face. She gazed up into my eyes, as if in doubt about her reception, and then allowed herself to be folded in the arms of her rough sailor son. I knew all the time it was not my love she craved for, but she was glad even for that, so hungry was her heart.

"Roger, do you know it is past mid-day?" she said, with a sad smile. "I thought something was the matter with you, but on listening at the door I heard you breathing regularly, and so let you sleep on. But come to the breakfast-room, I'm sure you must be hungry."

We went down the broad staircase together arm in arm, while the servants flitted around excitedly at the advent of Mr. Roger. How gladly, how proudly they waited on me, while my mother told me that the inhabitants of the parish had arranged to have a bonfire, and that a lot of festivities had been arranged in honour of my arrival! I seemed to be living a new life, to be breathing a new atmosphere, and so kind was my mother to me that by and by I broke down and sobbed like a child.

Then we went out on the headland together, she holding my arm, while the servants smiled and whispered one to another that it was "somethin' like."

By and by, after talking of many things relative to what had happened in the years of my happiness, she said:

"Roger, you still love Ruth?"

"More than ever, mother."

"I shudder when I think of the dreadful fate from which you saved her."

"You heard of that, then?"

"Heard of it? Why, it was the talk of the county. The more so as you so suddenly disappeared."

"Did no one know why?"

"No one except Wilfred and I, unless you told Ruth, I fancy you did tell her, for when Wilfred and I went over to see her she seemed amazed at the sight of him."

"And Wilfred told her of our struggle?"

"Yes, Roger."

"He deceived her."

"He tried to. I do not know if he succeeded."

I saw this turn in the conversation pained her, so I was silent.

After a few minutes she spoke again.

"Are you going to Morton Hall?"

"I do not know."

"Why?"

"I am afraid she hates me, loathes me. I could not bear to see her turn away from me in terror."

"I wish you would go, Roger."

"Why, mother?"

"Because I love her, and I think, I am sure, you will never be happy unless you do."

"But, mother, do you think that——"

"Nay, Roger, I would not tell you if I could. It is for you to discover that."

I could not bear to talk any more about it just then, so to change the conversation I asked her if she had seen Wilfred.

"No," she replied, "but I am not surprised at that he has gone away for weeks together sometimes, and I have had no idea where he has been."

I was about to ask another question when I heard a voice behind me.

"Right glad to see 'ee, Maaster Roger."

"Bill Tregargus," I said, "and I am glad to see you."

There was an uneasy look on his face, however, and although he touched his hat to my mother, and made many

remarks about his happiness at finding me home once more, I saw that something was wrong.

"Cud I ave a vew words in private with 'ee?" said Bill, at length.

"Certainly," I said, and my mother, evidently thinking that Bill had come relative to some matter connected with the estate, left us.

"Ave 'ee seed yer brother, sur?" said Bill, as soon as she was gone.

"Yes, last night."

"'Scuse me, sur; but was 'ee friendly?"

I did not resent this question, for Bill knew of our past relations, he knew what I had said when I heard of Wilfred's cruelty to Ruth.

"No," I said.

"You'll forgive me, Maaster Roger," went on Bill, "but I've got a raison for axin'; was anything said about Miss Ruth?"

"Nothing definite. Why?"

"Maaster Roger," said Bill, as if feeling his way, "people do zay as 'ow he will never stand no chance wi' Miss Ruth now, but do 'ee think 'ee wudd'n try to kip you from 'avin' 'er?"

"I think he would," I cried. "But what then?"

"Maaster Roger, I'm afraid he'll bait 'ee after all, ef you doan't maake haste."

"I don't understand; tell me what you mean quickly."

"Well, Maaster Roger, yesterday I was over to Polcoath Downs. As you knaw, 'tes 'bout fifteen mile from here. I've got a brother as do live there, the waun younger'n me. You remember Daniel, doan't 'ee?"

"Very well. Go on quickly."

"Well, I 'adn't seed un for a long time, so I stayed till nearly mornin', and as I was comin' on the road 'bout an hour afore daylight I heerd the sound of hosses. I was goin' down a steep hill when I heerd it, and I wondered who twas comin' at that time. In a minute more I seed two men comin' ridin'. They wa'ant goin' very vast, so I could hear 'em talkin. When I got to the bottom of the hill I sed to meself, I wan't let those chaps zee me, so I gets under a bush cloase to a pool beside the road. As luck wud 'ave it, they got off their 'osses right against where I was, so as to let um drink, and then I seed that one of them was yer brother, and tother a strange chap, as Maaster Wilfred 'ave got very thick wi'."

"Who was he?"

"I don't knaw, 'cept 'ee's a bad un. 'Ee don't do nothin' but loaf around the Manor and the kiddley-wink (beershop). I'm told as 'ow he's terrible thick wi' Maaster Wilfred, who do kip un to do all soarts ov dirty jobs. I've 'eerd 'ee's from Plymouth, and he goes by the name of Jake Blackburn."

"Well?"

"Well, Maaster Wilfred wur sayin' somethin' about his brother comin' 'ome again and wishin' he knawed he wur comin', as then Jake cud 'ave stopped un from comin' home. Then, Maaster Roger, I 'ad a sort o' notion 'ow that you'd come 'ome again, and I wur glad."

"What then? Tell me quickly."

"Then your brother said as 'ow he'd pay you out now, and that, though you might get the old estate, which was mortgaged, you shud never 'ave the girl you loved."

"Why? How?"

"I couldn't rightly make out, but I heerd Maaster Wilfred zay that he'd kill yer weth hes own 'and rather than you shud ever 'ave her. Then I 'eerd Jake Blackburn ax what 'ee'd got to do wi' that, and your brother told 'im that ef Miss Ruth didn't come down from 'er 'igh 'oss, there'd be some work for 'im to do."

"You don't mean to say that Wilfred would use this villain to kill Ruth?"

"I don't say nothin', sur, but I knaw Maaster Wilfred wur awful mad, and wur tellin' Jake that ef 'ee ded'n do as he was told he'd put a 'angman's rope round es nuddick. I 'eerd un zay, too, that he wud tell 'er you was dead, and that it wur 'er place to 'ave him, and if she wudden—well, and then they was whisperin' one to another."

"And are you sure they were going there?"

"As sure as I can be, sur. I 'eerd em zay they'd git to Morton Hall by ten o'clock."

"And now it's after two. Why did you not tell me before?"

"I've bin three times this mornin' sur, but they zaid they wudden wake 'ee. I've told 'ee as soon as ever I cud."

I could not believe in what Bill had said, it was too terrible, but I hurried madly back to the house, he keeping by my side.

"Do you really think he is capable of such a thing as you hinted at, Bill?" I said.

"I'm sure 'ee's capable of doin' any devilish thing," said Bill; "beside, 'e've bin drinkin' 'ard lately."

