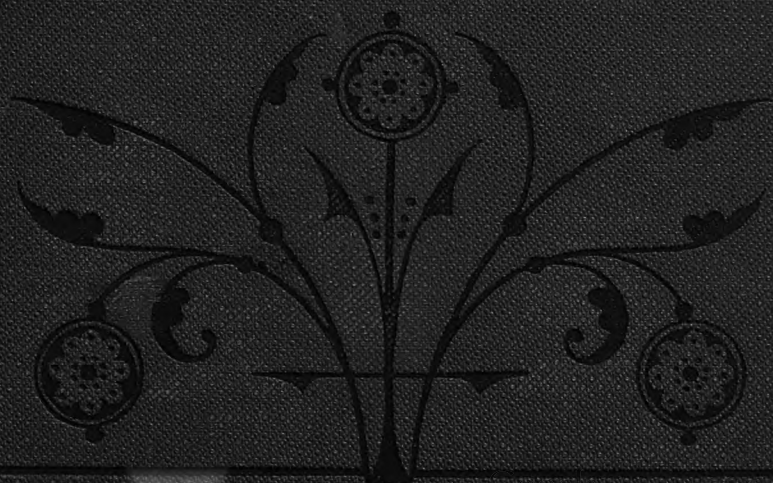

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OLIVE VARCOE.



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OLIVE VARCOE:

A *Nobel*.

BY

FRANCIS DERRICK,

AUTHOR OF 'THE KIDDLE-A-WINK,' 'MILDRED'S WEDDING,' ETC.

(*Mrs. Hotley*)

NEW EDITION.



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This Work is Dedicated

TO THE

RIGHT HON. THE COUNTESS POULETT

BY HER VERY SINCERE FRIEND

AND FORMER NEIGHBOUR

THE AUTHOR.

PRINTED BY
BLAKE AND MACKENZIE, LIVERPOOL AND GLASGOW.

OLIVE VARCOE.

CHAPTER I.

‘To ME, Sir Hilton!—and you say this to me!’

‘To you, Eleanor Maristowe, and to none other in the world. Why are you astonished? Have you not seen this long while that I love you?’

‘No,’ said Eleanor, ‘I never dreamed of it. I thought that you loved another.’

‘Then, Eleanor, on my life you have wronged me!’ he cried. ‘Whom did you suppose I loved? I have never seen any woman but you whom I could wish to make my wife.’

The young girl to whom Sir Hilton Trewavas spoke thus earnestly was silent, but her fair face was covered with blushes, and the little hand resting in his trembled visibly.

‘If I could only believe you,’ she said at last, in a low voice; ‘if I could only think it was true.’

‘Tell me why you doubt me, Eleanor?’ cried her lover, eagerly. ‘Let me defend myself. Of what do you accuse me?’

‘I thought your cousin, Olive——’

‘My cousin Olive!’ he interrupted, fiercely. ‘What of her?’

The girl drew her hand from his, and turned away her face proudly.

‘I see,’ said she, ‘you grow angry the moment I mention her name. Go back to your cousin Olive. I will never take another girl’s lover from her.’

‘This is nonsense, Eleanor! I am not her lover. Has she dared to say so?’

'She has not quite said so,' was the reply; 'but her manner, and your manner——'

'My manner was that of a cousin,' said he, 'nothing more. Eleanor—dear Eleanor, hear me! Don't leave me; don't wreck my happiness for such a folly as this.'

Eleanor Maristowe was stealing away from his side among the trees, but she came back at this appeal, and he seized her hand again.

'Eleanor,' he exclaimed, 'what can I say—what can I do to convince you of my truth?'

'And have you never loved Olive Varcoe?'

'No, never,' he replied. 'Eleanor, do not make me hate the poor girl. Remember, she is dependent on my bounty.'

'I am sorry,' said Eleanor, softly; 'I would not say a word to injure her; but I assure you she has always implied to me that you loved her; therefore I have avoided you as much as I possibly could.'

'And for this you have treated me so coldly, so cruelly! Eleanor, you owe me some amends. Say frankly now that you love me, and will be my wife.'

'If Olive——'

'Fling Olive to the winds!' he interrupted. 'Say "Yes," Eleanor. I want that one word—"Yes."'

'If you really love me, I say it—Yes. But if Olive has any place in your heart——'

'If!' said her lover. 'I will have no "ifs." You are mine now.'

He had her in his arms; and as his lips touched hers, Eleanor forgot her jealousy, and the vision of Olive Varcoe's bright flashing face faded away.

* * * * *

'John, I am going to be married,' said Sir Hilton Trewas to his brother. 'My bachelor days are nearly over. Congratulate me.'

'I'll wait till I know who the lady is,' said John, a great, easy, good-natured fellow, slightly given to superstition and a few other weaknesses.

'Well, guess then who it is,' said his brother.

'Do I know her, Hilton?'

'Slightly, I think.'

'My dear brother,' said John, 'I hope it is not Olive Varcoe?'

'Olive Varcoe!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, impatiently. 'Am I to have that girl always thrust into my ears? Do you think me a fool, John, that I should marry a little flirting witch like Olive Varcoe?—a cousin, too!'

'So you own she is a witch,' said John. 'And you know she is a flirt. Bad signs, Hilton—very.'

'Cut it short, John, unless you want me to get savage!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'I am going to marry Eleanor Maristowe.'

The blood flew to the face of John, leaving it quite pale as it rushed back to his heart.

'Then you are going to marry a good girl, Hilton,' he answered; 'and may God bless you and her! Hollo! there's Vivian Damerel; I must go and speak to him.'

John Trewavas sprang out of the open window, and ran down the lawn in fiery speed, but he dashed among the laurels, avoiding the elegantly dressed fop, who called out to him in a languid voice to stop.

'The deuce is in John this morning, I believe,' observed Sir Hilton to himself. 'He need not have gone off in that style; I had a hundred things to tell him.'

A light step made him turn round, and then he faced a tiny figure of a woman, so small, that she might have been a child, and so wonderfully attractive that she might have been a syren, or a witch, or a nymph, or all three in one.

'Olive!' exclaimed Sir Hilton.

'Yes, Olive,' she repeated; 'just arrived. Are you glad to see me?'

'I am always delighted to see the most charming of cousins,' he replied.

'That means nothing,' said Olive, seating herself on a little footstool just in front of Sir Hilton. 'I hate compliments. Say something true and kind, Cousin Hilton.'

The tall, handsome man looked down on the little figure in slight embarrassment. She looked lovely, and she knew it, as she turned her large black eyes up to his and smiled. One little hand rested on the large arm-chair against which she leaned. It was covered with green velvet; and the contrast between this and her white fingers, her glossy black

hair, coiled massively around her head, and the folds of her pale pink dress, all made a picture, the beauty of which no one could appreciate more than her impulsive cousin.

‘Upon my word, black hair is the richest in the world,’ he said aloud, speaking his thoughts too frankly; ‘and the colour you have in your cheeks, Olive, would shame a damask rose. You were born somewhere in the sun, I think, and dropped upon this world by mistake.’

Olive had just said she did not like compliments, yet she made no objection to this speech; on the contrary, her red lips broke into a smile, and her bright face was lit up with a flash of joy. She suddenly bent forward, and seizing Sir Hilton’s hand, she impressed a kiss upon it. The young man coloured to the roots of his hair, but he did not take his hand away from the ripe lips that lingered on it lovingly.

‘That’s to thank you,’ she said, ‘for your pretty compliment. Words are so tame, they never say anything that I want to express with my whole heart.’

‘It was a very pretty, cousinly act, Olive,’ returned Sir Hilton, a little gravely.

Olive’s dark eyes flashed at Sir Hilton’s words, and she flung his hand away with an angry gesture.

‘There, you have undone your kindness now,’ she said. ‘I understand you; I have not acted up to your stiff English notions of propriety. Wait—you shall not get a kiss from me again until you go on your knees for it. If you like prudes, go and flirt with Miss Maristowe.’

‘Miss Maristowe will never let any man flirt with her, Olive,’ said Sir Hilton.

‘Dear me!’ said Olive. ‘She is too good, I suppose—a sort of angel in flounces. Well, leave her alone, if you won’t flirt with her. I assure you, whether you do or not, it won’t trouble me.’

‘Nothing troubles you, Olive,’ said he. ‘I really think you never cared for any human being in your life.’

‘No, I never cared for anybody but my dog Spot,’ she replied; ‘and he isn’t a human being, is he? Look here, Sir Hilton—how do you like this new dance? I learnt it last week.’

She displayed a pair of twinkling feet, and danced a new

Mazurka, twisting in and out between chairs and tables with marvellous grace.

'The dance is very pretty,' said Sir Hilton. 'Who taught it to you?'

'A bear—a Russian bear,' she replied, 'rich and ugly. Oh Hilton, I had such a time in London.'

'What, pleasant?' said Sir Hilton. 'Balls, and concerts, and flirtations, I suppose, constantly?'

'Plenty of all that,' replied Olive. 'But where was the pleasure? Oh, it was such a dreary time to me! I would rather be at Trewavas than I would live in London, and go to parties every night.'

'I don't believe that, Olive,' said Sir Hilton.

'Oh yes, you do,' said Olive; 'you know it is true. Just try this dance, Hilton. I am sure I can teach it to you in five minutes.'

He put his arm around her; he took her hand in his; the glossy coils of hair rested on his breast: they could not reach his shoulder. He forgot Eleanor Maristowe, and the dance grew faster and faster, as she sang in a low voice a wild Russian melody to Mazurka time.

'There!' she cried at last, triumphantly. 'I knew you would learn it in a minute or two. You are so quick at anything. By-the-by, have you not found it slow here without me? I have been away a whole month, you know.'

'Is it really so long?' said Sir Hilton, gasping a little from his exertions in the dance.

'Then the time has not seemed so long to you!' exclaimed Olive. "'Out of sight, out of mind!'" as the old proverb says. But what have you been doing with yourself all this while?'

'Doing? Why nothing,' replied Sir Hilton.

'Then if you were doing nothing,' said Olive, 'why did you not come to meet the coach this morning, and escort me home? I felt so dismal when I saw the carriage was empty.'

'Upon my word, Olive, I didn't know the carriage was gone for you,' said Sir Hilton. 'My respected grandmother never said one word about your return. I never knew you were coming till you appeared to me here like a vision.'

Olive laughed aloud. 'Aunt did not know I was coming

till last night,' she said. 'I have returned without orders. I am not wanted here.'

'Olive!' he ejaculated, 'if I thought any one, even my father's mother, dared to make you unwelcome in my house, I——'

'I am always welcome wherever I go,' said Olive. 'In five minutes from this time I mean to make Aunt thank me for coming. I know she has been dull ever since she sent me away. Who has been here? Have you had those Maristowes all this while—the prude and her stately stick of a mother?'

A burning flush came over her cousin's face at these words. In his embarrassment he drew Olive closer to him, and grasped her hand with nervous strength. At that moment the door opened, and a well-trained servant, standing respectfully at the portal, said in the soft, calm voice peculiar to the English domestic, 'The horses are at the door, sir; and Miss Maristowe sent me to say she was waiting.'

'I am coming,' said Sir Hilton, biting his lip.

The servant closed the door, while the cousins looked at each other blankly. Olive was the first to laugh—'Oh, it does not matter, as we are cousins—that's just like brother and sister, you know.'

'Of course it is,' exclaimed Sir Hilton, eagerly; 'and I hope you will always feel it so, Olive.'

Olive turned her back on him, and walked to the window.

'I wish,' she murmured, 'you hadn't promised to ride with that tiresome Miss Maristowe on the very first day of my coming home.'

But she spoke to the winds—her cousin was gone; and, gazing blankly from the window, she saw him in a moment lifting Eleanor Maristowe on her horse. What was there in this little act of courtesy that made Olive gasp for breath, and send the blood to her heart in a rush of terror and anguish?

* * * * *

The green glades of Trewavas slope down to the sea, and honeysuckle and hawthorn, lilac and arbutus trail their branches on the beach, while the shadows of stately elm and oak fall far across the waters. The waves are blue and

limpid, clear as liquid crystal ; so that far beneath the surface, down among the very depths, the eye watches delightedly the silvery fish, darting to and fro, and marks the glittering sands, white as snow, the rocks of serpentine flashing purple and green, and the many-coloured plants of the sea waving in a thousand shapes of beauty. The bay of Trewavas, like an inland lake, is shut in on nearly every side by green hills and sloping woods ; and dotted around it, like gems, lie the glistening sands of little sheltered coves, up which the waves roll lovingly, dancing in with a gentle murmur.

High up, on the sunniest slope of the fairest hill, stands the old mansion of Trewavas. It seems embowered in roses, so luxuriant are the flowers of every sort that cluster round its windows, and climb up to its old grey roof. The garden, too, is lovely as a dream ; green glades, soft as velvet, with here and there between the trees a vista opening to the sea, or a peep given for an instant of the great rugged hills far away, and then the walls of leaf and flower shut them out again.

In this lovely nook of the west lived old Lady Trewavas, a stately dame of the old school, full of pride and kindness ; and with her lived her two grandsons—Sir Hilton, a man not without faults, and kindly, simple John, who thought every man a Bayard, and every woman a saint ; a good heart born to be deceived, born to 'love unwisely and too well.'

Olive Varcoe, a second cousin to the brothers, made one of the family at Trewavas. Utterly alone, but self-possessed, and wilful as an imp, she arrived in Cornwall at ten years of age, having come from Smyrna in a sailing vessel. She was put on board by the English Consul, with letters and credentials for Lady Trewavas. The letter was from her nephew, Mr. Varcoe, who, at the point of death, implored his aunt to take pity on his little child.

Lady Trewavas might have hesitated, but the letter and the child reached her together ; and the friendless and beautiful little creature, who with folded arms and flashing eyes stood dauntless before her, seemed to have no relative on earth but herself. Her father's letter made no mention of her mother ; but it was easy to see, by Olive's blue-black hair and dark skin, that she must have been of Eastern blood ;

and, though she might have been a wife, it was more probable that she was a slave.

Mr. Varcoe, all his life long, had been a strange, eccentric man, 'everything by turns, and nothing long.' Accident caused him to study astronomy; thence he diverged to astrology; and in pursuit of this science, he travelled to the East, and never returned to England. He pretended to have penetrated deep secrets, and learned weighty things; but they certainly never benefited his fortune, for at his death the small remnant of his once large property made only a scanty pittance for his child. Thinking pitifully of his poverty, and remembering, with ever fresh and yearning affection, the sorrows, the love, and the short life of her only sister, Mr. Varcoe's mother, Lady Trewavas took Olive, and gave her a home.

The two grandsons, whom the untimely death of their parents had left entirely to her care, had no sister; hence this little Eastern child became their petted playmate. But as Olive grew older Lady Trewavas became uneasy at this companionship. She had no wish to see Olive the wife of either of her cousins; hence she cleverly managed, after her fifteenth birthday, to keep them much apart. But her maternal instinct soon told her, that John might see this fascinating cousin without danger; therefore she allowed him to come and go as he would at Trewavas, but his elder brother she kept as much as possible from home. His education, his Continental tour, his amusements, all had insured his absence; and during his brief visits Lady Trewavas fondly hoped that he regarded the wayward wilful fairy of the household only as a sister. And we have seen how the old lady knew how to manœuvre. She could send Olive Varcoe on a visit, when Sir Hilton's stay was expected to be long, and she could fill her house with safer attractions.

Sir Hilton had known Eleanor Maristowe about two years; that is, he had seen her at intervals during that time, and every succeeding interview had strengthened the impression which her face had made. Her coldness and reserve wounded his pride, and made him only the more earnestly resolve to win her. Longing to see him safely married, Lady Trewavas had, without his knowledge, warmly aided his wooing. Long before his last return home, she had invited

Eleanor to Trewavas, and secured Olive's absence by procuring for her a judicious invitation to London. All this was well; but, in constantly having Eleanor for her guest, she had forgotten John. Thinking only of Sir Hilton, she had asked her to Trewavas as often during his absence as his presence; and the result was, that simple, kindly John loved her with all the strength of his soul. And his life was wrecked; there was no hope left for him now but to hide his pain, and never touch the happiness of others with the shadow of his own grief.

One of the silvery beaches that gemmed the Bay of Trewavas fringed also a little creek, so sheltered from the winds that hawthorn bushes and wild roses grew in every cranny of the cliff, and the clear waves crept in with a gentle lap, lulling into dreams of happiness even the hot heart of the careworn and the worldly.

The beach itself was almost inaccessible; walled in by cliffs, it could only be reached seawards, except by some adventurous climber, who cared neither for danger nor fatigue. On this warm spring day the sands glistened white in the sun, and no sign of life, either on sea or land, broke the beautiful loneliness of the scene. But soon a little boat put out from Trewavas, and a single rower with stout arms pulled steadily towards this solitary beach.

The rower was John Trewavas, who, impelled by that instinct of suffering which teaches man and animal alike to seek solitary places, had now set his face towards those lonely sands; but when he was about to spring ashore, hoping to find solitude and peace, he was startled to see the tiny figure of Olive Varcoe seated on a rock.

John was superstitious; and as he looked on the tiny creature, dressed in red and black, who sat perched on the very pinnacle of a rock, it seemed to him that he saw a veritable witch. The very place whereon she sat had a supernatural air about it. No mere woman, he thought, would have climbed to such a seat.

'How did you get on this beach?' he asked, looking about for her boat.

'I flew down,' she replied.

'Olive, you cannot have descended this cliff!' exclaimed John, aghast with astonishment.

'But I did, though,' persisted Olive. 'Look at my hands.' She held forth her tiny hands, and showed them cut and torn, and streaked with blood.

"The rocks are hard," she continued, "'and the thorn will pierce the flesh," as some trumpety poet says.'

'Olive, you are certainly mad,' said John; 'I would not have a spirit like yours for worlds.'

'Nor I one like yours,' she replied. 'I am tired, John; take me in your boat, and row me home.'

John threw down his oars, and jumped ashore to assist her; but before he had time even to stretch out his hand, she had made a daring spring, and alighted on the sands at his feet.

Very pale, John caught her hastily up, and asked if she was hurt.

'I wish I was dashed into a thousand pieces!' she replied. 'I wish my wicked brains were on the sands; that would be rare news for you to take back to Trewavas.'

'What can a man say to a woman when she talks like that?' said kindly John. 'Such words are childishness, Olive,—wilful, passionate childishness. You are looking ill. You are out of sorts to-day. Come home, and let Eleanor nurse you.'

'Eleanor!' she repeated, and the scorn, the anger, the hatred in that one word seemed to burn her lips, and flash fire into her eyes. She walked away, and stepped into the boat unaided. As John caught up his oars, and took his seat facing her, he saw she was deadly pale.

In deep silence he rowed half across the silvery bay; the scent of may and lilac reaching them in every breeze, the seabirds flashing by, and the song of the lark sounding high up in the clear heavens.

'How beautiful it is!' said John, pausing on his oars. 'To me, Trewavas is a Paradise.'

'And, like the other Paradise, there's a devil in it,' said Olive.

'Where?' asked simple John. 'I never saw a devil in it, Olive.'

'You can always see that individual if you look for him, John,' she replied.

She put her hand in the water as she spoke, and caught

up a sea-anemone; and in a moment she tore the beautiful living flower to pieces, and flung it again on the waves.

'Suppose it feels!' said John, watching her. 'Some people say it does.'

'What does that matter?' said Olive. 'Has anybody asked whether you and I feel? What do you think of it all, John?'

'What do I think of what?' asked John, dipping his oars in the water again, and flushing burning red.

'Don't row yet,' she said. 'The sea is a safer place to talk in than the land. You may speak out here, John.'

'I have nothing to say, Olive, except that I wish them every happiness,' said John.

'Nothing to say!' repeated Olive, 'when you know your feelings have been blindly, ruthlessly disregarded; when you know Hilton and that girl——!'

'You are insulting me, Olive,' interrupted John, 'when you suppose I can listen to such language as this.'

Olive shrugged her shoulders as she replied, 'I am a fool to try to move a dish of skimmed milk. Stoop, Issachar, and bear your burden; but as for me, I am not a mule, stooping between two burdens, penury and cruelty. No! I am a woman, and they will live to see what I can do.'

'Olive, you make me glad that Hilton does not love you,' said John, gravely, with disgust and anger visibly shining on his face.

'But he does love me,' said Olive, sinking her voice to sudden lowness, and gazing steadily at her cousin. 'There is the misery; he does love me, only he has been so used to me, you see, that he cannot believe in his love, and he mistakes his fancy for that white Maypole——'

'Olive!' interrupted John.

'John!' she expostulated, 'you had better listen, and not interrupt me. I tell you this engagement has been made up by Lady Trewavas. Mrs. Maristowe knows that you love Eleanor, and she has been expecting to hear it daily from your lips; she would rather give her daughter to you than to Hilton, and Eleanor herself would be happier with you. Marry her, John. Save her from your brother, unless you wish her to be miserable.'

It was painful to see a great strong man like John Trewa-

vas grow so ghastly pale, and sink down on his seat helpless as an infant; but it was pleasant to mark how soon he rallied from the temptation laid before him, and sat up erect, with kindling cheek and eyes.

‘Hilton loves her!’ said he. ‘Who will make Eleanor miserable?’

‘I will,’ replied Olive.

There was poison and death in the soft, low accents of her voice, yet John looked upon her words as a childish threat.

‘Try to be happy, Olive,’ he said, kindly.

The girl burst into tears, and covered her face with her small hands, sobbing violently.

‘I shall never be happy,’ she said. ‘I am not tame, like you. Oh John! Hilton has flirted with me—Hilton has caressed me—Hilton loves me! How can I bear to see him taken away from me by a plot? I am not blind. I know my aunt looks upon me as a dependent, and she would rather have Hilton die than marry me; so she has thrust Eleanor Maristowe in his way expressly. She wants to see him safely married out of my reach, and she does not mind crushing your heart too, to do it. She knows that you are not in danger from my wicked fascinations, and our both being miserable counts for nothing.’

There was some truth in these words, and again John’s face flushed, and his lips trembled.

‘Oh John, my dear cousin!’ she continued, ‘help me to break off this horrid engagement, and thank me for it, as Eleanor’s husband, in a year’s time.’

The oar slipped out of John’s hand, and when he recovered it his lips were so deadly white, they could scarcely form a word.

‘You utterly deceive yourself, Olive,’ he said. ‘My brother loves Eleanor Maristowe with all his heart. I will not interfere between them to blight their happiness. Let us end this discussion.’

‘Then you will not help me?’ said Olive.

‘No,’ he replied. ‘There are better men in the world than Hilton: try to love one of them, and be happy. Your secret is safe with me—you know that; and as for myself, if I have had feelings and hopes, which I have buried now as deep as these shining sands beneath us, I expect you to

respect them and be silent. No one has guessed the truth but yourself, and I will not have any other heart troubled with it but my own.'

The kind, simple tones of his voice, that trembled,—the fervent, generous look he wore, touched Olive.

'John,' she said, 'you are too good for this low cunning world. I wish you would save me from being a devil. There are only two ways to do it now, since you won't help me to show your brother his own foolish fickle heart.'

'And what ways are those, Olive?' he asked.

'You can throw me overboard, and beat me down with an oar every time I rise and shriek for mercy,' she replied; 'or you can row straight home, and tell Aunt Trewavas all I have said. In that case she will thrust me out of this dear old place; and flung forth into the world, I shall beg, starve, and steal, and I shall not have time and opportunity to become quite a devil.'

As she spoke these bitter words, there came floating towards them over the sea the sound of fresh young voices, singing a hymn in unison; and winding up the soft green of the park, now disappearing, now flashing out between the trees, they saw a procession of Sunday-school children passing on to Trewavas church, which stood among the hills beyond.

'Hark!' said John, 'I would much rather listen to that childish hymn than hear you talk of devilry, Olive.'

John broke into a whistle, and, bending steadily to his ears, it was not long ere the keel of the boat grated on Trewavas sands.

CHAPTER II.

ELEANOR MARISTOWE and her mother sat together in the morning room at Trewavas. There was a shadow between them, which kept mother and daughter silent; one worked, and the other drew, without exchanging more than a word or two on commonplace subjects. At length, Mrs. Maristowe threw down her work, and sighed heavily.

'I cannot keep this up, Eleanor,' said she; 'I must speak.'

I have been coming to Trewavas these two years, thinking it was John who liked you, not Sir Hilton.'

'John, mamma!' said Eleanor. 'I assure you he has never said a word of that sort to me in his life. And besides, it was always Sir Hilton whom I liked.'

'I am half sorry for it, Eleanor,' said her mother. 'Most mothers would be glad that a daughter should marry a rich man and a baronet; but I am a widow. I wanted to keep my child, not lose her. I wanted to find a son in your husband, not a son-in-law.'

'And so you will, mamma,' said Eleanor. 'I am sure Sir Hilton——'

'No, my dear, you are mistaken,' interrupted her mother. 'Sir Hilton will never be a son to me. He must live here, of course. Now, John could have come to live in Devonshire with me, and we should have made a home together.'

'I am very sorry, mamma, that you should have had such a pretty, impossible dream,' said Eleanor. 'But, you see, John does not care for me, nor I for him; so you must be content to see me Lady Trewavas, and you must come and live here with us.'

Mrs. Maristowe shook her head as she replied, 'That seems so easy to you now, Eleanor; but in a year's time you will wonder you ever thought of it. Lady Trewavas, of course, will stay here.'

'Then why can't *you* if she does?' said Eleanor.

'My dear, the cases are altogether different,' replied Mrs. Maristowe. 'No, we are separated for ever, Eleanor, when you marry. I shall only be a visitor to you now and then.'

The sadness of the mother met no reflection in the daughter's mind; she was too young, too full of joy, to comprehend the significance of parting, or to have an insight into the barrenness that lay before the future of her mother's life.

'My dear, are you sure of your own feelings? Are you quite certain you love Sir Hilton?' said Mrs. Maristowe.

'My dear mother, should I have accepted him else?' said Eleanor. 'The truth is, I have liked him this long, long while; only I fancied—that is, I feared——'

Eleanor stopped, and looked anxiously round the room.

'Speak out, my dear,' said her mother; 'no one can hear us. You have thought he cared for some one else.'

With burning cheeks Eleanor looked an assent rather than spoke it.

'And, thinking this,' continued Mrs. Maristowe, 'you have bestowed your time and attention on John, in order that Sir Hilton might not guess that you liked him.'

'Ah, mamma,' she said, 'I could not bear he should see how much I cared for him !'

'My dear child,' said Mrs. Maristowe, 'I understand it all now ; I wish I had done so before. I wish I had saved poor John.'

'But, my dear mother, John is very well,' said Eleanor. 'Why should you trouble yourself about John ?'

Mrs. Maristowe was silent ; she did not like to tell her daughter, that in thinking only of herself, in trying only to save her own wounded pride, she had deceived an honest mind and wrung a generous heart.

'And,' continued Eleanor, her thoughts going instantly from John to Hilton, 'I am so glad now that all is cleared up, and that John and all the world may know that I love only Sir Hilton.'

Her mother's grave face checked any further expression of her joy, and she added, a little pettishly, 'I can't understand, mother, why you are not quite pleased.'

'I am pleased, Eleanor,' she replied ; 'only the affair has come upon me so unexpectedly. Like yourself, I really thought Sir Hilton cared for some one else.'

'Oh mamma, have *you* too believed that he liked Olive ?' said Eleanor. 'But it is quite a mistake ; indeed it is.'

'So you tell me, Eleanor,' replied Mrs. Maristowe ; 'but are you sure Sir Hilton is not making a mistake ?'

The question was almost cruel ; it flushed Eleanor's face, and made her lip tremble.

'What motive could Sir Hilton have for deceiving me ?' she said proudly.

'None, Eleanor ; but he might deceive himself,' replied her mother. 'It is certain there can be no mistake about Olive's liking him.'

The rosy flush on Eleanor's cheeks had faded away, leaving her pale as marble.

'Do you really think so ?' she said. 'What can I do, mamma ?'

'You can do nothing, Eleanor,' was the reply. 'If Sir Hilton truly loves you, the girl, seeing it, will come back to her senses; and the kindest thing you can do for her is to say nothing. I am not fond of Olive Varcoe. Are you?'

'I did not like her a few days ago,' said Eleanor; 'but now I am so sorry for her, that——'

The door opened ere she had finished the sentence, and Olive herself entered, radiant and smiling. Eleanor rose to receive her, and as the two girls stood face to face a perceptible flush rose to the brow of each. Olive was the first to recover herself.

'What a lovely drawing!' she said, looking over Eleanor's shoulder. 'I hope I don't disturb you, Mrs. Maristowe. My aunt sent me to ask if Eleanor would take a drive with her.'

'Of course she will,' said Mrs. Maristowe. 'Eleanor, my dear, put on your things.'

'I believe, mamma,' said Eleanor, 'Sir Hilton expects me to ride with him at three; and it is now past two.'

'Oh, Hilton is going to drive the phaeton,' said Olive carelessly. 'I heard him say so just now to his groom.'

'Then, doubtless, my dear,' said Mrs. Maristowe to her daughter, 'that is why Lady Trewavas wished you to go, as Sir Hilton will be with her.'

'I wonder why he has changed his mind?' said Eleanor a little hotly. 'He promised yesterday he would ride with me to Trewavas Cliffs.'

'But, my dear,' continued Mrs. Maristowe, 'if Lady Trewavas wished him to drive her, he would of course give that up till another day.'

Eleanor threw down her pencils with a puzzled air, and looked at Olive.

'Is Lady Trewavas going directly?' she asked.

'Yes, the pony phaeton is at the door,' replied Olive.

'Then I will be with her in a moment,' said Eleanor, as she left the room to dress.

When Eleanor got down to the hall she found Lady Trewavas standing there ready cloaked, and she was hurried into the phaeton before she had time to look for Sir Hilton.

'Tell my grandson we are waiting for him,' said Lady Trewavas to the servant.

As Lady Trewavas spoke, Eleanor felt the little flutter at her heart subside into peace; but it was John who obeyed the summons, John who sprang on the box seat, and seized the reins.

Overcome with agitation and surprise, Eleanor leant back speechless, and the ponies had started at a good trot before she could utter a word.

The drive seemed interminably long; Lady Trewavas was tiresome, John full of platitudes, and once or twice Eleanor felt her eyes fill with tears, as she wondered whether this was a studied slight on Sir Hilton's part. At last she ventured to say timidly, in a low voice, 'Olive told me Sir Hilton was going to drive us. How is this? Where is he?'

'Has Olive been meddling between you and Hilton?' asked the old lady, sharply. 'She knew he could not drive me to-day; she heard him say he had an appointment at three.'

'That was the hour at which he promised to ride with me,' said Eleanor.

'Then, my love, let me counsel you another time not to disappoint him,' said Lady Trewavas. 'Hilton easily takes offence.'

'I disappoint him!' cried Eleanor. Tears of vexation filled her eyes, and for a moment she could say no more; then rapidly she explained the *ruse* by which Olive had induced her to fail in her appointment. 'I did not like to refuse when you sent for me,' she said.

'Turn the ponies' heads, John; we'll go home,' cried the old lady. 'My dear, I did not send for you. That artful girl said you had a headache, and wanted to come. John, have you heard what we have been talking about?'

'Every word,' replied John, whose ears were burning red with indignation.

'Then what does this girl mean, by telling falsehoods to my guests in this way?' said Lady Trewavas. 'Of course Eleanor would not have come with us, if she had not thought Hilton was going to drive.'

'No, Eleanor would not have come if she had known I was going to drive,' said John. 'I'll tell Hilton that, of course. As to Olive, she is always making mischief for fun, and no one knows what she means.'

John was too loyal to betray Olive's secret; yet he felt

that, unless something were done to check her plots, unhappiness to all would be the result.

'Drive home fast, John,' said Lady Trewavas, in her most decided tones. 'I will permit no misunderstanding to arise between Eleanor and Hilton, through Olive Varcoe's love of mischief.'

Anxious and more agitated than so slight a cause would seem to warrant, Eleanor remained silent, while John, turning round at times to speak to Lady Trewavas, let his eyes rest on her with a lingering sorrow, that somehow recalled her mother's words and tone that morning, when she said, 'Poor John!' A sort of mist rose before Eleanor's vision—a mist of trouble and grief, through which the old grey turrets of Trewavas shone out dimly, as John drove rapidly up the park.

'Here we are at last!' cried John cheerily, as they entered the avenue. 'Never mind, Eleanor; we'll soon make Hilton understand it was a mistake.'

'A mistake! a mistake!' echoed a voice in Eleanor's heart. Her mother had used the same word this morning, only she had said it was no mistake that Olive loved Sir Hilton. What should she do? Should she tell Lady Trewavas? No, that would be mean and cruel; the poor girl was dependent on her. And here they are at the great oak doors of Trewavas, which fly open at their approach.

'Is Sir Hilton come back from Bosvigo?' asked Lady Trewavas.

'Yes, my lady,' replied the servant; 'he came back at three o'clock.'

'Then tell him I want to speak to him,' said Lady Trewavas.'

'He is not in now, my lady,' was the reply. 'He is gone out riding with Miss Varcoe.'

Eleanor was on the steps of the carriage; she heard, and turned giddy, her senses swam, and she would have fallen, but for John's arm, which held her up, and but for John's voice, which whispered encouragement.

Not a word was said before the servants; but once in the drawing-room, with the door shut, Lady Trewavas gave way to her anger.

'This shall not go on!' she cried. 'Olive Varcoe leaves Trewavas to-morrow for ever!'

‘Not on my account,’ said Eleanor, proudly. ‘Your niece must not be driven from her home for me. If Sir Hilton prefers his cousin to myself, it is for me and my mother to quit Trewavas, not Olive.’

She said this with pale face and firm lips, and a throb of hope for one moment beat in John’s heart; then he flung hope off as a crime, and stepped forward to take his brother’s part.

‘My dear grandmother,’ said he, ‘don’t make a mountain out of a mole-hill. If we allow this affair to appear important, we shall make it so. Hilton was doubtless annoyed when he found Eleanor had gone out driving, and he has shown his pique by taking his ride all the same. It is nothing strange or new, that he should ask Olive to go with him. Recollect that she is almost a sister; and surely you would not have Hilton take a dismal ride by himself?’

John’s words sounded true and reasonable; yet an instinct in Eleanor’s heart warned her of danger, and said loudly that this ride was not the insignificant thing that John would fain make it appear. Lady Trewavas, however, was calmed.

‘Well, my dear,’ she said, ‘when you see Hilton at dinner I hope you will give him a scolding; and you may depend on it I shall let him know that he has to thank Olive for your displeasure. These tricks are unlady-like, and beyond a jest.’

Eleanor thought this affair more serious than a mere trick or jest of Olive’s, but she would not argue the point; she felt that her vague uneasiness, her jealousy, her wounded pride could not find expression in words. She bowed her head silently and left the room. In passing, she gave her hand to John to thank him. He started at the action, his face growing crimson; then he seized the extended hand, and holding it in both his, whispered earnestly, ‘Don’t be afraid. Don’t cry, Eleanor. I’ll bring Hilton up to your sitting-room before dinner.’

‘Heaven bless you, John!’ said the girl. ‘What a good kind fellow you are!’

Every word went to his heart, and so did the touch of the little cold hand that pressed his so gratefully. He turned away and let her go, showing a cheerful face to the stately old lady who was watching him half curiously, half strangely.

Meanwhile Eleanor, restraining her tears, escaped to her

room ; but here she flung herself on the bed, crying, ' Mother is right. He loves Olive ! Oh, what shall I do ? What ought I to do ? '

That evening there was a party at Trewavas, and the guests looked blankly at each other, as ten, twenty, thirty minutes crept by, and no announcement of dinner reached their ears.