The thought was ghastly in the extreme, and yet as I remembered the look on his face the night before, when he said he would ever seek to curse my life, I felt the truth of Bill's words. He had tried to murder me in order to retain wealth, would he not murder her rather than see her make me happy? Then the thought came to me—was this a part of the curse? For the past eleven years I had never known real happiness. Before I had raised the cup to my lips it had been dashed out of my hand. Was it to be now as it had ever been? For a moment I believed that an evil power attended me, and that I could not rid myself of the evil to which I had been born. Then I thought of old Deborah Teague's words. "You ca'ant curse waun that do love everybody, and whose heart es full ov love." This comforted me; not that I believed particularly in anything she might say, but because her words sounded true.

Anyhow, if such were the case, I would resist my fate, I would struggle to the end, and God would help me.

I rushed to the stables, where two or three men lolled around.

"Are the horses all in the stables?" I asked.

"No, sur, there be two gone."

"Good ones?"

"The best we've got, sur. Brown Molly es a thora breed, sur, and will run till she do drop; and Prince is nearly so good."

"Have you a good horse now?"

"There's Bess. She's a bra mare, jist brok in, sur."

"Saddle her at once for me, and stop! Do you know who has the other two horses?"

"No, sur; but Master Wilfred do often take hosses without we knawin' 'bout it."

"Just so. Bring Bess to the hall door immediately."

I rushed into the house, where I found my mother. I told her all Bill had related to me. As I did so I saw her face pale to the very lips.

"Oh, Roger, oh Roger!" she cried, "save him."

"Do you think Bill's surmise correct?"

"Oh, Wilfred, Wilfred, you will kill me yet," she murmured. "Ride fast, Roger, ride for your life. Don't wait a moment if you would save her, and save him!"

The horse was brought up to the door at that moment, a powerful black mare, well fed and exercised.

I kissed my mother and prepared to go, but she held my arm for a moment.

"Be careful and watchful," she said, "he's very cunning; but, oh, my God, save him from this!"

I jumped into the saddle, and in another minute was riding with a fast beating heart towards Morton Hall.

CHAPTER XXXI

TO THE RESCUE

For the first mile I rode almost without heeding the direction I was taking, or thinking of what was the best way to proceed.

My mind was too full of terror. Perhaps even then Wilfred with his devilish cunning was weaving a net from which my darling could not escape. Aided by the villain with whom he had been so friendly, he might destroy my happiness for ever. And so, unthinkingly, I allowed the mare to carry me whither she would. It did not matter, however. By a strange instinct, which I am sure some animals possess, she seemed to divine the road I wanted to go, and plunged forward joyfully.

I was no light weight to carry. It is true that the past year's sorrow had worn me very much, so that there was but little flesh on my great, gaunt frame; but I still weighed nine score pounds, and thus would tire any horse that had to carry me a long distance. I could not have ridden a more noble animal, however; I think she united all the qualities of strength and speed, and tore along the road as though she felt my weight no more than if I had been a feather. It was but little I had done in riding during the eleven years I had been away, but I found I had not lost my old skill, and soon I was able to bring Black Bess into entire subjection, and settled down into a good swinging trot.

I longed to gallop the gallant animal all the way, so anxious was I to reach Morton Hall; but I knew that she could not hold out at such a speed, so I patted her neck and gave her a few kind, caressing words, at which she whinnied a little and tossed her head proudly, as if to tell me she was prepared to go as fast as I liked.

Thirty-five miles. It was a long stretch of land, and difficult to cover quickly. In most places it was very hilly, which would often check our speed. I calculated, however, to get to Morton village in four hours. It was just after two o'clock when we started; by six we should get there if nothing was amiss. It was in the month of October, so that the day would be nearly gone ere I should see the old village church, which a year before had been the scene of such a wonderful event.

After riding an hour I was able to think more clearly, and to form some idea as to the steps I should take. I remembered that I had a cunning, unscrupulous man to deal with, one who, in his disappointment and jealousy, would stop at nothing. There were but little data on which I could build my theories, or form my plans. The first question that appealed to me was, What was Wilfred likely to do? What steps would he take?

From what Bill Tregargus had told me I gathered that he was going to tell her that I was dead, and again press upon her his suit, and then if she would not listen to him to—well, I knew not what.

But I was sure he would not dare to harm her in her own home, where she would be surrounded by so many servants and friends. No, he would seek to lure her away alone; where I could not guess; but knowing Wilfred as I did, I felt sure that this would be his plan. The execution of this plan would, however, be delayed till dark, so my hope lay in arriving before sunset.

Let no one think, then, that I was riding on a scheme of vengeance; on the contrary, my intention was to save. I hoped to save Wilfred from committing a dark deed, I longed to save Ruth from becoming a villain's prey. I had no desire to hurt either Wilfred or his accomplice. No good could come of that. To meet evil with evil is useless for any good purpose.

At length my heart began to beat loudly, for I knew I was nearing Morton Hall. I passed by the farm where a year before a buxom maiden had given me some new milk, and when I had ridden a little farther I saw a great clump of trees which I knew surrounded Morton Church. It was well that the journey was nearly over, for Black Bess was covered with foam, and by her spreading nostrils and hard breathing I knew she would be glad to rest.

Knowing nothing of Wilfred's schemes, I had no definite plans made; but I had been revolving a dozen in my mind, and determined, if necessary, not to hesitate to take bold action.

Just before coming to the village, I decided that it would not be wise to go to the inn. My brother would very likely stable his horses there and for aught I knew might have watchers on every hand. Where should I go, then, so as not to be noticed?

When last there, I discovered that there was no need for me to go into the village in order to reach Ruth's house. Perhaps it would be better to ride there direct, and make the necessary inquiries. Perhaps—God knows how I hoped it—she was still in the house, Wilfred not having been able to concoct a plan sufficiently plausible to get her away alone. If so, I should meet her, and be able to warn and protect her.

This I would do, then, but I dared not go dusty, dishevelled, travel-stained as I was. So I got off my horse, and washed myself in a streamlet that trickled beside the road. Then I picked up a wisp of straw and rubbed down the mare. It was but little I could do for her, but I wiped the foam from her, and made her look less conspicuous than she had been before. This done, I mounted again and rode direct to the Hall.

How my heart thumped as I neared the stately old mansion, and how I hoped and prayed that I might be successful in my mission! I thought not of myself now. My one thought was to save Ruth, and to save Wilfred.

Daylight had begun to fade as I rode up to the Hall door. A stable boy had seen and followed me. Without a moment's hesitation I flung myself from the faithful creature who had borne me so gallantly over those long weary miles.

"Take this mare, rub her down well, feed her well, and wrap her up warmly. And, stay—don't give her too much water."

He looked at me in astonishment, then a look of recognition came into his face. Evidently he had seen me before, for he grinned and touched his cap as he said, "I'll zee to 'er proper, sur."

I would have followed him and made sure that he did as I commanded; for, brought up among horses as I had been, I had learnt to care for them, and to see them properly provided for, but now, other matters were more pressing. So I threw him a crown piece, and hurried to the door.

Again the bell clanged through the old hall, again I stood with beating heart waiting for the answer, for now I was nearing the great crisis of my life—at least, it seemed so to me then.

The old servant I had seen a year before met me, and despite the dim light recognised me in a second—joyfully, I thought.

"Mr. Trewinion, sir," he said, quickly, "walk in."

Again I entered the house and with a fast beating heart.

"Is your mistress at home?" I said, hastily.

He looked up at me anxiously, I thought.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "she is at home; that is, sir, she is not at home now, but we expect her home every minute."

"Has she been far away?"

"No, sir; oh, no, she's only gone to the village."

"Do you know why?"

"Why, sir!" he said, looking at me strangely. "She's not gone into the village exactly, but to a little cottage just outside. You see, sir, she's mighty good to the poor, and she do visit 'em and carry things to 'em."

"Do you know the one she's gone to visit now?"

"Oh, yes, sir. She's a bedridden old woman. Mistress has been to see her many a time."

"Did she walk or ride?"

"Walked, sir; you see, she couldn't ride to Mrs. Bray's, her cottage is among the fields, and there's no carriage road."

"She is not gone alone?"

"No, sir," said the man, evidently wondering more and more at my questions, "one of the servants went with her to carry the basket.

"Have there been any callers here to-day?"

"No, sir, no one has been but Mrs. Bray's little maid, who came to say that her grandmother was worse."

"Ah! You are sure it was Mrs. Bray's granddaughter; you know the maid?"

"Know her, sir! Of course, know'd her ever since she was a baby; you don't think that——"

"How long ago did this girl come?"

"About two hours, sir."

"And how long since your mistress left?"

"Directly after the little maid."

"And the servant who is gone with her is trustworthy?"

"Oh, yes, sir; why sir, you don't——"

"Where is this old woman's house? Tell me quickly."

He told me the direction, and assured me that by going across the park I could reach it in less than ten minutes.

"I'll go and meet her," I said, as calmly as I could, "but if she arrives before I do, say nothing of my being here. I shall not be much later than she. But point out the road by which she will come."

He did so, and then wanted to send a servant with me; but of this I would not hear. I wanted no prying, gossiping servants to be around. The truth was I feared Wilfred had succeeded in sending Mrs. Bray's granddaughter on a false errand, or else had watched her and found out hers. At any rate, I felt sure that he would be cognisant of the child's visit, and would use it as a means to carry out his designs.

I hurried across the park like a deer when the hounds are behind it, cleared the fence that lay at its utmost extremity, and struck into a footpath that led to the cottage. The way was very lonely. A few straggling houses formed the village and the cottage was some distance from them. Two weak, defenceless women could easily be met and overpowered and without anyone being the wiser.

Wilfred was not likely to attempt to carry out his designs in daylight, so if the summons to Mrs. Bray's bedside were genuine, the chances were that Ruth would be allowed to pay the visit first. Perhaps she might be there even now, and if I went a little faster I might be in time to see her before she left the cottage. Filled with this thought, I rushed rapidly on to the little thatched house, and knocked at the door.

A little girl came, with a tallow candle in her hand.

"Does Mrs. Bray live here?" I said, pantingly.

"Iss, sur, she do," replied the child.

"Is she alone?"

"Iss, sur," wonderingly.

"Has any one been to see her this afternoon?"

"Iss, sur. Miss Murten 'ev bin."

"Miss Morton," I said, with a glad feeling at heart. "How long has she been gone?"

"Not more'n 'bout vive or ten minutes, sur."

"Has she gone down the lane?" I said, pointing to the one I took to be that of which the old servant at the Hall had told me.

"Iss, sur," said she, timidly.

Without another word I rushed down the narrow lane which led to a distant farm, then coming to a stile I jumped over it into a field.

Daylight was now quite gone, and I knew that I must be careful. True, I did not know that Wilfred and Blackburn had come to the village at all, but I must be ready for any emergency.

I could dimly see the footpath by the hedgerow, so I ran noiselessly along it, until I reached the end of the field, then I stood upon the stile and listened. All was silent as death.

"Surely," I said. "My fears are in vain. Ruth has gone quietly back to her home. If I am quick I shall overtake her."

With this hope in my heart, yet feeling terribly anxious, I rushed along the hedgeside, and had nearly traversed the length of the field when I heard what I thought was a smothered scream.

The sound was near me, too, it seemed to come from the other side of the fence which was just before me.

With beating heart I went stealthily forward and looked over the hedge into the other field.

In the dim light I saw four figures.

But there was no struggling. They seemed to have only just met, and as I looked I heard a voice that set my every nerve quivering.

"Wilfred," said the voice, which I knew was Ruth's, "how came you here?"

"I came to see you, Ruth," said Wilfred in low, subdued tones.

"But why did you not go to the house? I have been home all day, and my doors are never closed to any one bearing your name."

"I have met you here because I want to see you alone, and because I have some strange things to tell you."

"Well, speak on," she said, haughtily; "here, Clara, come and stand by my side."

"No," said Wilfred, hoarsely, "I want no servants near; I must speak to you alone, here, now. Jake, take this jade a few yards away and stay there."

Jake did as he was told, and the servant, having evidently seen Wilfred before, seemed to think no wrong. I saw Ruth look around her as if in fear, however, while I, scarce knowing why, waited for what should follow next.

"Wilfred," said Ruth, "this is strange acting. Never before has any one dared to treat me so; but you are an old

friend, or I should say perhaps that I have known you a very long time, and so I grant your request. Speak, but speak quickly. Meanwhile we will walk home."

"No," said Wilfred, "I say what I want to say here."

"Why?"

"Ruth, I am a desperate man, and I must use desperate means. I am not going to be frightened out of my purposes; nothing shall stay my hand!"

He spoke with the old intense tone of voice that I knew so well, and I knew, as he said, that he was desperate.

"Well, what have you to tell me, Wilfred?" There was no fear in her voice. Evidently, she felt she was on her own land, and that no one would dare to molest her, where she was beloved by all.

"First of all, Ruth," he said hoarsely, "I am come to tell you that Roger is dead. News came last night of his death."

"Died! How?" she gasped.

"Hanged," he said, savagely. "The pirate vessel on which he sailed was captured, and he has been hanged. One or two of the crew were granted a reprieve, but Roger was the most bloodthirsty man among them, and to him no mercy was shown."

She did not speak, and, after being silent a second, he went on.

"I came to tell you that first of all; I thought you might be glad to know that he will plague you no more.

"Then, Ruth," he went on, "I am come to tell you something else. I cannot live without you, Ruth. I have been mad for love of you for long, long years. Oh, if you only knew, if you only knew!"

"Wilfred," she answered, "say no more about that. Surely you know that when I was nearly driven to marry you, the thought of it almost killed me. You cannot come with that petition again."

"But, Ruth, Roger is dead, and now I have come to beseech you to have pity. I am dying for you, Ruth. Oh, if you will only pity me, and if although you do not love me, you will fulfil my father's wish, and your father's wish, and wed me, you will save me. Save me from death here—from death hereafter."