Stately and self-possessed as she might be, Lady Trewavas could not altogether conceal her uneasiness. Not that for a moment it disturbed the quiet dignity of her manner, or the graceful flow of talk that set her guests at ease. Accustomed all her life long to power and command, she kept her face now calm as a queen's, showing only in the slight trouble of her eye the anxiety she felt.

Mrs. Maristowe did not try to emulate her ladyship's calmness. Her eyes wandered restlessly from her daughter to the great bay window that commanded the park, and every time she turned away, they said plainly that the expected figures of Olive Varcoe and Sir Hilton were not in sight.

With every nerve quivering, Eleanor bore her anguish as only a proud girl can ; she would not show her jealousy, she would not show her pain ; so she talked to the young squire of Bosvigo, and turned over the leaves of photographic albums with a seemingly careless hand. But John Trewavas saw the trembling of her eyelid, the flush upon her cheek, the sorrow and signs of recent tears that lingered on her face ; and it was John's cheery voice that proposed dinner as a relief to all.

' My dear Lady Trewavas,' he said, ' are we all to starve because Hilton has lost his way in the woods ? Come, let us have dinner ; he deserves to get his cold for coming home late.'

' May he not have met with an accident ? ' asked the doctor's wife.

This agreeable suggestion brought a quick flush to Eleanor's face, as she looked eagerly at her mother.

' My grandson is too good a rider to be likely to meet with an accident,' said Lady Trewavas, a little drily.

' But is not Miss Varcoe with him ? ' said the doctor's wife. ' She is a very wild rider, I know, for she has frightened me often by coming down these hills at a furious gallop.'

'She deserves to break her neck if she does that,' said the blunt old squire of Bosvigo. 'But ladies are never fit to be trusted with horses; they are always cruel to them. A man would be ashamed to whip a horse, and gallop him up-hill and down, as a lady does.'

'Quite true,' said the doctor, in an undertone; 'but I wish Miss Varcoe would use the whip just now, and practice a little of that galloping you talk of; it would be better than keeping us all waiting for dinner.'

'Lady Trewavas would not wait a minute for that madcap girl,' whispered the old squire. 'It is for Sir Hilton she waits. Rather awkward, don't you see, sitting down to table without the master of the house.'

At this moment the firm hand of the hostess rang the bell.

'Serve dinner,' she said. 'Sir Hilton is doubtless detained by some slight accident.'

As the guests walked to the dining-room, whispers were exchanged and surmises uttered respecting Sir Hilton's strange absence. Some of these Eleanor overheard, and her ears tingled with indignant pain.

At this party her engagement was to have been announced, and her position as Sir Hilton's intended wife was to have been acknowledged; and from such a gathering of friends as this, brought together for such a purpose, he had chosen to absent himself, in order to prolong his ride with Olive Varcoe! Unless some accident detained him, his conduct was an insult, deliberately given; and it could only mean that he had discovered, ere it was too late, the mistake he had made in offering his love to her.

How Eleanor's heart swelled—how her veins throbbed at the thought! How horrible was the torture of sitting here, to be gazed at by these people, who could not see that her brain was on fire!

'Miss Maristowe, you are ill!' exclaimed the blunt, fussy Mr. Vigo. 'Let me assist you from the table?'

Eleanor was leaning back in her chair, deadly pale. She had just seen Sir Hilton's groom dash by at a gallop. Why had he come home alone?

Lady Trewavas had seen him also; but, although a little pale, she was still stately and calm; and, with instinctive delicacy and tact, Eleanor copied the demeanour of the hostess.

‘My dear Eleanor,’ said Mrs. Maristowe, nervously, ‘I think you had better go and lie down a little—you look so ill!’

Eleanor was so used to be cared for by John Trewavas, that she was not surprised when he came to her, and she found herself quietly led from the room, and placed on the drawing-room sofa.

‘Now, if you are quite comfortable, I will run and see what is the matter,’ said John. ‘I expect our wild cousin has had a spill.’

‘How kind you are, John!’ said Eleanor; and her blue eyes swam in tears, as she looked at him gratefully.

In two minutes John was back again.

‘Don’t be frightened, Eleanor,’ said he. ‘There has been an accident—only a slight one; Hilton is a little hurt. That madcap girl has been jumping hurdles and running races with him, and in clearing a hurdle, his horse swerved and threw him. He is at a farmhouse a few miles off.’

‘And Olive?’ said Eleanor, faintly.

‘Oh, Olive is not hurt,’ replied John. ‘Do you feel strong enough, Eleanor, to come in the carriage with me to fetch Hilton?’

Eleanor sprang from the sofa instantly; she understood John’s words too well. Olive was there by Sir Hilton’s side; Olive had her place; Olive was tending him with her insidious smiles and tender words. Yes, she would be ready to go in a moment. Once more, how good, and kind, and thoughtful John was!

As the carriage was getting ready, John returned to the dining-room, and whispered the news to Lady Trewavas.

‘Thank Heaven!’ said the old lady, wringing his hand gratefully. Her grandson was hurt, perhaps dangerously; and yet she said, ‘Thank Heaven!’

John knew why: she had fancied that Sir Hilton and Olive Varcoe had eloped together.

CHAPTER III.

SIR HILTON TREWAVAS lay on a bed in his tenant's house. Olive sat by his side, holding one of his hands in hers. All the rich colour had faded out of her face, and she was nearly as pale as he.

'Aunt will never forgive me, Hilton,' she said. 'I shall be sent away to the Antipodes now.'

'You'll be sent nowhere,' he replied; 'you'll stay at Trewavas. My home is yours while I live. If I die, and it goes to John, I can't say what will happen. Look out for yourself, then, Olive.'

'I won't,' said Olive; 'and, if you die, I'll kill John.'

'Hallo!' cried Sir Hilton, 'have you and John quarrelled?'

'No; only the thought of his being master at Trewavas makes me hate him,' she replied. 'But you won't die. Why are you talking about death? You are not much hurt.'

'The deuce I'm not,' said Sir Hilton. 'I'm in horrid pain, then. Put a pillow under my shoulder, Olive.'

Olive did as he requested; then, stooping suddenly, she kissed him on the brow.

'You are a good little girl,' said Sir Hilton, taking her hand, and bending her face again to his. 'You are sorry for me, I see. I do believe you would suffer all this for me if you could. A sister, after all, is better than a sweetheart. Eleanor, you perceive, does not trouble herself about me; and to-day she broke a promise. I hate an unreliable woman; it was a shabby trick she served me, Lola, wasn't it?'

'How do you feel now, Hilton?' asked Olive, evading his question.

'Horrid!' he replied. 'I'm swelling like a porpoise. Just see the size of my arm! I wish that doctor would come.'

'He will be here soon,' said Olive. 'I told Kinsman to ride like a fiend. When they hear of this at Trewavas, Hilton, I know exactly all they'll do and say.'

Sir Hilton did not answer precisely as Olive expected; he

raised his head languidly, and said, 'You are mighty clever, Miss Lola; can you tell me what Eleanor will do?'

There was a flash in Olive's eyes, but she replied, with seeming gaiety, 'Oh, I don't pretend to know what she will do, but it will be nothing useful for certain. She will faint, most likely, and have your grandmother fussing over her with eau-de-cologne and heartshorn. I never saw such a spoilt baby as Eleanor Maristowe. If she had roughed it in the world as I have done, and never had a human being to care for her, she would have learned a few things by this time.'

'Good things, Lola?' asked Sir Hilton, a little satirically. 'Do you know, I think it is unfair to say you are not cared for. What has been lacking to you at Trewavas?—not love, not kindness, I am sure.'

'There's nothing wanting at Trewavas except a Roc's egg,' replied Olive, laughingly, 'and I dare say I shall get even that in time. When I spoke, I was thinking of old days, before I came among your kind faces. Ah, I roughed it then! What a terrible time I had in Smyrna!—my father always in the clouds, and the horrible old woman who ruled the house used to beat me with her slipper. And, my goodness! what falsehoods she used to tell, and teach me to tell too!'

Sir Hilton was looking at her curiously, as though for the first time it had struck him that her character had strange points in it.

'Don't you still indulge in little fictions, now and then, Lola?' he asked. 'Beware of that gift! Falsehood is a virtue only in the East.'

Olive coloured crimson, but laughed gaily as she replied, 'Truth is too precious to be given to every one; I keep it for you, and a few others. To the rest of the world my Eastern blood will break out at times. You know, if I am neither Cornish nor English, I cannot help it, can I?'

'No,' replied Sir Hilton. 'But how about this Roc's egg that is wanting at Trewavas? Can I get it for you?'

Olive turned her black eyes on him in a piercing and strange way, but she saw that he was still blind to the truth; so she replied carelessly, 'Yes, you can get it, and you only, but not now. I'll ask you for it one day.'

Her hand touched his as she spoke ; it was burning hot, and there was a glow like fire on her cheeks.

‘Upon my word, Olive, it must be something you have mightily set your heart upon,’ said Sir Hilton ; ‘but you need not get so excited over it. Ask, and thou shalt have it, even if it be to the half of my kingdom. Is that the Eastern style, Lola ?’

‘In untruth I dare say it is Eastern enough,’ she replied. ‘Hilton,’ she added, suddenly, ‘I wish you were going to stop here for a month.’

‘That’s kind,’ he returned. ‘But I have no doubt you will have your wish. I don’t feel like moving.’

‘Ah, but you will have to move, Hilton,’ said Olive. ‘Your grandmamma is too fond of her own way, and too proud of her own dignity, to let you stay here. That’s one of the things they will do at Trewavas directly : they will bring a carriage here to take you home.’

‘But suppose I won’t go ?’ said Sir Hilton. ‘It is useless to think of it. I could not bear the jolting. I am very comfortable here ; and I shall stay.’

‘Stand to that firmly,’ cried Olive, her eyes glistening with joy ; ‘and I’ll stay with you, Hilton.’

‘You, Olive !’ said he. ‘You can’t do that.’

‘Yes, I can,’ she replied, ‘being a cousin,—almost a sister. Eleanor could not, of course. Mrs. Grundy would scream and go into fits of horror, but I am too insignificant to be talked of. Besides, I am a better nurse than Eleanor. How does that pillow feel now ?’

‘Beautiful, Olive,’ he replied. ‘You have given it just the right twist. So you really think you can stay ?’

‘Of course I can, if you insist on it with Lady Trewavas,’ said Olive. ‘Really, Hilton, it will only be kind of you to do that ; for the truth is, I am afraid to go home till the storm is over. At Trewavas they’ll say this accident is all my fault.’

‘They won’t dare to say that,’ said Sir Hilton. ‘How can it be your fault ?’

‘Asking you to go out with me, you know,’ replied Olive.

‘Nonsense, Olive,’ said Sir Hilton ; ‘that was very kind of you. It would be absurd if any one blamed you for this accident. Pixy was very hard to hold to-day. I never knew

her so hot. If my respected grandmother says a word to you that you don't like, tell me, and I'll set things to-rights. I detest to see a girl bullied by her relations.'

'What a dear, good, kind cousin you are, Hilton!' said Olive, bending over him, with the gleam of her black eyes shining full into his own hazel orbs. 'What can I do to thank you?'

Sir Hilton smiled. It was a droll smile. He was beginning to have a glimmering idea that all this was a little too cousinly.

'Never mind thanks, Lola,' he said. 'Brothers and sisters need not talk of thanks.'

At this moment the sound of wheels was heard in the farmyard, and Olive's answer was interrupted.

'There's the doctor!' cried Sir Hilton, joyfully. 'Now for a good tug, and then I suppose I shall be all right again. Have you got courage to stay with me, Lola?'

To his surprise, Olive burst into tears, and rushed from the room. On the stairs she met the surgeon, and seized him by the hand, in a strange excited manner.

'Will it pain him much?' she cried. 'Oh, Dr. Burton, I little thought that I might injure Hilton.'

Olive checked herself suddenly, for behind Dr. Burton was the grave face of John Trewavas.

'Do not alarm yourself, Miss Varcoe,' said the doctor. 'I trust I shall find Sir Hilton not much hurt. You seem unnerved. You had better go down to Lady Trewavas and Miss Maristowe; they are both below.'

Olive gave John one reproachful and bitter look; then rushing past him, she sprang down the stairs, and out at the door into the orchard beyond.

The pique against Eleanor, which Olive had planted in Sir Hilton's mind, could not endure for a moment after the explanation clearly and promptly given by Lady Trewavas. She turned it off as a jest of Olive's; one of those mischievous jests to which that lively young lady had long accustomed the inmates of Trewavas. With studied carelessness, Lady Trewavas thus spoke of it, giving it no other motive beyond the fun to be got out of a lover's quarrel.

The want of truth which Miss Varcoe had displayed in the affair counted for nothing; Sir Hilton even laughed at

it. Olive, from her first appearance among her relations, had indulged in inventions, Eastern fashion, with an adroitness and skill that oftentimes amused her English opponents. Yet it was almost impossible to be angry with her, as her ways were so different from their ways, and she evidently considered lying as a charter of right, and a just means either of defence or attack. Moreover, her falsehoods did not disgust, as they were mostly so un-English, so removed from mere vulgar lying, having in them a keen jest, a spice of romance, or a touch of Eastern malice. Hence it was permitted to her to do and say things that in an English lady would be inadmissible.

Governesses, tutors, young curates, and respectable old vicars, had all tried their eloquence on Olive Varcoe in vain. She was always willing to acknowledge herself in the wrong, always willing to fast, or pray, or pour ashes on her head, and humble herself as a penitent; but this contrition and these penances never mended her. This Eastern twist in her character seemed in English eyes a moral blindness, whence might spring all manner of sins and cruelties. And the passion, the leaven of fire in her nature, still further startled the calmer, colder hearts around her. Anything she desired was sought for with an intensity past their comprehension, and therefore regarded with fear. A strange girl, dangerous to herself and others; vindictive, yet generous; false, yet fascinating and tender; a girl whom it was impossible to hate, and perilous to love.

This was Lady Trewavas's thought as, bending over her grandson's bed, she watched the changes of his countenance as she talked.

'Olive has no moral sense, no truth in her,' she said, anxiously. 'I have thought that a convent or a school might do her good.'

'A convent!' cried Sir Hilton. 'My dear grandmother, neither school nor convent will ever make a puritan out of such stuff as Olive. And I, for one, don't want to see her changed; her tricks are only amusing; she means no harm. Trewavas would be intolerably dull without her. I won't have her sent away.'

'But, my dear Hilton, there's her future to think of,' remonstrated Lady Trewavas. 'What man would like to

marry such a girl? I must at least teach her truthfulness.

'Marry her!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, with a sudden start; 'who wants to marry her?'

'No one,' replied Lady Trewavas.

'Of course not,' said Sir Hilton, laughing. 'What an elf for a wife! She'll never marry; she must always live with you and me and Eleanor, at Trewavas.'

Lady Trewavas had strong opinions on this subject, but she hesitated to utter them; and before she could shape a reply, Dr. Burton entered, with Eleanor leaning on his arm.

'Now my formidable business is over,' he said, 'I bring you a better medicine than can be found in drugs, Sir Hilton. Here is Miss Maristowe, too impatient to see you to heed any longer my prohibition.'

Excitement had flushed Eleanor's cheek and heightened the lustre of her eyes, and her loveliness was still further enhanced by the rich robe she wore. She had not changed her evening dress, and as her cloak fell back over her tall figure, showing the lovely bust and arms that gleamed white beneath its scarlet folds, it was difficult to suppress the admiration which her beauty excited. Sir Hilton looked at her and sighed. To him she had always seemed a cold, proud girl, whom it was his misfortune, rather than his joy, to woo. He mistook her timidity for coldness, and her maidenly reserve for want of heart. But now he was to see her under a new phase; for at sight of his fevered face and evident suffering she sprang forward, and, seizing the hand he extended, she stooped and kissed him, while her tears fell fast upon his cheek. Much moved, he flung his arm around her, and pressed her to his bosom.

'My dear Eleanor!' he said, trying to speak without faltering, 'I did not think to see you here. How did you know of this?'

Eleanor could not answer him for her tears.

'Doctor Burton was dining at Trewavas, and Kinsman rode thither after him,' said Lady Trewavas. 'Olive seems to have forgotten he was there, and but for this circumstance we might not have heard of your accident for hours. She did not send to tell us.'

'Never mind,' said Dr. Burton, cheerfully. 'You ladies

must not make such a mighty fuss over my patient ; the accident is really nothing.'

'I am thankful it is no worse,' said Lady Trewavas. 'My dear boy, you have not told me how it happened.'

'I was riding Pixy, and she threw me ; that's all,' he replied ; 'let us leave details at present. By-the-by, Eleanor,' he continued, and his arm pressed her more closely, 'I am right glad you treated me so shabbily this afternoon ; for, had you ridden, I should have mounted you on Pixy, and Heaven knows what would have happened ! The mare was downright vicious to-day.'

'I meant to ride with you,' said Eleanor, softly, 'and I was so hurt you should think me deliberately unkind. Oh Hilton, I have spent such a miserable evening !'

'I have explained it all, my dear,' interposed Lady Trewavas. 'Hilton knows whose fault it is that you did not keep your promise. Really, my dear boy, Olive must not be permitted again to make mischief between you and Eleanor.'

'She shall never do that,' said Sir Hilton, as his eyes rested on Eleanor's beautiful face. 'How can you think such a thing possible ?'

He forgot how he had talked and felt only an hour ago.

'My dear Lady Trewavas, said Dr. Burton, 'I have recommended quiet to my patient ; so what do you say to our leaving him ? Rest will be better than conversation ; he has talked too much already.'

'Do you want to go so soon, Eleanor ?' asked Sir Hilton, wistfully.

The girl was kneeling by the bedside, with the beautiful waves of her brown hair sweeping his brow ; she raised her head at this question, and looked pleadingly at Lady Trewavas.

'Appeal to me, Miss Maristowe,' said the doctor, smiling. 'I brought you to Sir Hilton as my best panacea ; I am going to leave you here, and carry off Lady Trewavas. Will that please you, Sir Hilton ? And if I leave you this physic for a quarter of an hour, will you swallow a veritable medicine when I bring it ?'