He spoke with passionate earnestness, which I can never forget. He pleaded for her love as a man fearful of death might plead for his life. But to all his petitions she gave no encouragement.

"I cannot do as you ask, Wilfred," she said, "neither would my father, or your father, if either were alive, have me do it. My eyes have been opened as to their real wishes, and I cannot marry you."

"But, Ruth," he continued, "you do not know. My very existence depends on your answer. Do not think I care for your money; but, driven to madness by your constant refusal of my love, I have acted foolishly, I have blindly engaged in speculation, until Trewinion estate is no longer mine, except in name. If you do not have pity on me it will become the property of strangers, and those who care nothing for us or ours will possess it. My mother will be homeless, and the old rooms, which were my father's and—Roger's will be desecrated by others. For myself I care nothing, but I cannot bear that my mother should have to leave the home of our people."

She seemed moved at this, for in her pure guilelessness I do not believe she ever thought that Wilfred was seeking her for her wealth alone. Hence what he had said appealed to her, as my brother intended it should, as an additional reason for her to accept him. Still, it did not alter her determination.

"I will help you, Wilfred," she said, "if it is in my power to do so. I will see that all shall be well with your mother, but I cannot do as you wish."

"But why?" Wilfred asked hoarsely. "Roger is dead, and even if he were not you could never wed him when you know that his heart is full of murder. You know that he sought my life, and but for a fortunate——"

"I do not know it," she said passionately, "neither do I know that he is dead."

"What!" he exclaimed, savagely, "you believe that I——"

"I know that you have deceived me about him in the past," she said. "I know that you drove him from home. I know that you have tried to make me believe that he sought to murder you, but let me tell you this, Wilfred: If I believed he were dead, which I do not, and if he has been all you say he has, then, knowing you as I do, I cannot, will not, be what you ask. Now, I will go home. Stand aside, please?"

"You refuse, then?"

"Certainly, Wilfred. And now that I have yielded to your wish for this unseemly interview, I wish it to be the end of all such scenes."

"Ay, and it shall be, for I have a few words to say." His tone changed, and he spoke with haughty insolence. "We are in a lonely place," he said, "half a mile from a house. No one will molest us here, and you are in my power. I have begged you to grant my request, now you will have to yield to one of two alternatives. The first is this: The town of —— is ten miles from here. You will ride there with me this very night, quietly, and remain there until arrangements are made for our marriage."

"What!" she exclaimed, "you seek to force me? You dare not do such a thing."

"I dare do anything," he said, "for I am a desperate man. Will you accede to this?"

"Never. I will die first."

"Then hear my other alternative. There is a vessel lying in the cove yonder. I have got it for this emergency. You will come with me now, and to-night we shall sail for a port where my wishes will be carried out in spite of you. Stop, if you scream or cry for help I will gag you, and Jake will do the same by your girl. He has my orders. Choose which you like, but one of them you shall do."

All this time I had listened as in a dream. For a time I seemed incapable of action. I was stupefied by the villainy of my brother, while my blood surged madly at the sound of Ruth's voice. It seemed so strange that I should have come thus, and be listening to such a conversation. At first I could not think it real, and yet I remembered I had ridden thirty-five miles to prevent whatever schemes he had concocted.

"Choose quickly," he went on after a pause. "I have no time to waste. Either you come to the three bridges, where horses are waiting, and ride to ——, and marry me as soon as it can be arranged, or you come to Pendugle Cove. I care not which, but as I am a maddened, desperate man, it shall be one or the other."

She did not lose her presence of mind. I do not think she realised her danger.

"Wilfred," she said, "I have long known that you were capable of much that was bad, but I never thought you were as bad as this. You have my answer. I will die rather than accede to either of your plans, and you dare not carry them into execution."

"But I will. Then you will wish you had consented. Jake, Pendugle Cove, and gag the girl. I will manage Miss Morton."

He laid his hand on her as he spoke. She gave a slight cry for help, which was instantly choked.

Then all my stupefaction left me. With one bound I cleared the fence, and in another second I was by Ruth's side.

CHAPTER XXXII

TWO HEARTS

More than eleven years of seafaring life had accustomed me to danger. During the two years I sailed in the pirate ship I had often been within the jaws of death, for as all the world knows pirates are not dealt leniently with. I had been mixing with men of all nationalities, and had been engaged in all kinds of fray. Thus, I was never unprepared for a struggle. To be ready to meet danger was second nature with me.

Almost instinctively I settled on my plan of attack. They were two to one, so stratagem was required as well as strength. Noiselessly as possible, and with no parleying, I seized Wilfred, mastered him, and bound him, before he was capable of resisting. No sooner had I done this than I saw Jake Blackburn coming towards me, as if wondering what was the matter, but seeing a man almost twice as big as himself confronting him he took to his heels.

The struggle was so soon over that Ruth scarcely realised what was done. Wilfred, however, understood only too well.

"Jake, Jake," he shrieked, "help!"

"Jake is gone, Wilfred," I answered. "He will not help you."

"Roger, Roger," cried Ruth, "is that you?"

"It is Roger," I said, as calmly as I could, "but danger is not over yet. Will you lead the way to the high road, and then on to the Hall as quickly as you can?"

The servant came up just then. She had contrived to free herself, and now ran to assist her mistress.

Wilfred writhed and struggled, but I held him fast. This I had little difficulty in doing, as his hands were firmly tied behind him. Meanwhile Ruth, as if in a dream, led the way home. Silently, yet swiftly, we went on, I wondering all the time, not whether Jake Blackburn would return with his accomplices, if he had any, to carry out Wilfred's design, but whether Ruth still loved me.

I dared not speak to her. My tongue seemed tied, while she moved on like one in a trance.

Presently we came to the churchyard gates, and as we did so I could scarcely help shuddering. Like lightning the events of a year before flashed through my mind. Vividly I remembered going down the churchyard path and opening the old church door, in order to gaze on the face of the dead. But Ruth seemed perfectly unconscious of that which haunted me. A look of expectancy was on her face, and by and by she gave a glad exclamation as we heard the sound of wheels. In a minute more a carriage drove up and stopped at our side. I still held Wilfred by the arm, and he, doubtless feeling that resistance was useless, submitted quietly.

"Roger," said Ruth huskily, "you will come home with me?"

In reply I was about to enter the carriage with Wilfred by my side; but no sooner did she see this than she exclaimed as if in horror,

"Not him, Roger; no, not him."

"Then I will ride on the box by the driver," I said. "I will not let him go yet."

"But will you be safe?" she said, anxiously.

"Perfectly safe, Ruth," I answered.

Then she allowed the servant to help her into the carriage as if she were dazed, while I mounted the box with Wilfred.

We were not long in reaching Morton Hall, I realising more clearly each minute the position in which I was placed and the hopes dearest to my heart.

The old servant I had seen on my first visit was delighted as well as relieved at our advent, but looked strangely at Wilfred, and at my request silently opened the door of a room, and left us together.

I did this because, as I descended from the carriage, Ruth said:

"Say what you must say to him quickly, Roger, I cannot bear for him to be in the house. I cannot bear to see him again!"

And so he and I stood alone in the room into which we had been ushered, and in the flickering light I saw that his face was pale as death.

"You have won again," he said between his set teeth.

"Be thankful I have won, Wilfred," I said. "Supposing it had been otherwise, and you had succeeded in your designs. Would you have been any happier? Would you not have been haunted with the thought that you had ruined her life, besides condemning her to the hell of a loveless marriage?"

"And would I have cared for that?" he retorted, "My chief thought was to baulk you, to crush you, as the younger brother should crush the elder, when the elder has been unworthy of his name. To do this I would suffer hell, here and hereafter; to do this I would allow myself to be buffeted, scorned, hated; I would be as I have been, the vile plotter and cunning villain. And why? I hate you, partly because you have stepped into the place I longed for, but more because my mother taught me to do so. Ay, and I will hate you, and I will curse you."

"Wilfred," I said, "do not goad me too far. I wish you no harm; nay, I only wish you good. I have in the past sacrificed much for you; but if you plot against Ruth again, or if you lift a finger against her, I shall be obliged to crush you as I would an adder, not because I hate you, but because I care for others."

"And that's your love for me, is it?" he sneered.

"Yes, it is my love," I answered; "for I will not allow you to be more a devil than you are while I can prevent it. Remember, Wilfred, there is a law in England, and to that law I will appeal, and if that law will not give me justice, then, Wilfred, you know me, I will take you in hand, and I will lock you up as a fiend, a moral madman, that should not be at large. I will imprison you as I would a mad dog. I want no revenge, for I have no wish for it in my heart, although God only knows what I should have felt had you succeeded in your designs to-night. As it is, I only tell you to beware."

"And what do you intend doing with me now?" he said.

"Nothing," I said. "At first I held you to keep you from doing harm, but when I saw the carriage I brought you here, that I might give you this warning."

"And do you think I care for your warning?"

"I do not know, Wilfred; but in roving round the world for more than eleven years I have learnt to take care of myself. Depend upon it, I shall use that knowledge, not only to care for myself, but for others. Be careful then. Justice is sometimes as strong a feeling as revenge, and if needs be I shall take terrible means that justice may be done."

Upon this I cut the handkerchief with which I had bounds his hands, and he was at liberty. He snapped his fingers in my face.

"You have given me warning," he said, hoarsely, "Now I will warn you. First of all I thank you for what you have told me. I will heed your words, and you need not fear that I shall put myself within the reach of the law. Experience has taught me wisdom. But I tell you this again. If there is any power in evil, you shall suffer. If it is possible to sell myself to the devil that I may make you accursed, I will do it; if the curse of a man who hates can

avail, your future shall be as black as hell, and your children and your children's children shall suffer too. I have told you this before, and I tell you so again. Not one penny of the money you can get out of Trewinion will I have; but I shall live, and you shall have reason to know it."

With that he went out and I did not seek to hinder him. I saw two of the servants, evidently under orders to do so, follow him as if to see him safely out of the grounds, and thus I was left alone.

I did not think of his words, nor did they have any effect upon me. I seemed to be encased in an impenetrable armour. Sorrow I did feel for him, but fear entered not into my heart.

For some minutes I sat alone, wondering what I should do. I had indeed found Ruth, and yet I knew nothing of her feeling towards me. I knew not whether I might hope, or whether the events of the long weary years had destroyed all her love for me. I longed to go to her, and yet I dared not. I longed to tell her of the great love that burned in my heart, but something hindered me from doing so. What should I do? I was in the same house with her, I had again rescued her from terrible surroundings, she had spoken kindly to me, and yet I remembered the look she gave me more than a year ago, and I could not nerve myself to seek her.

By and by a knock came to the door, and a servant entered.

"Please, sir, your room is ready," he said, and led the way to a bedroom.

I followed him bewilderedly, wondering what the end was to be. Everything was so strange that I scarcely realised what I was doing.

"Miss Morton told me to tell you that she would be in the library," he said as he showed me into the bedroom, and left me.

It will be remembered that I was more than thirty years of age, and yet no lover of eighteen could have felt more nervous than I. For the first time during eleven long years I dared to hope that I might be happy, and yet as I stood outside the door, longing yet not daring to enter, my limbs trembled like those of a woman in great fear.

At length I knocked timidly, and heard Ruth's voice telling me to enter, and in a second more we stood face to face.

She stood by the library table with an eager look upon her face. For a minute we did not speak, but looked steadily at each other.

How beautiful she was in spite of the long years of trouble and disappointment! True, the first blush of maidenhood was gone, for she was only four years younger than I, but she was beautiful beyond description. Little of stature, yet perfectly moulded, her great, grey eyes still possessed their old charm, while her brown hair made a fitting crown for so beauteous a face. To me, the rough sailor, who for more than eleven years had scarcely spoken to another woman, save Salambo's wife and my mother, she seemed like an angel.

All this flashed through my mind as her great eyes met mine.

"Ruth," I said.

"Roger," she sobbed, "thank God you've come."

I could not speak another word just then. I could only open my arms; but with a glad look on her face, and with a joyful cry, she laid her face on my bosom. And I—I was in Heaven. My happiness was beyond all thought, all hope. It was joy unspeakable to feel her in my arms, and to know that no cloud intervened.

"Ruth," I said after a while, "I have loved you all these long years, loved you when all was darkness, and when there was no hope. When my heart was full of hatred for all else, I loved you. Ruth, I have been a sinful man, rejecting God's help, and breaking His laws, but I have loved you."

She did not answer, save to sob as though her heart were too full for utterance.

"Can you not speak some word, to me, Ruth?" I went on. "I know you must have hated me when I left you more than a year ago, for in my madness I thought that I had——"

"No, no, Roger, I never hated you," she said, quickly. "I loved you all the time. I was mad, I think—and I did not know what I was doing, and I thought I should have died when I knew you were gone."

"And now, Ruth?"

"Can you ask, Roger, after—after all you have—no, no I do not love you because of what you have done, but because I cannot help it," and she clung more closely to me.

After that I remembered little that was said, and what still remains with me I cannot write down, for such joy as mine comes to man but rarely, and cannot be told to others.

By and by the dinner bell rang, and Ruth and I entered the dining hall together, where we found Mr. Inch, still stately and upright, but growing very feeble.

He had heard of my arrival, and now gave me a hearty welcome. I learnt afterwards that he had endeavoured to do all in his power to atone for the past, and that no one could be more true and faithful than he, after he had once shaken himself free from Wilfred's coils. And I found, too, that he had constituted himself Ruth's protector, and although she often had friends to cheer her in her loneliness, to the end she regarded him as her adviser and comforter.