'Anything short of poison, doctor, will I take, in gratitude for this your best prescription,' he replied.

In spite of pain, in spite of doubt and jealousy, those were

happy moments that the lovers spent thus together, forgetful of all things in the world save of each other. Above all, forgetful of Olive Varcoe, who, drenched with rain, and weeping bitterly, sat out beneath the trees in darkness.

To some people it is always Winter. Dependence and poverty, sickness and sorrow have no Summer. And among the most miserable of the outcasts from the sun, ranks the poor relation,—the old feeble man, who shrinks nervously from the honoured guests, who sits in draughts, and runs errands, and smiles vacantly at your jests, with a dismal mockery of mirth; or the woman turned fawner and flatterer, who bears all snubbings with supernatural cheerfulness, and does all the family mendings. Upon her is poured out the vials of domestic wrath, and she takes the edge off the sharp tempers of family belligerents, before they come themselves to the conflict. This is her fate; and it is a sad sight to see her smiling on the cross children, or listening with intense interest to the tattle of her patroness: a sad sight, because there is a lack of sturdiness and truth in the natures that prefer to bear such things rather than work hard and fare hard with independence.

Yet Olive, though a dependent, was not one of these. It is true that Lady Trewavas, without meaning it, was sometimes hard on her. If the house was full of guests, it was thought a mere trifle to disturb Miss Varcoe, and make her yield her room, or share it with another. Slightings, seldom put on others, sometimes fell to her share, and at parties or picnics she was often thrust aside, without Lady Trewavas herself being very conscious of the fact. The household had grown into the habit of forgetting or overlooking her, and the justice or injustice of the process was never inquired into; she was a person of little importance, and there was an end of the matter. No unkindness was meant; and yet the family slipped into grooves that passed Olive Varcoe by. Then, too, she was expected to do many things that she chose to consider derogatory. She helped to mend the family linen, she assisted to label preserves and pickles; and (horror of horrors!) Lady Trewavas sometimes gave her a dress of her own, with orders to alter it for herself.

All these things Olive bore, not like a dependent, but like an imprisoned princess raging beneath the thrall of a malig-

nant fairy. And for these small grievances she thirsted for revenge, and nursed in her heart an eager desire to ride over the necks of her enemies. Beneath all her gaiety, all her freaks, there lurked a passionate resentment, which might one day break out in dire deeds, or (so inconsistent was her character) in some wild act of marvellous generosity. To make Sir Hilton love her, to make him marry her, was the favourite shape her dreams took. To be Lady Trewavas would be a triumph indeed. Then she would be loftily generous and forgiving; then she would show her proud aunt that the insignificant Olive could be noble as the noblest.

Oh, would it never come, that glorious day? Was there no hope? Must she always thirst and never drink?

It seemed so, for now her hopes were shaken to the dust; and wounded in her love, disappointed in her ambition, she turned at bay like a creature hunted and terror-struck. A long gloomy future spread itself before her eyes; mortification, defeat, penury, dependence, marked her way; and, keenest sting of all, Eleanor would see her shame—Eleanor would triumph over her! Eleanor, radiant, victorious, beloved, would lean through life on Sir Hilton's protecting arm, and bestow her charity contemptuously on the poor cousin who had once been her rival.

The thought was too galling, and, wringing her hands piteously, Olive wept beneath the dripping trees, regardless of the rain, regardless of the loneliness and darkness, and heedless of the shiverings that ran through her frame, as her wet garments clung around her.

No one asked for her, no one missed her; so the forlorn girl sat out in the rain, taking a vicious delight in her misery, and yet angry that no one cared enough for her to seek her. In this, as in all other things, she was still a froward child, needing the kind mother's voice that she had never heard, the mother's love that she had never received; and yet some one even now was seeking her—some one who was always kind, always thoughtful for others—some one who, in the midst of his own sorrow, so carelessly ignored by all, could yet feel for hers.

'Olive! Olive!' cried John's voice, cautiously, 'where are you? What are you doing out here in the rain? You will kill yourself.'

'What does it matter?' said the girl, bitterly. 'Is there any human being that will care? My aunt suffers me, that is all; and lately she has begun to dislike me. If she could help it, she would not give me even a garret in her great house; she would thrust me out into the world to perish. I hate her, John! And I hate Eleanor, too, and every one! Shall I be grateful for the unwilling charity flung to me carelessly, as we fling bones to a dog? No! And if it were not for you, John, I would kill somebody this very night.'

'Olive! Olive! you are talking most unjustly,—most wickedly!' exclaimed John, aghast at her violence. 'You are mad!'

'I am not mad,' she replied. 'I am too sane. If my brain were not so clear, I should not see how bitter is my future, how drear and horrible my fate.'

'Does no one suffer but you, Olive?' asked John. 'Look out into the world, and you will see real misery enough; or look at home, and you will find you are not the only one writhing beneath a sore heart.'

'Oh, *you*, John! Who can copy you?' she said. 'You have the patience of Job and the meekness of Moses. Will you set yourself up as a model to a girl like me?'

'No,' replied John gently; 'but you might have sense enough in yourself to bear things more quietly.'

'I cannot bear them quietly, and I won't!' she exclaimed. 'John, I cannot endure this marriage; I must stop it. I shall commit murder to stop it, if nothing else will.'

'You are talking wildly, and like a foolish, wicked child,' said John. 'You don't know what you say. And besides, would murder stop it?'

'Yes,' said Olive, lifting her face from her hands, and letting the fitful moonlight fall full upon her agitated features. 'If I flung Eleanor into the sea, or if I shot aunt, or poisoned old Mrs. Maristowe, Hilton would not marry, at all events, not for a year; and stranger things than the breaking off of an engagement may happen in a year.'

John listened to her silently; then stretching out his hand he seized both hers, and held them in a strong grasp.

'Olive,' said he, 'beware of what you do. If you touch a hair of Eleanor's head, I denounce you at once. The wicked deed you have done to-day is not hidden from me. I know

that you went out to the stable, and twice filled Pixy's manger with corn; and this you did, knowing that Eleanor was going to ride to Trewavas Cliffs. A swerve, a plunge, an unexpected gallop near that precipice, and her life would have been flung away like a straw. Nothing could have saved her. She would have been dashed to pieces beneath the rocks.'

Struggling to free her hands, Olive burst into passionate tears.

'I have not your patience—your goodness,' she cried. 'Forgive me, John! I repented; you know I did. I went to Eleanor, and told falsehoods to save her from riding Pixy. And am I not punished bitterly by seeing Hilton lying in pain and danger through my folly? I was in agony when I saw him mount that beast. You cannot tell how I begged and prayed him to let me ride her. Then seeing the creature so unmanageable, he jumped hurdles to tame her, and I stood by, mad and miserable. I thought I should have died when I saw him fall.'

'You took care not to go to Trewavas Cliffs,' returned John, with a shudder. 'If Hilton had fallen there, he would never have been picked up a living man.'

Olive dragged her hands from John's grasp, and covered her face with them again.

'Don't, don't!' she cried; 'it is too horrible what you say. Oh, John, if I had killed him! What a wicked, wicked girl I am!'

'Yet you would have been glad,' said John, gloomily, 'if Eleanor had been flung by that vicious brute over the cliff, and had lain crushed and mangled out of life on the sands.'

'No, no, I should not have been glad,' she replied. 'If she had not believed my stories, and gone with aunt, I meant to confess what I had done. Do you believe me, John?'

She sunk down on the wet grass, exhausted by her own vehemence, and clung to his knees with both arms.

'I believe you, Olive,' said John, lifting her kindly. 'You are wet through, my poor child; let me drive you home; no one shall see you.'

'Mayn't I stay here?' she cried; 'mayn't I stay and nurse him? It is my fault that he is hurt. I ought to stay.'

'It is useless to ask it, Olive,' replied John; 'Lady Tre-

wavas stays here herself, and Eleanor with her, and Hilton returns home with them to-morrow, if well enough. You see all your mad endeavours to separate these two, only endear them the more to each other.'

For the first time there was a tinge of rancour in John's tone, but in a moment he returned to his old self.

'Come, Olive,' said he, 'let us go home together. They won't miss us.'

Worn out and weary, Olive consented ; but when she rose, she trembled violently, and John was forced to support her with one arm. Thus, with head drooping, and her heavy habit trailing over the long wet grass, the forlorn girl passed beneath the dripping trees, and so down the lonely road, where John's tilbury waited. He lifted her to the seat, and drove fast towards Trewavas.

CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG VIGO, of Bosvigo, was as good looking a Cornish squire as one would wish to see. His eyes were of that deep, peculiar blue, that only Cornish eyes possess, and his complexion had the glow and life of the western sun and the western sea : truly a handsome young fellow, well-made and blithesome, with a springy step, a bright smile, and a pleasant voice.

But Cornwall is the land of pleasant voices. And here, too, is the deep blue sky of the poet's vision ; here the radiant sea of the painter's fancy, and here the thousand strange and mystic memories of an ancient race—a race to whom the Norman and the Saxon seem but of yesterday. In this legendary nook of England, there is an atmosphere around a traveller which breathes of a civilisation antique and strange : he sees the remnant of a people dating from Troy : traditions come upon him older than Rome ; and a peasant will set before him the cream and cakes of Carthage.

Those wild ruins on the hills, where Druids worshipped, have still about them the footsteps and the breath of ancient

Trojans. The fear of the mighty giants of that dim time rests on these lone places, and the blood of forgotten battles oozes through the heath. Here are mounds and barrows of the bones of the slain; and yonder, in the valley, are the workings of the old Phœnicians when they delved for tin.

Is it a wonder that in Cornwall the hills and dales are peopled with ghosts, while living men delving beneath them follow the faint footsteps of races now a mystery and a shadow? And these shadows—these battlings in the mines with rock and ore, amid mysteries and darkness—make the Cornish a strange people, a people quick in intelligence and sympathy, full of poetic fancy, soft of speech and kindly, yet fearless as the hardiest men of the North. The sea is their cradle, the mine their school; the storms and perils of the ocean they brave daily (for the miner is also a fisherman), and solitude, darkness, and death in many shapes, they suffer even from childhood.

And the beauty of the Cornish land,—who can tell it in words? Can pen and ink paint the azure of the bright sea, its changing hues, or the might and grandeur of the league-long rollers that sweep the sands? Or can feeble hand trace out on paper the forms of these great hills, purpling beneath the sky; these giant and rugged cliffs; these valleys, where fairies linger; these dales, in which the laughing pixy hides among flowers and fragrant herbs, speaking of the sun? And what words can show the rippling murmur of the brooks, the green of the waving ferns, the dance, the music, and the song, the life and sunny glow of this soft, delicious land?

And now let us go back to Charles Vigo, of Bosvigo, who cleans his gun in his hall, and whistles to himself and his dog. Over his cheerful face there is an unwonted cast of thought, and he looks at his retriever wistfully, as though he would fain ask his counsel. Putting his gun on the billiard table, he pats the good dog on the head, and gazes into his honest eyes with a perplexed look.

‘My good Bolster,’ he says, ‘would you like a mistress?’

Bolster wagged his tail tremendously.

‘Shall I ask her if she will come hither to be your mistress?’ he continued; ‘a tyrannical mistress, good Bolster; she will give you and me no peace; but then some-

how I cannot do without her. What do you say, Bolster? Shall I try my fortune, or shall I leave it alone?’

‘Since Fortune is a woman, I should say leave it alone, my dear fellah,’ said a languid voice.

The voice belonged to a very swell young gentleman, who stood at the door with a lighted cigar between his lazy lips. Charles Vigo coloured crimson, and then laughed.

‘Where have you been?’ he asked. ‘You came upon me and Bolster very suddenly.’

‘Bwoke up a confidential meeting, eh?’ said Damerel. ‘I’ve been to Twewayvas to see the ladies.’

Young Vigo coloured again to the brow.

‘Can’t you open your mouth, and say Trewâvas?’ said he. ‘And how are the old ladies?’

‘I don’t know,’ replied Damerel. ‘Wasn’t awayaw of their existence duwing the delicious houaw I spent at Twewahvas. (Is that wight?) But I can tell you how the young ladies are.’

‘How, then?’ asked Charles Vigo.

‘At daggers-dwawn,’ replied Damerel. ‘I weally believe that little sawcewess from the East will kill somebody soon.’

‘Are you alluding to Miss Varcoe?’ asked Charles Vigo, in a cold tone.

‘Yes,’ replied the other, looking at him keenly, ‘I allude to her. She is vewy pwetty, but a demon. If you were talking about her to Bolstaw, I give you my advice in one word,—don’t.’

‘Upon my word, Damerel,’ exclaimed young Vigo, hotly, ‘I consider this an——’

‘Impertinence?’ said Damerel. ‘Oh yes, no doubt, my deah fellah, it is impertinent. You can shoot me for it, if you like; there’s your gun handy. A fwriend who gives dis-intewested advice ought to be shot. If I advised you to cnt your throat, or do something to destwoy yourself for life, of course you would embwace me with gwatitude. Well, do it if you like. I’ve nothing more to say.’

Charles Vigo was excessively pale; the hand which he had stretched towards his gun fell powerless by his side as he turned towards his friend and guest.

‘Come, Damerel, let me know what you are talking about,’ he said, in a low voice. ‘I don’t understand a word of all this.’

'You understand it perfectly, old fellow,' replied the other, dropping his affectation in his earnestness; 'but I would not have ventured to speak if I had not a kind of doggish affection for you, arising out of the numerous lickings you gave me at Winchester.'

Charles Vigo and Damerel had clasped hands before this speech was finished, and the two young men stood looking at each other a little sadly, all the memories of boyhood and its thousand happy scenes speaking in their eyes. English fashion, very little was said, but much understood; and had they obeyed their feelings, it is highly probable they might have given each other a good hug. As it was, they subsided very quietly, contenting themselves with a hearty thump in the back; which, as a piece of practical eloquence, seemed to relieve them greatly.

'Look here, old fellow,' said young Vigo, 'I was a little vexed at your going up to Trewavas by yourself.'

'I know that,' said Damerel; 'but you see I did it on purpose. I couldn't trust you to go; so I got up early and sneaked off by myself. A man may do a sneaky thing for a friend, Vigo; but he can't do it for himself. You would never have done what I have done for you this morning. I cannot say it is a grand thing, or a gentlemanly thing to do, to bribe a groom; but for your sake, old fellow, I was determined to know the truth.'

'And what is the truth?' asked Charles, impatiently.

'The truth is, that Miss Varcoe is a dangerous woman,' replied his friend.

'And I am a fool, I suppose, Damerel,' said Charles Vigo.

His face was so white and set, and his voice so full of pain, that his friend completely broke down in his efforts to keep a careless tone and manner.

'My dear Vigo,' said he, 'if you were a fool I would say nothing more to you; but as I have known you all my life long, let me speak out; let me tell you what I have heard.'

'Speak, for heaven's sake, Damerel, and speak plainly,' said Vigo.

'Well, then, Miss Varcoe is dangerous and desperate,' said Damerel; 'she has tried to kill Eleanor Maristowe.'

'Take care what you say, Damerel,' said Vigo. 'This is too absurd.'

'It is too true, Vigo,' he replied, earnestly. 'There is a certain mare in the Trewavas stables, very quiet if properly looked after, but a demon if over-fed. Miss Varcoe twice loaded this beast's manger secretly with corn; the groom watched her, though she made some pretence for sending him away, and fancied she had secured his absence.'

'Well, and what does that prove?' asked Charles Vigo, indignantly.

'I answer you with another question,' said Damerel. 'Do you know Trewavas Cliffs?'

'Of course I do,' replied Charles Vigo.

'I don't,' said Damerel. 'Are the cliffs a dangerous spot for a rider on a restive horse?'

'They are simply fearful,' replied Charles. 'Imagine a precipice three hundred feet high, with a narrow shelving path on the edge, along which a pedestrian can scarcely go safely.'

'And to this delightful spot Eleanor Maristowe was to have ridden on a vicious horse!' said Damerel. 'What would you have set on her life when she started?'

'No man in his senses would take a lady there,' replied Charles Vigo.

'But Sir Hilton Trewavas is not in his senses; he is in love,' said Damerel; 'therefore he permitted Miss Varcoe to persuade him that Trewavas Cliffs was the very place to which he should take his intended wife; and I assure you it was only by the accident of Lady Trewavas asking Miss Maristowe to go for a drive with her, that she was saved.'

'I don't believe or understand a word of all this, Damerel,' said young Vigo, sturdily. 'Why should Olive Varcoe wish to kill Miss Maristowe?'

'Because she loves Sir Hilton Trewavas,' replied Damerel, in a low, emphatic tone; 'and to hinder his marriage, I verily believe she would risk all things.'

Charles Vigo's hand shook as he rested it on the billiard table, and his handsome face flushed painfully.

'Do you really think she loves him?' he asked. 'I have never noticed it—never seen anything.'

'My dear Vigo,' said Damerel, 'the girl loves her cousin desperately; it is only you have been blind. John Trewavas knew it, Eleanor suspects it, Lady Trewavas guesses it, and all the servants talk of it.'

'Then you think I have no chance?' said Charles Vigo, with a forced and hollow laugh.

'On the contrary,' replied Damerel, 'I think she would accept you directly, and make you miserable. Promise me, Vigo, that you won't try her. I am convinced she is a dangerous girl. You are worthy of a better woman than Olive Varcoe.'

'Don't say anything against her, Damerel,' said Charles Vigo; 'you know nothing—it is all surmise—all suspicion.'

'Will you give me time to prove it?' said Damerel. 'Will you promise me not to ask her to be your wife for a month?'

'I'll promise that, and I'll watch her meanwhile,' replied Charles Vigo. 'If she loves Sir Hilton, I shall never ask her. I don't want a woman whose heart is in another's keeping. Besides, if that's the case, she won't have a word to say to me.'

'You are mistaken,' said Damerel; 'she would most likely marry you; or, at all events, she would accept you, and parade her conquest before Sir Hilton's eyes to make him jealous.'