When Ruth and I were again alone in the library, she asked me to relate all that had passed since I had left her on that terrible night.

Then I told her of the scene at my home on the night before, of Wilfred's avowal of hatred, and then of what had happened in the morning, and of Bill Tregargus's news. I described the journey to the Hall, and my inquiries of the servant, and at the cottage where I had been directed.

"He told me you were dead," she said hoarsely.

"I heard him," I answered.

"I did not believe him," she went on; "I could not, something told me even then that you were near me, and so I was not afraid—but oh, I shudder at it now."

"Thank God I was in time," I said; "and yet I cannot think he would have dared to do what he threatened."

"I do not know, Roger; I dare not think of it; but what passed between you after you came here?"

Then I told her all, told her of the curse which was said to belong to our race, and related how Wilfred had sworn that if it could reach me I should never know happiness.

"Do you think it is true," I said, at length; "or do you think these stories are only vague rumours and idle tales?"

"I cannot say," she answered. "Your mother told me many wild stories when I used to live at Trewinion Manor, and I thought they were true."

"Then," I said, "if it is true, I cannot allow you to link your life with mine. Why should I bring pain and sorrow on your?"

"I do not know whether these stories are true," she repeated; "but, Roger, I am yours always. If you are to have sorrows, I intend to bear them with you. I do not believe a curse can fall on a heart that is full of love like yours; but if you are to be cursed, Roger, I shall help you to bear it."

And thus there was light, even on the one black cloud of the sky of my life.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DAWNING OF THE MORNING

I would fain linger over that evening, and the days which followed. To me a new life full of joy and pleasure began. And yet I did not feel quite at rest. A fear constantly haunted me that Ruth would be taken away from me, so I begged her that there should be no delay in arranging for our wedding.

When I left her the following morning, I made her promise that she would not go out of the house, unless under sufficient escort, while she in return made me promise that I would not for any length of time stay away from her. With a sad heart I mounted Black Bess to ride back to Trewinion Manor, and watched her until we could no longer see each other as she stood with tearful eyes at the hall door, but it was only to be for a day, for on the morrow I determined I would return.

I found my mother anxiously awaiting me when I arrived home. She was, however, relieved beyond measure when I told her of the defeat of Wilfred's schemes.

"And you, Roger?" she asked anxiously, "are you going to give me Ruth for a daughter?"

I think my answer satisfied her, for a look of contentment came into her eyes.

As soon as possible I consulted the old family lawyer, and together we discussed the affairs of the estate. They were quite as bad as Wilfred had declared. Everything he could turn into money he had sold or mortgaged, until there was scarcely any unencumbered property; but the lawyer told me that, with care and economy, I might in a few years replace what Wilfred had so extravagantly wasted.

I also visited my sisters, and found them delighted beyond measure at seeing their brother again, and looking forward with joyful anticipations to welcoming their new sister.

Altogether my life was very happy, and as I constantly rode over to Morton Hall to see the sweet woman who had promised to be my wife, and watched the gladsome smile that lit up her face whenever she saw me coming, my cup of joy was full.

A month later we were wedded in the old church, from which I had carried her more than a year before.

When I entered the gloomy building, I almost felt like shuddering, so awful were its associations, and when I saw the clergyman take his stand near the very spot from which I had turned back the stone, to enter the resting-place of the dead, I could not help picturing what I had then seen. I think Ruth must have felt it too, for her hand trembled in mine. Perchance she thought of the awful doom from which, by the mercy of God, I had rescued her; but when I heard the old clergyman pronounce us man and wife, and then repeat in solemn tones the words that were full of meaning to me, "whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder," my heart thrilled with a new joy, for I felt I possessed the greatest blessing on earth.

And then as the bells pealed out, while with Ruth on my arm we traversed the long nave, it seemed as though the angels of God were there to smile on our wedding morn.

And what of Ruth? In her great happiness, she could scarcely grieve for the long years of pain, and as she nestled nearer to me, on our way back to the Hall, she whispered that no joy could be as great as ours, because for years we had both despaired of ever meeting each other again.

At the wedding festivities, my mother sat, pale and sad, perchance thinking of Wilfred, of whom we had heard nothing since the night he had been disappointed of his hopes. As soon as they were over, we went back to Trewinion, which we both decided should be our home.

I shall never forget the scene as we returned and entered by the postern door into the grounds. All the people in the parish had gathered together to do us honour, and with gladsome words and hearty cheers they bade us

"welcome home." They lit great bonfires on the headland, around which the village lads and girls danced with joy, because of the return and happy marriage of "Master Roger."

And yet amidst all the joy I could not help sorrowing for my mother. It is true that both Ruth and I, as well as Katherine and Elizabeth, had done all in our power to make her happy, but I saw that she brooded over the past, and was anxious about Wilfred.

"Mother," said Ruth, brightly, "your sad days are over now; let only bright and happy things possess your mind."

This was after the crowd had gone home, and we sat around a huge fire, for November had come, and the nights were chilly.

"How can I be happy," she answered, "when, but for me, you might have had happiness instead of misery these eleven long years? How can I think of gladness when my accursed selfishness has destroyed my boy's life, made him hate his mother, and driven him into the world an outcast? And, besides this, it is I who have led him to curse you and be your enemy, and of this I am sure, if he can ruin your life he will."

"But he ca'ant," said a croaking voice in the doorway, and turning round we saw Deborah Teague. She was ninety years of age now, and bent almost double, but she had hobbled up from her cottage to speak to the new squire.

"Maaster Roger," croaked the old dame, "do 'ee remember that there night when you come'd up to Betsey Fraddam's cave in the middle ov the night?"

"Very well, Deborah," I answered.

"People do zay as 'ow we ain't got no power," she went on; "but ded'n us tell 'ee true? We tould 'ee you'd 'ave to suffer; but there's no curse can stand 'ginst love, and so when you larned to love everybody, oal your darkness went away."

"True, Deborah," I answered.

"But take care o' yer brother still," she croaked, "ef ever you do hate, or feel enmity to he, or to anybody else, well then—black days 'll come. And, Maaster Roger, ef ever you do 'ave cheldern, taich 'em to love, for love es the only power 'gainst curses, and as sure as you'd live, yer brother es yer enemy, and aw, Maaster Roger, remember Trewinion's curse!" As she spoke she lifted her skinny hand, as I had seen her lift it long years before.

Soon after the old woman left, and I sent one of the servants with her, to see her safely home.

* * * * *

I have little else to write, for in narrating what happened during the years that followed I shall not use many words. My pen drags wearily, and my eyes begin to grow dim.

About six months after our wedding we received the startling news that Wilfred was married. During the years of my absence he had made the acquaintance of a lady whose father's estate joined Ruth's, and whom he had fascinated by his handsome presence and smooth speech.

The news made me glad at first, for I hoped that his marriage would put an end to his enmity and make us brothers again. But when I went to see him he at first refused to see me, and then he told me he had only married to gain wealth and power, both of which should be used to crush me and mine.

And so, to my heart's deep sorrow, he still remained my enemy, the door of his heart continued to be shut towards me, and the one black cloud on my sky continued to remain.

After that two years passed quietly away, during which time my mother grew weaker and weaker, and although I trust that her life was not altogether sad, yet she was constantly weighed down with the one great trouble of her

life. At the end of two years she became too weak to leave her room, and after a few weeks passed away. Before she did so, however, she asked us to send for Wilfred; but he refused to obey her summons, and so she never saw him from the night on which he told her he hated her for cursing his life.

Shortly after she died a boy was born to us, but he only lived a few weeks. Then a little girl came; but she too was taken, and we began to fear the curse of my race. After that two more years passed away without any event of importance, save that Deborah Teague died, and then another boy came, whom we called Roger, and he is with us yet, our joy and our hope.

And now what more shall I write? I have told my story so that Roger, my only son, may learn the lessons of my life.

Looking back now over the days of my life, I cannot say whether I believe in the legend of my race, and so I know not whether my son may have to suffer, and his children inherit a dreadful legacy.

It is true Wilfred still hates me, and has taught his children to hate me and mine. In a letter he sent me not long since, he tells me the curse of the Trewinion shall still fall on Trewinion's heirs, that they shall have blackened lives and terrible deaths.

What is that? It is Ruth asking me if my work is not almost done, and I answer, "Yes, I have almost done." And as I answer, I look up from my paper and see my dear one who has been with me for long years, ever my comforter, my counsellor, and joy. She has lost the fresh bloom of her womanhood, but to me she was never so beautiful as now. Never did I think that such a pure soul could exist on earth, or that a woman could be so brave in difficulty, so hopeful in sorrow, so comforting in the hours of darkness.

I look forward with hope and joy. Let the lamp of life burn dimmer and dimmer, I fear not. Ruth will be near me, and her presence will make me strong. But a few more years, and Ruth and I must enter the dark valley from which we shall never return, but she will be by my side, and in her dear presence, I am full of hope.

THE END OF ROGER TREWINION'S CONFESSION.

EPILOGUE

I

Thus finished the story, a story of sin, and sorrow, and of a curse. I must confess that when I laid it aside the life of Roger Trewinion had become very real to me, and for a long time I sat thinking over the events which were related. Everything was more vivid to me, for I had for days past been living in the atmosphere of superstition, and speaking to people who still believe in many of the things about which Roger Trewinion spoke. Moreover, I had seen the old house, I had realised the rugged grandeur of the rock-bound coast, I had let my imagination brood over the great mass of rocks which are called the "Devil's Tooth." In spite of myself, too, I began to be influenced by the story of the "curse," which, although not clearly explained, was fearfully spoken about. Yet I could not see why a man like the present Roger Trewinion should allow himself to become a misanthrope because of it. Perhaps succeeding events had led him to shun society; but whatever may have been the explanation of his attitude, I longed to know more about himself and his family, and before I went to sleep I made up my mind that I would go back to Trewinion Manor and see whether the "Trewinion curse" had manifested itself since the time the grandfather of the present squire wrote his confessions.

It was midday, when I left my apartment, and, on entering the reading room of the hotel, I found my friend Will just on the point of sending to see if anything had happened to me.

"Well, have you read the confessions?" grunted he, after grumbling some little time.

"I have, indeed," I answered.

"And found a lot of foolish jargon, I suppose?"

"I found a strange story," I answered, "and it has so interested me that I am going to hire a conveyance and drive to Trewinion this very afternoon."

Will muttered something about the man going crazy over silly stories, and then burst out laughing, but still showed considerable interest as I related to him the chief outlines of "the confessions."

After a meal, I started for a twelve-mile drive along the coast, and was able to enjoy to the full the grand scenery that escaped my attention on the afternoon of the previous day. As I drew near to the house, too, I was able to recognize many of the places Roger had mentioned, which made the events connected with them far more real. So real, indeed, were they that once or twice I felt like shuddering as I thought of the feelings that must have possessed him. Especially was this so when I traced the outlines of the "Devil's Tooth," and when I thought I recognized the spot on which Wilfred and Roger had struggled for life.

At length I reached the postern door, which had looked so formidable on the previous day, and was again met by the same men I had seen before. The place did not now seem nearly so strange, and I felt as though I were a friend of the Trewinion family, and as if the old house had been long familiar to me.

Roger Trewinion welcomed me heartily, and I thought I saw in his face some indications of expectancy.

"Well," he said, after I had been seated a few minutes, "you have read the confessions?"

"Yes."

"And what do you think of them?"

"I found them so interesting that I could not leave them until I had read the last word."

"And now you understand why I live here like a hermit, and why such strange stories are circulated about me?"

"I can see why stories are circulated about you certainly, but I cannot see why you live here so lonely and forsaken."

"But you read about the curse, and the way it worked itself out?"

"I read what might easily be explained in the light of to-day. Your grandfather saw things through the glasses of the time he wrote. Like all literature, it is a product of the age and surroundings of the writer, and must be judged accordingly."

"Ah, but you do not know all that followed. If you did you would not talk thus."

"No, I am here to-day to hear more, so interested have I become. I found yesterday that you were a man of culture and intellectual power, and I cannot help wondering that such a story could so influence you."

"No, honestly, I do not think I am a fool, and, believe me, I have read and studied, as few men have, in order to free myself from the fear that possesses me. Look at me! I look sixty years of age, and yet I am only fifty. Fear and dread have made me old. Naturally, I am fond of society, but an invisible presence, which always seems to confront me, makes me live alone, without friends, without companionship."

"Will you tell me the sequel of what I have read, then?" I said, anxiously, for I was greatly interested.

"Yes, I will tell you as plainly as I can. It is said that my grandfather—the writer of the confessions—died a terrible death, and that dread thoughts ever haunted him. Of that, however, I cannot speak authoritatively."

"I do not believe it," I said. "No one who reads the closing words of his confession could believe such a thing. Nay, I feel sure his end was peace."

"Well, it may be so; I hope it is. But directly after his death my grandfather's brother, the Wilfred he speaks so much about, sent for my father. What he said to him I do not know, but from that time he became as one possessed of the devil. He married, and although his wife was my mother, and it is hard to say it, she made his life terrible to bear. They had several children, all of whom died at an early age, excepting me. Everything to which my father put his hand, seemed accursed, and every life he touched he blighted. Although, before he died, my grandfather had put the property on a firm and secure basis, my father, in spite of himself, let a great deal of it slip out of his hands. Disappointed in life, he drifted away into sin, and died with his mouth full of curses, a raving maniac. After his death I of course succeeded him. True, I do not need money, but a great part of the estate is gone, while the whole of the Morton estate has passed from my hands."

"To whom?"

"To the other branch of the family. Before my father's death, Wilfred had secured the whole of my grandmother's estate, and a great deal of mine," as he spoke his eyes lit up with an angry flash.