'What a noble part I should be made to play,' said Charles Vigo, bitterly, 'if what you say be true. But I believe nothing of it. You are prejudiced, and you don't know the girl. The fact is, she has been brought up like a sister with Sir Hilton and John, and of course she is fond of them.'

Mr. Damerel whistled in a provoking manner, but made no reply.

'Then you think it is more than a sisterly affection she feels for Sir Hilton?' continued young Vigo.

'I think it is a mad, desperate love, capable of all things,' was the reply; 'a love that has already brought her to the verge of crime.'

Beads of sweat broke out on Charles Vigo's brow; and, starting up, he struck his fist heavily on the table.

'By heavens, Damerel!' he exclaimed, 'I'd bear this from no man on earth but you; and I am bound now to prove this girl's innocence. I'll watch her day and night till I convince you that you have brought a false charge against her. Servants' tales! It is unworthy of you to listen for a moment to such vile calumnies; it is unlike you, Damerel. I am lost in wonder at your assertions.'

'Pass all that, Vigo, and keep your word as to watching the girl,' said Damerel. 'That will satisfy me, and amply satisfy you too. Unless your senses are quite gone, you will come to me, long before the month is up, and tell me with thanks that you will never ask Olive Varcoe to be your wife.'

Charles Vigo's lips were white with anger and grief; but he restrained himself, and spoke calmly.

'You say what you believe, Damerel, and I forgive you,' said he; 'but long before the month is gone you will be ashamed of having traduced an innocent girl, and I shall expect one thing then at your hands—I shall expect you to beg her pardon.'

'If what I assert is not the melancholy truth, I will do that willingly, and beg your pardon too, my dear boy,' said Damerel. 'Now, let us end this discussion; it grows painful.'

'One thing more,' said Charles Vigo—'I want your promise that this scandal shall go no further. You will not repeat your suspicions of Olive here or at Trewavas?'

'I promise that, for your sake,' replied Damerel. 'If I allowed her to know that I suspected her, she would baffle us both, and all your watching would be in vain.'

Charles Vigo writhed beneath his friend's words.

'Enough,' he said, hurriedly. 'I can bear no more of this, even from you.'

From that day, although Olive Varcoe guessed it not, watchful eyes were set on her in her lonely walks, and in her wild wanderings on shore and sea.

CHAPTER V.

'AND what is this pretty thing for?' said Sir Hilton Trewavas, taking a silken chain from Eleanor's hands and throwing it over the sling in which his arm rested. 'Is it a silken fetter for a man to wear, or is it a snare for a lady's neck, meant to string foolish hearts on?'

'Neither one, you silly Hilton,' replied Eleanor; 'it is something far more deadly. It is a thing of crime, of mur-

der, of terror; it is one of those silken cords the sultans of old sent to disgraced pashas, and the sight of it meant death.'

'And who presented you with so ill-omened a gift, Eleanor?' demanded her lover.

'It is not mine,' she replied; 'it is Olive's. There is a dreadful story belonging to it, so she tells me. By this cord her grandfather died. Her mother, then a little child, saw the slave of the sultan approach him with the fatal gift; she saw him kiss the cord, and bare his neck to the executioner; and it was not till the strong hands of the black had commenced their hideous work, that the child stopped her play, and ran shrieking through the harem.'

'A horrible story, indeed,' said Sir Hilton, throwing the cord on the table with disgust. 'But how did Olive get the rope?'

'Her mother gave it to her, and she had it from her mother, who took it from the dead man's neck,' replied Eleanor. 'Wives and children were sold into slavery when he was slain. Olive's mother was a slave for many years, you know.'

'I know nothing of the kind,' said Sir Hilton, in an irritated tone. 'Who tells you these absurd stories, Eleanor?'

Eleanor's fair face crimsoned, and her eyes drooped timidly.

'Lady Trewavas told me some of this; Olive herself told me the rest,' said Eleanor. 'She wants me to weave her a rope like this with some Syrian silk I have.'

'Don't do anything of the kind, love,' said Sir Hilton. 'Olive is half mad at times, with her queer ways and gloomy fancies. I wish she had not told you this story. The child is too fond of telling tales against herself.'

'What is there against herself in this?' asked Eleanor, touching the rope lightly with her finger.

'A grandfather hanged, a mother a slave!' murmured Sir Hilton; 'it curdles one's blood to think of it. Don't touch that hideous cord, Eleanor, I entreat you. The sight of it between your fingers makes me shudder.'

'I touch it without fear,' said Eleanor, 'because I do not in the least believe these romantic stories; and you will laugh when I tell you why Olive wishes me to make a second cord like this. She wants the two for bell-ropes for your dressing-room.'

'That's just like her,' exclaimed Sir Hilton—'always mingling the grotesque and terrible, without regard to one's nerves. What pleasant fancies I should have as I pulled such a rope! Give it back to her, Eleanor, and tell her I have no wish to summon the ghost of her hanged grandfather by sound of bell.'

'Then I am not to obey her behest?' said Eleanor, laughing.

'No, indeed,' replied Sir Hilton. 'I should be sorry to see your pretty fingers weaving ropes of such a deadly pattern.'

He seized her hand as he spoke, and held it lover-like in his own; then drawing her towards him, he stooped and kissed her. Eleanor blushed in her deep happiness as his lips touched hers, and, leaning her head on his shoulder, she gave way for a moment to all her girlish joy and love.

They made a pretty picture, standing thus, with encircling arms, her bright brown curls waving loosely on his breast, and her glowing face hiding itself there in sweet security and peace.

'Are you ever jealous now, Eleanor?' he asked, suddenly.

Eleanor started, and, in her surprise and pretty maiden shame, she replied, falsely, 'Jealous! No, of course not; since you told me that—that you loved only me.'

'I am glad you are not, Eleanor,' said Sir Hilton, 'because I have just had a fuss with your mother on that very point. She declares that you are still jealous of little Olive Varcoe, and she says the poor child shall not live here when we are married; she pretends her stay would make you unhappy.'

A burning red flushed Eleanor's cheek, but she replied gently, almost timidly, 'Do you wish her always to live at Trewavas, Hilton?'

'Well, it is a pity to thrust a poor little creature like her into the world,' he returned; 'and if she is happy here, I see no reason why she should not stay.'

'She may not always be happy here,' said Eleanor, slyly; 'she may fall in love.'

'Olive fall in love!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, with a strange laugh,—'that child fall in love!'

'She is only two years younger than I,' said Eleanor; 'she is no child; she is just as capable of falling in love as any other girl.'

'Not a bit of it, Nell,' said Sir Hilton. 'And if she did, who in the world would ever like such a little elf as Olive for a wife?'

'I know some one who loves her,' replied Eleanor, 'some one who would marry her to-morrow.'

'Not John!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, in a tone of intense amazement and vexation.

'No, not John,' replied Eleanor. 'Guess again.'

'My dear Eleanor, I can't guess,' replied he. 'The idea of anyone liking Olive is too absurd; it is only a fancy of yours; no one would venture to marry her, with her strange ways, and her queer parentage—that is, no gentleman.'

'The person I mean is a gentleman every inch,' said Eleanor; 'even you would own that; and I firmly believe he would be proud to make Olive his wife, in spite of all the drawbacks you name.'

A curious shadow flitted over Sir Hilton's face, and his lip twitched nervously as he tried to laugh.

'Well, Eleanor,' he answered, 'this unknown lover is a more generous fellow than I am, that's all. I own I would not give a girl my name, unless she stood before the world without a flaw in birth, fame, and lineage. If her birth were doubtful, or she had earned a character for eccentricity like Olive, I could not make her Lady Trewavas.'

'Take care,' said Eleanor, a little sadly; 'if you talk like this, I shall think you have asked me to be your wife to gratify your pride, not your love. Or else you love me to please the world, not yourself.'

'My dear Eleanor,' said he, 'if my judgment approves of the choice my heart has made, surely you will not make it a matter of complaint. If in loving you I have pleased the world, the fault is not mine—it is due to your perfections; every one is obliged to confess that I have chosen well.'

He stooped, and touched lightly with his lips the shining brown tresses that bent so near his breast; but Eleanor did not look up or smile. His words had sounded in her ears like the dripping of icy water, and she was chilled even to her innermost soul. Yet his speech was courteous, gallant, and flattering; but then it was only these—it seemed to want the true ring of love; the reflection of the flame was here, but not its warmth.

Dropping her eyelids that he might not see the tears shining within them, Eleanor took up the Syrian cord, and began twisting it around her arms in an embarrassed way. It was a device to give herself time and courage to speak the thought hanging on her lips; but Sir Hilton did not divine this; he spoke again, and laughingly.

‘Put the unlucky rope down, Eleanor!’ he cried. ‘You should never bring anything scarlet so near your fair hair; you should leave all glowing colours to Olive. By-the-by, who is this unknown Quixote whom you believe to be smitten by her charms?’

With a quick gesture, Eleanor flung the scarlet cord on the table.

‘I want nothing of Olive’s,’ she said, with sudden disdain. ‘I do not pretend to vie with her; I am willing to leave her all glowing colours, and all other things she covets. As to the gentleman who loves her, Sir Hilton, you have but to use your eyes, and you will soon discover him. Perhaps there is more than one who loves Olive Varcoe.’

Sir Hilton’s brown cheek changed colour, and his eyes flashed.

‘Are you quarrelling, Eleanor?’ he said, in a constrained tone. ‘If there be really anyone paying attention to Olive, I shall feel obliged by your naming him to me. You forget that we were brought up together, and I have to play the part of a brother towards her.’

‘A brother!’ exclaimed Eleanor, indignantly. ‘You do not behave like a brother to Olive Varcoe. My mother is right; she and I cannot live in the same house together. You must choose between us.’

Sir Hilton Trewavas started from his careless attitude, and the colour forsook his cheek and lip rapidly.

‘You are jealous, Eleanor,’ he said, in a voice which he tried to make jesting.

‘There can be no question of jealousy between me and Olive Varcoe,’ said Eleanor, in her coldest, proudest manner; ‘a girl whom you yourself profess to disdain, with a slur upon her birth, and the shadow of an evil reputation following her.’

‘Evil reputation! Who dared to say so?’ thundered Sir Hilton.

Eleanor's face grew crimson at his loud tone, and her lips quivered when she spoke again.

'You mistake me,' she said. 'I alluded to her reputation for eccentricity and vindictive temper. I repeat again, Sir Hilton, I cannot endure the presence of this girl. If we marry, she must quit Trewavas. She would be a constant source of quarrel between us. My mother has often pointed this out to me, only I have not had the courage to say it to you. I think you should have seen it before for yourself, and so have spared me the pain of uttering this.'

'Pain!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, hotly. 'And who thinks of the pain to poor little Olive—the pain of quitting Trewavas, the pain of being thrust out of her home into the cold world?'

'No one would be so cruel,' replied Eleanor, struggling with her tears. 'A comfortable home could be found for her, or she may marry.'

Sir Hilton ignored the last phrase of this speech, and the first seemed to irritate him.

'A comfortable home found by advertisement, I suppose,' he retorted; 'a musty, dingy, stifling room, at a flabby family's, all dirt, noise, and disorder! What happiness for Olive! How considerate you women are, when you settle together to dispose of the existence of one of your own sex.'

'I will not talk to you any more of Olive,' she said—'I think her a wicked, vindictive girl. I shall speak to my mother, and if she obeys my wishes, we will both quit Trewavas to-night, and I will never return to your roof while Miss Varcoe remains beneath it. After this conversation, I should deem myself deceitful if I met her again as a friend. One thing more, Sir Hilton: when you first proposed to me I was astonished. I did not believe you loved me—I do not believe it now. I release you from all engagement to me. You are free as air.'

She took the diamond ring of her betrothal from her finger, and laid it on the table close to the silken cord. It gave a strange appearance of life to the secret coil, gleaming like an eye among its snaky folds.

Sir Hilton looked at her in bewilderment. He was greatly annoyed by her words: they irritated him as a lover, and touched his honour as a gentleman. Moreover, he

could not understand this sudden transformation of a gentle, timid girl, into an unreasoning, unjust woman. He had wished for an outburst of jealousy, but he had imagined it in quite another shape ; and because it had not taken the form he supposed, he failed to recognise it.

‘If you and Mrs. Maristowe choose to insult Lady Trewavas by quitting us to-night, I have nothing to say against it,’ he replied, coldly. ‘It is a matter for yourselves to decide on. I can only wonder, Miss Maristowe, what I have done or said to cause this burst of unnecessary anger. With regard to my engagement to you, let me tell you that a man’s honour cannot be so easily flung from him as a lady’s jewel. You may contemptuously withdraw my ring from your finger, and throw it from you, but my word still stands fast. You have every claim, Miss Maristowe, on my forbearance and affection, and I shall acknowledge those claims till the end of my life.’

‘I have no claim on you, Sir Hilton,’ she replied. ‘I have a right to expect to be loved. To marry, with only the dead ashes of your honour to warm our lives, would be misery indeed. I would not hold you for one moment on such terms. I release you from your word to me. Go, give it to her who already has your love ; and be quick, lest Mr. Vigo should seize the prize before you.’

She turned quickly and quitted the room, leaving Sir Hilton alone. He sprang after her to the door, but caught only the flutter of her robe as she passed swiftly up the great staircase. Then he came back, and flung himself into a chair.

What did it all mean ?—was it a dream ? No ; here was the diamond ring gleaming at him, like the cruel eye of a blood-red snake ; and Eleanor was in earnest, else she would never have drawn this from her finger, and thrown it here with such contemptuous and bitter words. With any other girl he would think it was only a lover’s quarrel ; but Eleanor was so tranquil, so calm, that anger from her came with double strength, and showed she was earnest indeed. If it had been little Olive now, who had flung herself into a fury—Ah ! what did this mean about Mr. Vigo ? Really, Eleanor had shown unpardonable temper in all she had said, especially in this nonsense about young Vigo and Olive, which was a thing perfectly absurd and untrue. And now,

what would Lady Trewavas say? What a horrible row and fuss there would be in the house over this affair, should Eleanor tell of it. What was the matter with her?—what had she quarrelled about?

Here a gleam of intelligence entered Sir Hilton's brain, and a glimmer of the truth reached him. Eleanor was jealous! There was a momentary flash of triumph in his eyes, and then a cloud fell over his features. It was evident the thought did not give him the pleasure he had fancied it would. No, because she was jealous of Olive; and he saw now, that if her jealousy took this phase, Olive was the last person in the world of whom he would wish her to be jealous. Like a sultan, he had dreamed of having two women at his feet, vying with each other in lavishing their tenderness on him; and lo! one had scornfully relinquished him, and the other, it seemed, was to be snapped up by this Vigo!

Sir Hilton Trewavas was not a puppy, although he indulged at times in puppyish thoughts. He took himself honestly to task now for the vanity which had led to this fracas; and, with his hand on his brow, he puzzled his brains how he was to get out of his trouble, and restore Eleanor's peace, without involving Olive in some misfortune.

'And there's that horrid ring,' he said to himself; 'what am I to do with it? I can't let it lie there, I suppose. I wonder if Eleanor will come after it if I do? Of course she won't hold out. I feel very odd. I can't tell whether I am a free man or no.'

At this moment John's hand tapped on the glass, and his head obtruded itself through the open window.

'Hilton, Hilton! what are you dreaming about?' he cried. 'Here's young Vigo and Mr. Damerel in the smoking-room. Come, and help us at pool.'

Sir Hilton started up and glanced at John, and then at the diamond ring lying on the little table before him among the snaky coils of the scarlet rope. He caught it up, and put it in his pocket unobserved, he thought; but John recognised the ring, and saw the action, and noted the perplexity on his brother's face; and with a strange flutter of new hope about his heart, stirring every vein, he walked by his side silently to the smoking and billiard-room, which was in a pavilion standing in the park.

Olive was also in the billiard-room, with a cue poised in her small hand, and her glowing face very near Mr. Vigo's, as that blushing young squire, steeped in an atmosphere of intense delight, was bending over her, with practical instructions how to hit the ball. In his present mood this sight irritated Sir Hilton Trewavas.

'We are going to smoke, Olive,' he said.

'You mean *you* are going to smoke?' she returned, laughing. 'All the others are smoking like chimneys already.'

'Yes, and it's weally too bad,' said Mr. Damerel! 'pon my honour it is.'

'Not at all,' said Olive; 'I like smoke.'

Sir Hilton went over to the bell and rang it loudly.

'What are you about?' asked John.

'I want some beer—some brandy—no, some champagne.'

This he said because he now perceived that the side-table was well laden with bottles, and he guessed champagne was the sole thing wanting.

'Have champagne, if you like,' said John; 'but really it is scarcely the right sort of thing for morning. We have to dine with ladies, you know.'

'For that reason I don't see that we want to smoke and play billiards with ladies,' returned his brother. 'Olive, if you were my wife, or my sister, I would say, leave the room; but since you are only my guest at Trewavas, I can but say, pray please yourself.'

As he spoke the word 'wife,' a flush covered Olive's face; but when he went on to utter the cruel truth that she was only his guest, and had no home at Trewavas, she turned pale as death. For a moment she could not speak; it was so strange, so new for Sir Hilton to taunt her; and in that instant's silence, young Vigo took up cudgels in her defence.

'Come, come, Sir Hilton,' he said, 'you are too bad; and you don't know the truth.'

'The truth seems evident enough, Mr. Vigo,' observed Sir Hilton. 'I see Olive here playing the fast young lady, among a set of young men, and——'

'Excuse me,' said Charles Vigo. 'I was going to tell you that had you come a minute earlier you would have seen Lady Trewavas also. She has but just left us, and in going she told Olive to stay.'

'And play out her game,' continued Olive, triumphantly. 'She said she would be back in a minute; Mrs. Maristowe wanted her for something. I wish she would not keep her so long.'

Hilton's face paled terribly. Eleanor then was determined to make a fuss; she would not keep this silly quarrel to herself. He felt himself growing pale with anger. To hide it, and moved by some other feeling about which he did not question himself, he turned savagely on Olive.

'I think,' he exclaimed, 'it would have shown better taste on your part had you gone with Lady Trewavas; but it is nothing to me; you are not my sister, and our distant cousinship can scarcely count. Do as you please. Perhaps you would like a cigar?'