"And does the enmity still exist?"

"Ay, does it? Man, I tell you the hatred is not one-sided now. I have prayed to love, and I cannot; if hatred can make a man liable to come under a curse, I am that man. There is bitter undying enmity between us. Our family has been looked on by them as robbers of their rights, and enemies of their peace. Wilfred taught his children to look on us so, as he swore he would, and the feeling exists to-day."

He paused a second and then went on.

"And now they gloat over the fact that the old Trewinion Manor shall be theirs, the place they have coveted so long, and that I shall pay for my father's sins by dying an accursed death. I am the last of the heirs, and, according to them, am of the third generation, my grandfather being accounted by them as the first who really felt the curse. Do you see now why I fear? I saw my father die, and the legend says that my death shall be worse than his. Even now I can hear shrieks of despair, and his unavailing cries for peace and comfort, and that I am to die a death worse than that is maddening to think."

I saw that he had been feeding his morbid imagination by brooding over these things, and that living alone in that lonely old house of weird associations must have led him to live such an unnatural life that he had become a confirmed monomaniac.

"But why should you be the last of your race? And why should you give way to these dread fancies?"

"Why should I be the last of my race?" he repeated—"ah, man, you do not know."

"I know that you could wed some pure-minded woman who would drive thoughts of the curse away, even such a one as your grandmother, the Ruth whom I read of in the confessions."

"And do you think I could marry? Let me tell you. When I was about five and twenty I determined that I would not succumb to dark feelings. I went into society, and I fell in love with an angel. Ay, she was an angel, and it is she who makes me believe there is a heaven, for I am sure such a soul as hers could never die. Well, my love was returned, and I laughed at all thoughts of the curse, and soon I was wedded to my darling. For three years I was in Heaven. My life was full of joy and gladness, and Alice was as happy as I. But at the end of that time every hope was dashed to the ground, every joy was stamped out of my life. And why? I have not spoken of this for many a long year, but I feel a relief in being able to speak about it now. A year after we were married, a baby was born to us, a bright, bonny boy, and we called him Roger, the old family name. My joy knew no bounds, and I breathed defiance against my enemies. How could there be a curse, I said, when God had given us such a boy? Ah, how we loved him, Alice and I, how we watched him as, day by day, he grew in strength of body and mind! A year passed by and all was well, still another passed and nothing seemed to darken our sky. Our boy was now two years old, and was strong and healthy, while my wife and I looked forward to long years of happiness.

"But the curse had been laid upon my race, and it crept upon us like a crawling poisonous serpent. Just after our boy's holiday he was missing. We searched for him high and low, we scoured the country side, but we never saw him alive again."

"What became of him?" I asked anxiously.

"A week after we missed him some fishermen discovered the body of a child, bruised and beaten beyond recognition, but still wearing clothes similar to those worn by our boy. And thus we concluded, that he must have strayed and fallen over the cliff."

I felt it useless to speak. Words, I knew, would only add to the suffering caused by the awakening of these bitter memories.

"It broke our hearts," he continued, hoarsely, after a minute's silence. "Soon I saw that grief was killing my wife. God only knows how I prayed for her. I consulted all the best physicians; but it was no use, in three months sorrow killed her, and—I was left alone."

He laid his head on the table, while sobs shook his mighty frame, and for minutes he did not speak. Mastering himself at length, he continued, more calmly.

"Then I shut myself up here. I dismissed all the servants save the two you have seen, and have for years refused to mix with my fellows. I grew churlish and bitter. I talked strangely, until stories were circulated about me, wild and foolish, of course, but still making me become more a misanthrope than ever. Why I gave you admittance yesterday I do not know, but acting on sudden impulse I did so, and then was led to allow you to see those confessions, and still further to relate my story. Now do you believe in the curse? Now do you believe that, remorseless as fate, it is dogging me, and will dog me, until, mad with despair, and taunted by powers of darkness, I go away into darkness?"

"No," I answered, "I do not."

"Why not?"

"Curses such as that do not exist, as your grandfather half perceived. You would not believe in anything of the sort but for your unhealthy and lonely life. Go out into God's sunshine, lead a healthy, vigorous life, and your dark fancies will dispel like mist in the summer's sun."

He shook his head sadly.

"Nothing can turn the curse aside now," he said, "only one thing could ever have done so."

"And what is that?"

"If my son had lived and married, and children had been born to him, then I should not be the last of my race, and the curse must go."

"But why may not you marry again?"

"I marry!" he exclaimed. "Man, much as I fear the horrible death that I daily think about, I would rather bear it than that another woman should take the place of my Alice. No, no, that can never be!"

"Then go out into the world and mix with your fellow creatures," I said, "I believe that even this visit of mine will do you good."

"Your visit yesterday did do me good," he answered, "and I hope to see you again soon. The old place shall ever be open to you. Come when you like. I think you could make me forget some of the dark things of life. But now about the publishing of these confessions. Can it be done?"

For a time we talked the matter over, and after a while I drew him on to converse about other things until he became comparatively cheerful.

II

Will and I finished our tour around the Cornish coast, and then I came back to London, and made arrangements for the publication of the manuscript which had been given to me for that purpose.

I had re-written all that was necessary, and had corrected the last proof sheets from the printers, when I recollected that we were near the date on which I had promised to go to Trewinion Manor. I must confess that, sitting in my rooms in London, weary with the amount of work I had done, the thought of spending a few days among the scenes in which I had been led to take so much interest, was very fascinating to me, and I eagerly began to make preparations for going.

Two days before the time for starting, I received the following letter;—

"DEAR ——, I must ask you to delay your visit a little while—how long I hardly know—yet. I have received information, which has every evidence of being true, that my son is not dead. I have no time to go into details now, but I pray God, ay, I even hope, that there is yet happiness in store for me. Indeed, I feel like saying, with one of my ancestors of whom you have read, 'There is no curse, God is love!' Yet, I am naturally terribly anxious, and I leave Trewinion to-day to verify the information, and please God to bring home my son! The very thought is Heaven! Ah, dear God, may it be so!

"I will let you know all later on, for I have come to feel that you are my friend, and if—if all is well, I will give you such a welcome as man never had before.

"I shall be doubly glad to see the 'confessions' printed, if my hopes are realised.

"Anxiously, yet hopefully.
"ROGER TREWINION."

I have finished my work. I have told how I came by the strange history here given, and, without sacrificing

altogether the quaint and characteristic Cornish vernacular, I have endeavoured to tell the tale in homely English, and, as far as possible, in the spirit of the time in which the events herein narrated passed.

Of the final outcome of the matter mentioned in the letter just quoted, it is not for me to say anything now. It may be that at some future time I shall have an opportunity of following still further the fortunes of the Trewinion family; but, in laying aside my pen for the present, I must express my feelings of thankfulness that hope had dawned in the sky of the lonely man whom I met in the old house on the cliff.

THE END OF EPILOGUE

[The end of Roger Trewinion by Hocking, Joseph]