The young men listened to this rudeness in silent amazement. They waited, with some wonder, to hear what Olive would say to this unjust and unexpected attack. She did not keep them in suspense long. One look of angry pain shot from her eyes, and then she turned at bay.

'Since the matter is nothing to you, Sir Hilton Trewavas, I shall remain,' she said, proudly. 'And I should like a cigar. It is no sin in my country for a woman to smoke; in Syria, in Egypt, in Persia, in Spain, they share the weed with their friends and lovers, but not with their enemies. I won't take a cigar from you. Mr. Vigo, will you give me one?'

John Trewavas listened and trembled. Here surely was the opportunity for which Olive had panted. And if her idea was true, that Sir Hilton secretly liked her, and she succeeded now in rousing his anger and jealousy, what would happen? Should he be spared this daily agony of seeing Eleanor betrothed to a man who played carelessly with her happiness? Might he hope that his own deep, strong love would one day find a hearing? The thought rushed over him in a great wave of happiness, making his heart beat violently. His brain grew bewildered, and he heard things like one in a dream, or like a man lost and wandering in a mist, on whose ear familiar sounds fall with a drear ghostliness.

'You are welcome to every cigar I have, Miss Varcoe,' said young Vigo, his handsome face flushing with pleasure; 'but, I confess, I would rather not see you smoke.'

'Nonsense! I smoked when I was six years old,' said Olive, laughing. Give me your cigar case.'

In another moment a small puff of smoke curled from her red lips, as in a pretty attitude of defiance she leant against the billiard table, and glanced furtively at Sir Hilton Trewavas.

'So that is the girl Eleanor has told me to marry!' he said to himself, bitterly. 'And I should feel ashamed of her as my wife, just as I feel now.'

There was a sickening tightness at his heart as he looked at her, a yearning and miserable feeling of pain and anger, inexplicable and wordless.

'You smoke capitally, Miss Varcoe,' said Mr. Damerel, in a slightly familiar voice. 'Shall I mix you some cold bwandy-and-wataw, or will you have a glass of champagne?'

Olive's cheek tingled, her sensitive nature felt the lowering of the man's respect, and her whole blood seemed stung; but she was determined not to be daunted.

'Wine is forbidden by the Koran,' she replied, 'else I should be glad to accept your obliging offer, Mr. Damerel.'

There was a wonderful intonation in her voice; it tingled through Mr. Damerel's brain, and ran down through his back bone, covering him with a creeping shame. It was a tone which spoke plainly to his understanding, saying, 'This is a war between me and Sir Hilton. Leave us alone, and don't insult me like a coward.'

But Sir Hilton had brought a belligerent atmosphere into the room with him. The contagion in his rasped, angry nerves, was spreading around him dangerously; and Mr. Damerel, whose opinion of Olive we have heard him give, had taken somewhat of the fever. He looked in her face, and smiled.

'We don't admit the laws of the Kowan here, Miss Varcoe,' he retorted. 'Twewavas, can't you persuade your cousin to dwink a glass of champagne? A dwy cigar is a vevy bad thing.'

He appealed to Sir Hilton to show that he had arrayed himself on the enemy's side; and this naturally made Olive turn pleadingly towards young Vigo.

'Mr. Vigo,' she cried, 'shall we go on with our game? Mr. Damerel, Sir Hilton will not persuade me to take cham-

pagne ; he knows I never touch wine of any kind. A cannon, Mr. Vigo, and both balls pocketed. Can you beat that ?'

Olive followed the young man to his side of the table as she spoke, and laid her fingers on his arm.

'Here, give me a corkscrew,' cried Sir Hilton, starting up. 'Let's get this champagne opened. You'll take some, I know, Vigo, if your fellow-smoker won't.'

Fellow-smoker ! Olive grew a little pale, but she poised her cue with untrembling hand, as Mr. Vigo looked up, and said, hastily, 'No, thanks ; none for me.'

'There is no corkscrew here,' observed John, searching among the glasses on the side-table.

'Never mind ; my pocket corkscrew will do,' said Sir Hilton.

He thrust his hand in the pocket of his velveteen jacket, and dragged forth with the corkscrew a scarlet silken cord, and a ring. This latter fell to the ground, and rolled beneath the billiard table. Young Vigo stooped and picked it up. Every one recognised it : every one had seen it on Eleanor's finger, and knew it as that very significant jewel which bespeaks an engagement. The gentlemen said nothing, hiding their thoughts adroitly ; and Mr. Vigo was about to place the ring silently on the table, when Olive took it from his hand. 'Why, it is Eleanor's !' she exclaimed, with an air of surprise. 'How strange——'

But she checked her speech, and the blood flew to her heart, as she saw the anger and confusion on Sir Hilton's face. Then she turned to John, and exchanged with him one rapid glance of burning hope and gladness.

'It is this accursed rope that has caused the mischief !' exclaimed Sir Hilton, flinging it on the ground. 'Miss Maristowe wants the ring altered, and I took it from her for that purpose, and had no idea I had put it among the coils of this unlucky cord. How that got into my pocket I don't know.'

Sir Hilton was not aware that, in his haste, he had caught it up with the ring, when John called him from the window. No one believed what he said of Eleanor.

'I take you all to witness this cord is mine,' cried Olive, winding it round her waist as she spoke ; 'and I cannot tell in the least how it got into your possession, Sir-Hilton.'

'Is it a valuable welic?' asked Mr. Damerel.

'It is one I do not covet,' replied Sir Hilton. 'A hangman's perquisite is not a pleasant gift in one's pocket.'

Again Olive coloured, but she turned gaily to Mr. Vigo.

'You see,' she remarked, 'Sir Hilton's grandfather broke his neck respectably, out hunting; so he can afford to despise ropes; but mine had his neck broken for him. This is the cord with which his Highness the Sultan had him amiably strangled by his own slave. You can imagine how I value it.'

Young Vigo, evidently not knowing what was expected of him, seized the dangling ends, and, examining them attentively, said it was a curious history, and, doubtless, the cord was worth preserving.

'Send it to Madame Tussaud's,' said Mr. Damerel, 'with a card attached, saying, "By this wope was stwangled the gwandfather of the beautiful Miss Varcoe, of Twewavas."''

'Leave out Trewavas, if you please, Damerel,' said Sir Hilton, haughtily.

Olive glanced at his angry face and turned pale, and as she withdrew her eyes, dewy with crushed tears, she encountered the blue orbs of Mr. Vigo.

'Say of Bosvigo, Damerel, if Miss Varcoe will permit it,' said he. 'The place and its master will both feel honoured by her name being associated with theirs.'

Every one felt this was a little serious; and Mr. Damerel elevated his eyebrows in a warning way. Sir Hilton ran the corkscrew into his hand, and then flung it on the floor.

'Give me Eleanor's ring, Olive,' he said, in a husky voice. 'You are slinging it on that horrible rope, and the contact irritates me.'

With a glance of fire in her eyes, Olive gave it him hurriedly; but as her hand touched his, she screamed and drew it away.

'There is blood on the ring, and on my fingers!' she cried. 'What have you done?'

'Don't be frightened,' said John; 'it is only a scratch he gave himself with the corkscrew. I think somehow we have fallen into a disagreeable kind of talk—blood and ropes, and hanging, and I don't know what.'

'It is all Miss Varcoe's fault,' said Mr. Damerel. 'She dished us up her gwandfather's bones.'

Sir Hilton was busy wiping the blood from Eleanor's ring; but it still had a red spot on it when he placed it on his little finger. He looked dangerous, so strange was his expression and manner. At this moment the door opened, and a servant appeared.

'My lady wishes to know, sir, if you can step up to her room, and speak to her?'

He addressed himself to Sir Hilton, but John answered him.

'We are all coming in directly, Kinsman,' said he. 'What does Lady Trewavas want?'

'I don't know, sir, unless it's something about Mrs. Maristowe, sir. She is going away so very sudden with Miss Eleanor.'

The servant shut the door, as a blank silence fell upon all. Sir Hilton broke it with an abrupt laugh.

'What can have happened?' he said. 'I suppose I must go and see what is the matter. But it is quite a mistake of Kinsman's to suppose that Mrs. and Miss Maristowe are leaving us.'

'Perhaps she has had a telegram with bad news,' suggested young Vigo. 'Miss Varcoe, give me a tiny piece of this cord, and I'll wear it as a new kind of order.'

'What shall the order be called?' said Olive. 'Knights Defenders of the Friendless: will that do?'

Seeing Mr. Vigo turn instantly from him to Olive, Sir Hilton's footsteps lingered, and he of course heard this, and saw the look of admiration with which he regarded her.

'Olive!' he exclaimed, 'if you have finished smoking and playing billiards, perhaps you will come in, and see if Lady Trewavas wants you.'

It was not the tone of irony in which he spoke, but the implied command that she was to make herself useful when 'wanted,' that irritated Olive, and made her turn fiercely on him.

'I have not finished my cigar,' she replied; 'and if I had, I suppose I am not wanted to cord Miss Maristowe's boxes. Oh,' she added, in a low tone, to Mr. Vigo, 'when shall I be delivered from this bondage?'

She said these wilful words, not meaning them. Knowing that Sir Hilton listened, she spoke them in the wild hope that in his mistaken heart he cared for her, and would be jealous. But if he was jealous, he did not show it in the ordinary way. A sudden pallor struck him, and he closed the door without a word. As he passed the open window he saw young Vigo leaning over Olive, whispering; while Mr. Damerel was saying, in a weary voice, 'What's the wow, John? Do you think the lovers have quawwelled?'

'So I am to be a nine days' wonder,' said Sir Hilton to himself. 'I will never submit to this. Eleanor must stay. A bondage—Trewavas is a bondage! Let her leave it, then. She is free to go. She almost proposed to young Vigo in saying that. Well if——'

But Sir Hilton stopped, for a sharp pang seized him, and, putting his hand to his brow, he almost gasped for breath.

Lady Trewavas stood unnaturally upright as she greeted him, and her handsome, unwrinkled face flushed with anger.

'What is all this, Hilton?' she said, steadying her voice to speak calmly.

'All what?' said he, throwing himself languidly into a chair, and looking at her with a weary air.

'Hilton, your assumption of indifference won't deceive me,' she replied. 'You cannot be indifferent in a matter where your honour and happiness are concerned, as they are in this. Why have you quarrelled with Eleanor?'

'Why has Miss Maristowe quarrelled with me, you mean?' returned Sir Hilton.

'She is not quarrelsome, Hilton—she is wonderfully gentle tempered,' said Lady Trewavas; 'but I let the expression pass. Why, then, has she quarrelled with you?'

'I don't know myself,' he replied. 'Have you asked her why?'

'This pretence of ignorance is absurd, Hilton,' said the old lady. 'Of course I have asked her; but I get nothing but tears, and a passionate declaration that she deems it better to part at once.'

Sir Hilton was silent for an instant, and the shadow of a deep perplexity crossed his face.

'And can we part, grandmother?' he demanded.

'Is it a Trewavas that asks me?' said she, scornfully.

'Can a gentleman break his word? Can he jilt a girl like a butcher would? Can he consent to be mean, dishonourable, base?'

'But if Miss Maristowe wishes to break her engagement, it appears to me I am bound to submit,' said Sir Hilton.

'She does not wish it,' said Lady Trewavas. 'The girl is jealous, that's all. Go to her, Hilton, and ask her to marry you this day month, and see what her answer will be.'

'I don't know that I am prepared to do that,' said Sir Hilton, a little startled.

'Why not?' she resumed. 'You proposed to Eleanor, meaning to marry her, I suppose. And can you find a girl anywhere better suited to you?' There was no answer. 'Is she not beautiful, rich, well-born, gentle, good?'

'She is all that,' replied Sir Hilton.

'A girl worthy of the name of Trewavas,' continued the old lady. 'A wife of whom you would be proud, who would never bring pain, or shame, or sorrow on you, or yours, and whose children and grandchildren would love and honour her.'

'I firmly believe Eleanor is all you say,' returned Sir Hilton, earnestly.

'Then why do you hesitate?' asked Lady Trewavas. 'Go to her at once and make up this quarrel; and to convince her that you love her, propose an instant marriage, as I have advised. Do you know they are getting ready to leave, and Mrs. Maristowe positively seems glad to go? She dislikes you, Hilton. She sets her daughter against you.'

'I have seen that a long time,' said Sir Hilton, gloomily.

'And will you let her have her own selfish way?' continued his grandmother. 'If they leave in this manner, Hilton, I shall never hold up my head again. I shall feel ashamed of my grandson. You are as much bound in honour to Eleanor Maristowe as if she were your wife.'

'But if they will leave Trewavas in this hurried, discourteous manner, it seems to me it is you and I who have a right to complain,' said Sir Hilton.

'No; Eleanor has explained her motives,' replied Lady Trewavas. 'She goes to avoid giving you further pain; she has made every apology to me. And besides, I tell you, it is her mother who hurries her away; she catches at this quarrel eagerly, to part you and Eleanor.'

Sir Hilton's jealous temper could ill brook Mrs. Maristowe's interference.

'I believe this is all her doing,' he said angrily.

'And are you going to bear it?' asked Lady Trewavas. 'Hilton, do not deceive yourself; Eleanor loves you dearly; and if she leaves this house, and your engagement is broken off, I shall blame you, and the whole world will blame you. I shall say you have done a mean, base thing, and I shall be ashamed to own you.'

Sir Hilton was silent. He was not a man to take his own part, when a mother or grandmother was heaping reproaches on him. Seeing him so apathetic, Lady Trewavas grew more angry.

'I believe Eleanor's jealousy is not unfounded,' she resumed; 'you like that artful girl better than you do her.'

Sir Hilton was stung.

'What artful girl do you mean?' he demanded. 'There are so many.'

'I mean Olive Varcoe,' was the reply.

'Your own grandniece?' said Sir Hilton. 'Well, I would not marry Olive Varcoe for the world. I left her smoking cigars with young Vigo, and making love to him.'

'It's a pity young Vigo can't be got to marry her,' said Lady Trewavas.

'That's not likely,' returned Sir Hilton, drily. 'He won't marry her, for the same reason that I, or any other gentleman, would not, because her position here has been made too equivocal. You have kept her too much in the house-keeper's room. And her birth and manners are against her.'

'Well, then,' said Lady Trewavas, 'since you don't want to marry Olive, why do you hesitate to convince Eleanor of that fact, by going to her at once, and making up this childish quarrel?'

'Why do I hesitate?' he cried. 'Because I don't wish to pain you.'

'Me, Hilton!' she exclaimed.

'Yes, you have always been used to Olive,' he replied; 'you don't want to drive her forth from Trewavas, I am certain.'

'Assuredly not,' said Lady Trewavas. 'Who would think of driving the girl out of her home?'

'Eleanor does,' replied Sir Hilton. 'She makes it a condition of our marriage that Olive shall leave. That's the subject we quarrelled on.'

Lady Trewavas looked at her grandson in painful astonishment.

'It would certainly break Olive's heart to quit Trewavas,' she ejaculated.

'I don't think that,' said Sir Hilton, turning a weary gaze to the window. 'I believe you are mistaken there. I heard her tell young Vigo just now that Trewavas was a house of bondage. Therefore I was thinking of your pain, not of hers, when I hesitated to consent to her departure.'

'Then hesitate no more,' interposed Lady Trewavas. 'Your happiness and Eleanor's must come first with me; Olive's afterwards. So Trewavas is a "house of bondage" to her!'

'I don't know that the words were exactly those,' he observed. '"This bondage" and "who will deliver me?"—that was it, I think. Neither you nor I, grandmother, will let these foolish words affect her future.'

'No, certainly,' she replied. 'But I did not think ingratitude was one of her faults. However, since she will be glad to leave Trewavas, it makes matters less painful for all. I'll find her a home somewhere. Go to Eleanor, and tell her that point is settled. On the whole, Hilton, I am not sorry Olive should leave. I believe Eleanor is right; she is thrown too much with you and John.'

'With John!' exclaimed Sir Hilton.

The old lady would hear no more; she took him resolutely by the arm, and led him across the hall to the drawing-room. With his hand on the door, Sir Hilton turned, on her a strangely pale face, and whispered, 'Grandmother, I believe you are saving me from a great misery. I know what I do now is best for my happiness and for yours.'

He did not think whether it was best for Eleanor; yet in another moment he was gazing remorsefully into her flushed, tear-stained face, and he was telling her and himself that he loved her dearly.

After Sir Hilton's departure from the billiard-room, Olive's manner suddenly changed; and young Vigo, chilled and vexed, refused John's invitation to dinner, and left

hurriedly with his friend. In truth, both he and Mr. Damerel felt themselves *de trop* in this family party, in which it was evident some unpleasant event was impending.

'There's a good deal of electwicity in the air,' said Damerel, as the friends strode through the park. 'It is my pwivate opinion that young bawonet is not pwoperly acquainted with himself; he does not know his own mind. I must intwoduee him to it the next time we meet.'

'Come to heels, Bolster!' cried young Vigo, in a stentorian voice.

'Ah, I thought we should have thundah,' said Damerel. 'Pooah Bolstaw! how vewy pleasant these visits to Twewawas must be for him!'

'They appear to be very agreeable to you, Damerel,' said Vigo; 'you seemed to be pretty well amused this morning.'

'Oh, ah, yes,' said he. 'As a looker-on I see a good deal, and it's wathaw amusing, certainly.'

'And what have you seen as a looker-on to day?' asked Vigo.

'I have seen what I wemarked about Sir Hilton,' he replied; 'that he has nevaw been pwoperly intwoduced to himself.'

'Talk English, Damerel, do!' exclaimed Vigo.

'Do you mean you want me to speak out my opinion plainly—in a widiculous coarse way?' he asked.

'Yes, I mean that,' replied Vigo.

'Well, then, I have a stwong idea that Sir Hilton would like to join the Mawmons, if they were a wespectable body, with bawonets among them and membahs of Parliament.'

'Upon my word, Damerel, I am in no mood for fooling,' said Vigo. 'Talk nonsense to-night if you will, but speak sense now, if you can.'

'You won't listen if I do,' returned his friend, changing his tone. 'You are in love; and so, of course, you have neither sense, shape, sight, hearing, recollection, nor smell.'

'Am I so poor as that?' said Vigo.

'Yes, and I'll prove it,' replied Damerel. 'I'll bet you a pony that you have not heard anyone speak this morning but Miss Varcoe, and you haven't seen anyone but her, and can't recollect anyone but her; and as to sense, you can't put two and two together; and with regard to smell, I

should say you were quite lost, for when Miss Varcoe lighted a lucifer match, you said, "Beautiful!" I give you my word you did.'

'I won't take your bet,' said Vigo, smiling in spite of himself. 'I have no doubt that I have lost all my senses. And now let me hear what your idea is about Trewavas turning Mormon.'

'Well, since you are no longer quite deaf, I'll tell you,' said Damerel. 'My idea is, that Sir Hilton would like to marry two wives; one to gratify his pride, and the other his ignorance—his ignorance—yes, that is the only word I can use to express such a love as his. Oh, he is hopelessly idiotic, is Sir Hilton Trewavas. I wouldn't have his baronetcy and his estates for the world, if I was obliged to take his brains with them.'

'That is an absurd idea of yours, Damerel. It won't bear examination for a moment. If it were true, why of course Sir Hilton would be an idiot; but he had his choice, and he deliberately chose Eleanor; that proves where his love is. And Olive—are you still of the same opinion with regard to her?'

'For your sake,' replied his friend, seriously, 'I am sorry to say I am. Think no more of this girl, Vigo. If there is anything like a lasting quarrel between the lovers, she'll go in for the baronet, depend on it; and if the quarrel is made up, I shouldn't like to be Miss Maristowe, that's all.'

'It is hard you should think so ill of her, Damerel,' said Charles; 'but I'll keep my word.'

'Well, don't keep it in the unpleasant way you did this morning,' said Damerel—'whispering sweet things to her, and skirting the brink of a proposal every minute. I really trembled for you. Remember, a mistake in marriage can never be rectified.'

'True,' said Charles; 'matrimony is an awful affair.'

For a few minutes after the utterance of this aphorism, the friends walked on in silence; then Mr. Damerel turned suddenly, and said, 'Why did she smoke to-day, Vigo?—can you tell me that?'

'Why?—because she liked to, I suppose,' he replied. 'But, I must say, I don't admire that style of thing, and I was sorry to see her doing it.'

'There is no one has more tact or knowledge as to what a lady should or should not do than Miss Varcoe,' said Damerel. 'She smoked to-day to annoy her cousin—from no other motive, Vigo ; so don't waste your sorrow. What will you bet she don't touch another cigar for ten years ?'

'I'll never make her the subject of bets, Damerel,' he answered. 'Let us walk faster ; the governor will be waiting dinner.'

Thus these two beguiled the way ; while Olive and John, left alone in the billiard-room, looked at each other for a moment in agitated silence. John was the first to speak.

'What is the meaning of this, Olive ?' he said. 'Can it be possible that Eleanor has given up her engagement with Hilton ?'

'I truly think she has ; but do not let us hope too much from it, John,' she replied. 'Remember how soon lovers' quarrels are made up.'

'But this is serious,' persisted John. 'Did you see the state of mind Hilton was in ?'

'But I was in hopes, John, that some of that temper was — because I smoked and flirted with Mr. Vigo.'

'I don't think so,' returned John ; 'and if so, you are to blame. You know I never will help or encourage you in such tricks.'

'He was rude to me—almost brutal,' said Olive. 'I'll make him love me, John, if it is only for revenge.'

'What sort of revenge would that be ?' said John. 'Don't talk again like a demon, Olive. I have heard too much of it already.'

Olive was silent. There was a suppressed excitement about the usually quiet John that checked her own hastiness, and held her passionate tongue chained.

'Did you see Eleanor's ring, Olive ?' asked John. 'She must have given it back to him. Oh, what a blessing it will be for all of us, if this wretched, mistaken, foolish engagement is indeed broken off. Never were two people so unfitted for each other.'

'The world says differently, John,' replied Olive. 'Never was match so fitting, says smiling Mrs. Grundy.'

'A mistake, Olive,' said he. 'Hilton will make that girl wretched if he marries her.'

'But he shan't marry her!' exclaimed Olive. 'I'll tear up the world first. John, I shall kill somebody if you don't take care of me.'

John smiled, but it was such a sickly, painful smile, that Olive ran over to him, and put her hand kindly on his shoulder.

'What is the matter, John?' she said. 'You are not yourself to-day.'

'It is this hope, Olive, tearing out my very heart,' he replied. 'I cannot bear it. I did not think that a faint glimmer of hope would unnerve me like this. I was patient. I had given it all up, you know; and now, this is tearing open the wound afresh.'

'And you must give it up again, John,' said Olive. 'Eleanor loves Hilton. Your situation is not like mine. I am quite certain Hilton likes me.'

'All the more cruel is it if he marries Eleanor,' said John, bitterly, 'especially as he takes her from a man to whom, heaven knows, she would be dearer than life. As to his liking you, Olive, I doubted it once; but I begin to think now it may be so.'

A glow of triumph spread itself in a crimson flush over Olive's cheek.

'And do you think I'll let him marry that girl?' she cried. 'No; I'll——'

'No threats, Olive,' said John, putting up his hand to check her. 'I'm so weary of them. What do they do? They alter nothing. I have no reliance on any of your schemes. I trust most in Mrs. Maristowe. She is not very fond of Hilton; and Eleanor's love for him is not so very deep-rooted as you think, else her mother's words would not have the weight with her that they possess.'

At this moment a shadow passed the window.

'Here is Mrs. Maristowe,' said Olive, hurriedly. 'Let me escape—do! She hates me, I know. Get the truth out of her, John, and then come and tell me. There is one comfort—I suppose we shall not be kept long in suspense.'

Olive ran hastily out of the door as Mrs. Maristowe entered.

'Is Mr. Trewavas here?' she said. 'Dear me, Miss Varcoe, how disagreeably your dress smells of tobacco smoke!'

I wonder you like to remain here when the young men are smoking.'

Olive gave her a comical look, and then said, daringly, 'I have just been smoking a cigar myself, Mrs. Maristowe. John is in there, if you want him.'

'What a dreadful girl!' said that lady to herself. 'It is impossible for Eleanor to endure her as a companion. I wonder Sir Hilton has had the effrontery to expect it. Mr. Trewavas,' she said, aloud, 'will you take a stroll with me in the garden? I should like a little talk with you before I leave.'

'Are you going to leave us, Mrs. Maristowe?' said John. 'You have received no unpleasant news, I hope?'

'Oh, no ill news,' she replied, calmly; 'only I have been explaining to Lady Trewavas that if this unpleasantness between Sir Hilton and Eleanor continues, we had better leave. It would be so awkward, you see, for all parties, if we stayed.'

She linked her arm in John's, and pacing the shrubbery, she poured forth her complaint to him in languid words. She was glad Eleanor had acted with spirit at last. Her daughter could not condescend to any rivalry with Miss Varcoe. Sir Hilton would now have finally to choose between them. For her part, she was not anxious the engagement should continue. Eleanor had a very large fortune: it would be wiser if she married a man who would identify himself with her family, and leave his own.

'I want a son, John,' said she, 'not a son-in-law. The idea of parting with Eleanor kills me. How happy I should have been if things had gone as I wished them. Well, who knows? Events may even yet turn in a direction that I know would be the best for Eleanor's peace.'

'I am bound to submit to Miss Maristowe's decision,' said quiet John, and his voice shook; 'but if she had seen and returned my devotion, I would have died for her willingly. As it is, I will try to make her a good brother; and I hope that neither she nor Hilton will ever know the pang it costs me. You will keep my secret, Mrs. Maristowe?'

'Sacredly, John, will I keep it,' she replied. 'But do not despair. Eleanor has positively given up her engagement and given back her ring; and when the first shock and dis-

tress, which she naturally feels, are over, you must pay us a visit. I shall hope everything then. You will be a good, kind son to me, John, I know.'

The unhappy young man to whom she thus so unwisely spoke of hope, felt his heart stand still within him. Happiness came very close to him through her words; it was held from his clasp by only a single hair, and the sickness of fear that fell on him, lest all should be a delusion, and the slight thread turn again to a cable, made him reel as with a sudden faintness.

'Mrs. Maristowe,' he said, 'do not speak hopefully to me. I have borne despair quietly; I will not promise you that I can bear hope in the same tranquil manner. I may give way and do some wild thing, which will betray to all the world the misery that I now hide so well. This giving up of rings, this quarrel you speak of, will only be a renewal of love. I know Hilton better than you do; he is a proud man. He will never break off his engagement.'

'Nevertheless, try to hope, John, for my sake,' persisted Mrs. Maristowe.

'No,' he replied; 'I must try not to hope, if I wish to keep myself sane.'

There are some women to whom the agonies of passion are a play. A sealed book for ever to them is the hot, restless heart which they touch with a careless hand. Yet, strange to say, it is these cold, tranquil women who like to excite emotion and to witness it. They have an intense pleasure in seeing the anguish they have never been able to feel. So it happened that Mrs. Maristowe enjoyed herself immensely. Her life had been so very fish-like and cold, and it was a new sensation to her to draw out this agony and ignorantly play with it.

'Poor fellow!' she said to herself complacently, as she walked into the house; 'if Eleanor and Hilton do make up their quarrel, I shouldn't be at all surprised if he were to shoot himself—not at all.'

Meanwhile, Eleanor had believed once more, and the lovers had kissed again and made it up with tears. And the news of the reconciliation and coming marriage came to John from his brother's lips. The scene was a summer-house in the garden.

'Eleanor and I have had a row, John,' said he; 'but it's all square now; and the upshot is, we are going to be married at once.'

'I wish you joy,' said John, in a quiet voice.

'Well, don't wish it like a fellow going to his own funeral,' returned Sir Hilton, snappishly. 'I'm deucedly put out as it is, John, old fellow. I believe nothing irritates a man like these quarrels among women. I have purchased my peace with Eleanor, but it is at a great cost.'

'There's no cost too great for peace,' said John, abstractedly.

He was cleaning his pistols, and he drew the charge from one as he spoke, and laid the bullet on the table; but his hand shook so nervously as he did so, that it rolled off, and fell on the floor. Sir Hilton stooped and picked it up.

'Where is it?' asked John, looking about.

'In my hand,' replied Sir Hilton. 'Don't send your bullets rolling my way, John, to dirt my fingers.'

'Better in your hand than your heart, said John, in a dry tone. 'You are a consummate coxcomb, Hilton, though you don't seem to know it. Here are two girls quarrelling over you, apparently ready to poison each other, and yet you go on in your cool way making love to both, and ignoring the fact that you are embittering the lives of each, if you are doing no worse.'

'I defy you to prove such an absurd accusation,' said Sir Hilton, a little bitterly.

'It needs no proof,' said John. 'Demand the truth of your conscience, that's all I ask. And depend on it, Hilton, you are on dangerous ground. If you rouse the jealous rage of a girl like Olive, I will not answer for the consequences.'

'Olive cares nothing for me,' he replied. 'She is making fierce love to young Vigo.'

Sir Hilton's voice was still more bitter now. John looked up from his work and glanced at him, then he went on cleaning his pistols.

'Very well, then,' said John. 'Let us say she does not care for you, and that she has taken all your love-making since she was ten years old to mean nothing; still, you will own that Eleanor cares for you, I suppose?'

'Yes,' said Sir Hilton; 'I believe Eleanor loves me truly.'

A dusky flush covered John's face, and he looked up at his brother with bloodshot eyes.

'There is a thing you won't believe, Hilton,' he rejoined, 'and that is, that you try my temper horribly at times. You have too much pride, too much conceit. Had you possessed eyes for anyone but yourself, you might have seen——'

John was about to say, 'You might have seen that I loved Eleanor; and, but for you, I might have won her;' but he checked himself, and, instead of making the confession that would have changed his fate, he said, 'You might have seen that I have been sorely tried lately. Here is Mrs. Maristowe making a confidant of me to confess she does not like you; here is Lady Trewavas always in a fume; here is Olive bringing her passionate complaints to me; and none of them think that I may have a little trouble of my own, which I hide as I best can. And here are you, taking all the fuss made over you as coolly as a sultan.'

'You talk like a woman,' said Sir Hilton, a little contemptuously. 'I don't see why my simple acknowledgment, that Eleanor loves me, should bring on my head such a tirade of reproaches. If Mrs. Maristowe hates me, and makes love to you, can I help it? If my respected grandmother bestows the housekeeper's keys on you, and delegated the scolding of servants to your eloquence, again can I help it? And, lastly, if Olive sets her tears before you in a bowl, and requests you to drink them, am I to blame? Send her to young Vigo. As to your own troubles, John, I really cannot guess what they are. I know no younger son half so well off as yourself.'

'I am no brawler,' said John, his face as pale as ashes, 'else I might cavil at the ill-bred insolence of your words. Whatever I may possess as a younger brother was not given to me by you, that is certain.'

'At all events,' laughed Sir Hilton, 'you get board and lodging at my expense.'

The words had scarcely left his lips ere John sprang towards him pale with anger. His hands were clenched as if to strike, but suddenly they dropped by his side, and he started back trembling.

'Why do you try me so hard, Hilton?' he said. 'You know not what you are doing.'

Sir Hilton had turned pale at John's sudden outburst of passion, and had prepared himself to fend off a blow, but he had no wish to quarrel with his brother.

'Upon my word, John,' he cried, 'I had no idea you were so testy. I thought you a good-tempered fellow. But here you are showing fight at a jest. Why, what's the matter, man? Are we both fools to-day?'

'Something like it,' replied John, in a low voice. 'But do not jest again about my stay at Trewavas. I am ready to leave it to-morrow if you like.'

Sir Hilton bit his lip, and an expression of deep vexation passed over his face.

'I don't quite deserve that, John, for a mere joke,' he observed. 'Let us be friends and brothers, as long as we can. You will leave the old roof soon enough, depend on that. I foresee that my mother-in-law elect intends to make a clean sweep of all my friends and relations.'

'She is right,' said John. 'Of course I shall leave when you marry. When is it to be? I should like some notice, as I have arrangements to make.'

When is it to be? echoed Sir Hilton. 'Oh! the execution you mean. Well, that's appointed for the twenty-first. What a pleasant dungeon Trewavas will be with you gone, and Olive banished.'

'A dungeon, and Eleanor with you!' exclaimed John. 'And what do you mean about Olive's being banished?'

'It means,' replied Sir Hilton, 'that I was cowardly and unmanly enough to make my peace with Eleanor, by consenting to deny the shelter of my roof to a girl who has no other home.'

'You cannot intend that Olive shall quit Trewavas?' exclaimed John.

'It is not my wish,' said Sir Hilton. 'It is my intended wife who does me the honour to suppose that I am too great a rascal to succour an adopted sister.'

'Speak seriously, Hilton,' said his brother; 'this is a sadder business than you think. A girl like Olive cannot go out into the world alone.'

'Scarcely,' was the reply. 'Eleanor is not quite so unreasonable as that; she only insists on her finding another home. Bosvigo, perhaps, would do. But no; she would object to that, as being too near Trewavas.'

The careless bitter tone in which Sir Hilton spoke stung John to the heart. It was evident that the thought of his marriage brought no anticipations of Eden with it; and the gift of Eleanor's love, which seemed to John beyond price, beyond hope—a joy too glorious to dream of—was to him almost a weariness.

'Hilton, you are inexplicable,' said John, with extreme bitterness. 'No one can understand you.'

'I am speaking plainly enough,' rejoined his brother. 'I am saying that Eleanor has refused to become my wife, until I have acted the dastardly part of driving a friendless girl out of my house.'

'If you feel it so much,' said John, 'why do you do it?'

'I have told you why,' replied Sir Hilton. 'The Maristows make it a *sine qua non*.'

'But Olive will be miserable,' said John.

'So shall I—miserable as the devil,' returned Sir Hilton, and he drew on the gravel with his cane a rough representation of that individual.

As Sir Hilton bent down in performing this absurd work of art, John regarded him with a searching glance, while the blood rushed to his face, and the fire of some great hope flashed in his eyes.

'Miserable?' he repeated; 'miserable with Eleanor! Then give her up.'

'Never!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, with sudden and startling energy; 'never!'

'Why not?' persisted John.

'Because, if I don't marry Eleanor, I shall do worse,' he replied—'I shall do something wild—mad—foolish! It is only getting married that can save me.'

Again the blood surged to John's brow like a wave of fire.

'You are selfish,' he said, in a low, trembling voice. 'You marry the girl, then, only to save yourself from some supposed folly, and not because you love her. It is a rascally thing to do! Renounce her, Hilton, and yield her to a man who does love her.'

'Renounce her!' said Sir Hilton. 'You talk folly, John. A man in my position cannot proclaim his marriage to all the world, and then at the last moment act like a scoundrel. No; I tell you I must carry this thing through. I am

bound in honour to do it; and, setting aside my ill temper, my bachelor forebodings and discontent, I could not do better than marry Eleanor Maristowe.'

'Better for yourself,' persisted his brother; 'but how will it be for her?'

'You pay me a sad compliment, there, John,' he answered. 'I flatter myself it will be pretty comfortable for her. Do you want me to make protestations to you like a lover, or are you anxious for a few moral observations and promises of the religious swindler order? In my experience of life I have generally seen that the man who makes the fewest promises is the best husband. Come and see us in our honeymoon, John, and judge.'

'If you won't be serious, we had better drop the subject,' said John.

'Bless the man, I'm serious enough!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'I am going to give myself a mother-in-law, and that thought sobers me. But, jesting apart, old fellow, you can make your mind easy about me and Eleanor. We sha'n't fight, neither shall we take life to be all honey and champagne. We shall fall into a humdrum existence quite readily, and soon be like a million other couples in this world, tolerably contented and reasonably happy.'

'If I could not marry with higher thoughts than those,' said John, 'I would never take unto myself a wife.'

'Oh you, my dear fellow!' cried Sir Hilton, 'you are all romance and sentiment. But those things don't suit me. Depend on it, Eleanor and I understand each other pretty well; and it is wise for us to marry. If we broke off, we should both do worse—at least, I know I should.'

He sighed, and rose from his seat, saying—

'I must go and take my compliments. I don't know what Eleanor is going to do to-day. I have promised for a long time to row her to Trewavas Cliffs. I'll propose that, I think.'

'Stay a moment,' interposed John. 'Have you told Olive that she must leave Trewavas before the twenty-first?'

'No, that task is beyond me,' replied Sir Hilton. 'I am made to act like a brute, but I can't speak like one. Break it to her for me, John, if Lady Trewavas has not the courage.'

'How do you think I can do it?' said John. 'You know

Olive's nature. She will be wild. There will be a fearful outbreak. You had better keep out of her way. She is capable of stabbing you.'

'I wish she would,' said Sir Hilton, gloomily. 'The thought of this cruel thing does not put me in a pleasant frame of mind for playing the lover to Eleanor. She has roused me more than she thinks by this selfish caprice.'

'You are wrong, Hilton,' remarked John, earnestly, 'and Eleanor is right. She and Olive cannot live under the same roof. If Olive was going to be your wife, would she permit Eleanor Maristowe to reside at Trewavas?'

'I suppose not,' replied Sir Hilton, his face flushing deeply; 'but that would be very different. Trewavas is not Eleanor's home.'

'There is no real difference,' retorted John, 'except in your fancy. The truth is, you never anticipated parting with Olive; you did not expect Eleanor would demand it. And now that you are called upon to choose between them, and renounce one of these girls for ever, your mind is shaken.'

The flush on Sir Hilton's face grew deeper, but he replied in a calm tone, 'Naturally; Olive has been as a sister to us for eight years.'

'Sister, or cousin, or sweetheart, what does it matter which you call her,' said John, 'since the fact remains the same that, if you marry, your wife will not permit her to remain near you?'

From beneath his drooping eyelids John looked furtively at his brother, to mark the effect of his words. Sir Hilton's face was stern and sad, and his voice trembled.

'It is useless to talk like this,' he observed. 'I have accepted the situation with all its pain, and Olive must do the same. I have chosen best for her and for myself, and she will yet find me a true brother and friend.'

'No doubt,' said John, in a practical tone; 'but where is she to go now?'

'She can go to London with the lady she was with last month,' replied Sir Hilton. 'Arrange it with my grandmother, John. And to-day is the seventh; let her go on the fifteenth. The sooner the wrench is over the better.'

'I don't know that it is quite fair to send Olive so far

away,' remarked John; 'it may deprive her of a good chance of marriage. I am sure young Vigo is fond of her.'

'Confound young Vigo!' exclaimed the baronet fiercely. 'His legs are long enough to take his foolish head to London if he wants to propose to Olive.'

Sir Hilton rammed his hat on his head and strode down the walk, but in a moment he stopped and looked back.

'Good-bye, John,' he said kindly. 'I fancy I've been as surly as a bear, and you, too, are not yourself to-day. You are usually such a calm, quiet, old sobersides, and yet I do believe I was never so near having your brotherly fist in my countenance as I was five minutes ago for merely passing a jest. Don't talk again of leaving Trewavas, old fellow. You won't disturb my matrimonial bliss, I promise you. I suppose I shall not be more henpecked than other husbands; and even the meekest are allowed to keep their brothers, I fancy. You shall do the attentive sometimes for me, John—do you hear?'

'I hear you,' said John, in his old, quiet voice. 'Good-bye.'

Sir Hilton went off with a forced laugh; and John, taking up his pistol again, looked after him.

'There goes a madman,' he said, 'mad and blind; and yet, if all the thoughts of my wretched brain were told to the world, judge and jury would say that I am the lunatic.'

He sat down on the rustic seat, and rested his head on his hands.

'He does not love her,' he resumed, 'and yet he will make her his wife! How can I bear it?—and so soon! There is no time now for hope. Heaven help me! this misery is too great for me to bear. Is there no way to end it save one?'

John took up his pistol with an unsteady hand, then laid it down again.

'No,' he murmured, 'better to suffer and live. But they are all so selfishly blind. It is only Olive who sees the struggle that kills me. I have striven now in every way to shake Hilton's resolve. I only beat against a wall. I will speak to Eleanor herself. This cruel, wicked marriage shall not be; so help me Heaven!'

Thus the day wore slowly on—a long summer day of sultry

heat, and no voice within the house had found courage to tell Olive that her pleasant life at Trewavas was over.

Sir Hilton sedulously avoided her; Mrs. Maristowe and Eleanor scarcely spoke to her; Lady Trewavas, irritable and fussy, being in reality grieved by the painful necessity before her, rasped the unhappy girl's nerves by keeping her by her side, employed in those household occupations which always fretted Olive, because they seemed to be demanded of her as a right.

The table was piled with new bed linen and glaring curtains, all hot and heavy in the flaming window, upon which the sun's rays poured down fiercely.

'Dear me, my lady,' said the housekeeper, 'you'll be tired to death. Me and Miss Olive can finish marking these few things quite well.'

'No, no,' returned Lady Trewavas. 'I'll see it done myself. Olive, what are you about? All this new linen must be marked with Eleanor's and Hilton's initials jointly.'

A flash of scorn shot from Olive's eyes, and she flung down the pen.

'I am as hot as fire!' she said. 'Aunt, if you don't let me go out into the woods and scream, I shall go mad.'

'Olive, I won't have you talk in that wild way,' she said. 'And see! you have spilt the ink on this new table-cloth. What provoking carelessness! And you positively have not written Eleanor's name on it now!'

Stiffing with rage, Olive took up the pen again; but her soul rebelled against this duty, and her fingers refused to bend to their hated task. She flung both pen and ink into the grate.

'I don't see why I should mark their bridal outfit!' she cried; 'let Miss Eleanor Maristowe come and do it herself.'

'Olive,' said her aunt, 'you are a wicked, ungrateful girl. How dare you speak in that way?'

'Dear me, Miss Olive, you shouldn't go on so; you shouldn't indeed,' said the old housekeeper; 'and my lady so flurried with the wedding coming so soon and unexpected! In a fortnight isn't it, my lady?—and down here, too. That's very good of Miss Maristowe to have the wedding at Trewavas. Most young ladies hold very much to being married from home.'

Olive heard, and her heart beat with passionate grief and indignation. This, then, was the end of the lovers' quarrel, and it was only a mean trick of Eleanor's in order to make sure of being Lady Trewavas.

'Good of Miss Maristowe!' she said, in an accent of scorn.

'There's no good in her; there's nothing in her but a little milk-and-water prettiness. I hate her. If she really marries Hilton and comes here to live, there'll be a battle royal between her and me every day.'

Lady Trewavas was greatly incensed by this speech, the more especially as it was made in the presence of the house-keeper.

'Olive,' she exclaimed angrily, 'I will make no remark on the bad taste, the utter want of lady-like feeling, in your wicked words. I will merely say that you are mistaken. There will be no unseemly quarrels between you and my son's wife, because you will not inhabit Trewavas with her. Hilton spoke to me last night, and expressed to me his and her wish that you should leave. You are to go to London on the fifteenth.'

Olive stood like a statue of amazed grief, and heard this. She was bewildered. She seemed struck by some scathing lightning. Pale as death her lips moved, but uttered no sound.

Leave Trewavas!—leave the fragrant hills, the shady woods, the pleasant paths where her childish feet had trodden—leave the clear sky, the music and the freshness of the sea, and all the dear, familiar places loved in girlhood—leave these for that dull, gigantic prison, London!—leave them, and never see Hilton's face, nor good, kindly John's, nor hear a loving word again from either! Oh, it was too cruel!—it was better to die than suffer thus! And Hilton had banished her—it was Hilton's command that drove her forth!

At this moment, looking through the flaming window, she saw the sunny sea below, and the pleasant beach, and Eleanor standing dressed in the freshest lilac, with Sir Hilton by her side, bending over her lover-like, while two men launched a little boat and adjusted sailing gear.

Like one possessed with a fierce torture, Olive lifted her hand against them, and uttered rapid, burning words—

words long remembered at Trewavas—words that seemed unearthly, falling from a young girl's lips. Then she fled from the room and from the house, and with swift steps ran through the garden to the beach. Here she seized Sir Hilton by the arm, and, breathless, told him she hated him.

'You are a cold, cruel man!' she cried; 'a worldly calculating man! I scorn you!' She waved the two servants away with her hand, and then she went on like a torrent. 'While it pleased your boyish fancy to make love to me, you did it; but now, grown a man, you marry to please the world. You make a fitting match; respectable selfishness, and inane beauty and wealth, are suited to each other. I despise you both; I despise the sort of cold conventional content in which you'll live. You deny me a home beneath your roof! I am come to tell you I do not need it. You dare issue your commands to me that I am to stay here till the fifteenth—that I am to go to London. I will do neither. By what right do you presume to dictate a residence to me? I will quit your mean, uncharitable hearth to-morrow. I will accept nothing from you. I will sell all I possess, to pay you for the bread I have eaten of yours, these eight years past. I will not be insulted by your charity, or dictated to by your insolence. And, as for you, Miss Maristowe,' she continued, turning fiercely on the trembling girl, who clung to her lover's arm, 'you are a feeble piece of feminine spite indeed! I recognise you in this. 'Tis your malice raises my cousin's hand to strike me. But I tell you, if you marry Hilton, you will be to him no more than a straw floating down the wind. As his wife you will live to be so miserable, that I should be doing you a mercy if I killed you.'

Her flaming cheeks, her flashing eyes, spoke a stronger language than her words, and Sir Hilton stood mute and astonished before her, his pale face, and his eyes abashed, seeking the ground; then, flinging his arm from her, she wrung her hands together, as though cleansing them of his touch, and fled up the shingly beach towards the garden.

'I am faint—I am ill,' said Eleanor, in a low voice. 'Take me in—I cannot go boating now.'

Biting his lip, Sir Hilton beckoned the men, who stood aside out of hearing, and bade them wait for his return; then, very gently, and with a kinder, more tender touch

than generally fell from his hand, he aided the uncertain steps of his affianced wife, as she went languidly up the beach. She wept as she went, and her hand upon his arm trembled.

In the garden, on the path where Olive's fierce steps had fled before them, Sir Hilton lingered, and coming to a great oak with a rustic seat beneath it, he placed Eleanor there tenderly, and sat down by her side.

'Eleanor,' said he, 'forgive me. I would not for worlds have exposed you to Olive's temper, but I could not guess such an outbreak possible. I did not know she would take leaving Trewavas so much to heart.'

'Leaving Trewavas!' repeated Eleanor, in tearful indignation; 'it is not that alone excites her fury. She wanted to be mistress of Trewavas. She is jealous; she hates me because you love me—because I am to be your wife. I am afraid of her, Hilton, I am indeed.'

Sir Hilton bit his lip still deeper; then stooping, he gathered Eleanor in his arms, laid her head upon his breast, and kissed her.

'My dear love,' he said, 'be comforted. She will not hurt you; and believe me, Eleanor, I never said one serious word of love to the poor girl in all my life. I never thought of her as a wife; she is mad to be jealous.'

'My mother thinks you have flirted a great deal with Miss Varcoe,' said Eleanor.

'Your mother is not my friend,' rejoined Sir Hilton; 'and when we are married, Eleanor, I will take care she shall not poison my wife's mind against me.'

'You will never part me from my mother!' cried Eleanor.

'You part me from my brother and sister,' replied Sir Hilton, 'and you must not wonder, Nellie, if I ask a little of you in return.'

'But my mother!' she expostulated. 'No; you are not in earnest, Hilton.'

'We will not talk of it now,' he answered. 'Are you better?'

'Yes. But why should John go?' said Eleanor uneasily.

'Perhaps because you flirted with him before you accepted me,' replied Sir Hilton, a little carelessly.

'I never flirted with him!' she cried, eagerly.

'Call it by another name, if you will, Eleanor,' said Sir Hilton. 'At all events, you were very friendly with him,' he added.

It was Eleanor's turn to be embarrassed.

'I did not know I was so friendly with him,' she said. 'But my mother accused me of it too. The truth is, I always took John's arm, or walked with him, because I wanted to hide that—that I liked you, Hilton.'

What lover could be other than pleased with such a speech as this? He turned and thanked her again with kisses.

'Poor John!' he said, with a light laugh; 'I fear both he and Olive bring a grievous bill against us, Eleanor.'

It was true, as John had said, that Sir Hilton was something of a coxcomb, and yet every man suffering a woman's flattery has somewhat of a coxcomb air about him, whether he will or no. Moreover, Sir Hilton's nature was not deeply stirred by his love for Eleanor. It floated lightly on the surface of his heart, and he was content to drift on with it into the safe haven of marriage. Satisfied with her fitness for the position of his wife, pleased with the applause of the world, and flattered with her love, her wealth, and her beauty, he would not ask himself what lay beneath the careless, happy respectabilities of his life.

Thus Olive's outburst of fury on the beach drew him nearer to Eleanor, with a self-congratulation that he had resisted some inclination, unexamined, which would have drawn him into a vortex of fancied happiness, and, perchance, repentance.

'I am not a man to create a fool's paradise for myself,' he said, within his thoughts. 'Life is nothing without its respectabilities, its comforts, its tranquillity, and honour. I have chosen well in taking the safe side,—the side that friends, relations, and my own conscience approve.'

And so, in his careless contentment and ignorance, he laughed when he said 'Poor John!' coupling his and Olive's name together as aggrieved for a trifle.

'Olive is fierce indeed,' said Eleanor. 'She is a terrible girl, and it is true that I am afraid of her.'

'She does not mean half she says,' replied Sir Hilton; 'and I am so used to her, I think nothing of these storms.'

'They would kill me,' continued Eleanor. 'I should die of terror.'

'Eleanor, until this sad outbreak of Olive's, just now, I really thought you unkind in demanding her expulsion from Trewavas,' said Sir Hilton; 'but I now see you are right. You cannot, must not be exposed, as my wife, to Olive's fits of temper. I am grieved for her, because I know she loves Trewavas, but her departure is her own fault. We will give her a hundred or two a year, my love, and find her a home with some nice old lady. Are you rested? Shall I take you home, or will you change your mind and try the boat?'

'I am so nervous,' she said, pleadingly. 'I should be afraid now on the sea. Come home with me; for, if I see Olive without you, I shall be terror-stricken.'

It amused Sir Hilton that anyone should be afraid of that tiny little mite, Olive, and he laughed as he gave Eleanor his arm.

'I fear I must go to the Cliffs,' he said, 'as you know we promised to meet Damerel there; and he will wait for us; but, coming home, could you not manage to meet me somewhere on the sands, and we will have a walk together?'

'Can you put in at the Lovers' Seat?' asked Eleanor.

'Yes,' was the reply. 'Can you be there at five o'clock?'

'I'll be there,' responded Eleanor; 'and whoever comes first must wait for the other.'

'Agreed,' said Sir Hilton.

They were close upon the house now, but lilacs and syringas and fragrant roses hid them from sight, and Eleanor did not resist as Sir Hilton drew her to his side, and gave her a parting kiss.

In another moment they were in the large cool drawing-room, where sat Mrs. Maristowe and Lady Trewavas, both of them with a look of consternation on their countenances.

'Thank Heaven, you are safe, my love!' exclaimed Mrs. Maristowe. 'The violence of that dreadful girl alarmed me for you. We have had such a scene here with her!'

'Could nothing be done to restrain Olive from such folly?' said Sir Hilton, looking much vexed. 'If she has to leave Trewavas, cannot she bear her grief like a woman, and not like a passionate child? She ought to know that we all feel this parting as a painful necessity.'

'I am very glad you are come in, my dear Eleanor,' said Mrs. Maristowe, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. 'I consider you are much safer with me than with Sir Hilton. It is my opinion he cannot protect you from the dangerous hatred of this girl.'

'There's nothing to fear from Olive's childishness,' interposed Lady Trewavas, hastily, evidently fearing the effect of this speech on Sir Hilton. 'And, at all events, Eleanor will not meet her again to-day; for John, who is the only person who can manage her, has persuaded her to go to her room and lie down; and, thinking she might be disturbed, he locked her door, and here's the key.'

Lady Trewavas held it up, and gave Sir Hilton a look, as though entreating him to restrain himself.

'Well, Eleanor,' said he, laughing, 'since the tigress of the family is locked up, I shall expect you punctually at five at the Lovers' Seat. Take care of the poor little fury, grandmother.'

With a smile he kissed her hand, and ran down the lawn towards the beach.

CHAPTER VI.

'HAVE you heard the news, Vigo?' said Mr. Damerel. 'The baronet is going to try the truth of the adage, "Matrimony is a cure for love."'

Young Vigo looked up from his newspaper with a bewildered expression on his face.

'Oh, don't be frightened,' continued Damerel. 'He mawwies the fair Mawistowe; but I can't say what love he hopes to cure by the cewemony. The Varcoe is outwageous. I shouldn't be surprised if she made arsenic puddings for the whole family. I hear she makes all the puddings and pies.'

'You hear great nonsense, Damerel,' said young Vigo, putting down the paper with a trembling hand. 'I am glad to know the marriage will be soon.'

'Yes,' said Damerel, 'it's so disagweeable to be jealous; and

when the bawonet is disposed of, the course will be clear. But, my dear friend, unless I have much mistaken that little girl, this mawwiage will never be.'

'Your extraordinary ideas of Olive would provoke a saint,' said Charles Vigo, warmly. 'Even if she were, as you suppose, desperately in love with that epitome of all pride, Trewavas, what could she do to stop his marriage with the milk-and-water heiress?'

'Do?' said Damerel; 'oh, she'd do anything. I'd label her "dangewous," if she belonged to my family menagewie.'

'Really, Damerel, I lose patience with you,' said Vigo. 'I consider you mad on this point, and I only like the girl all the more for your abuse of her; and I think she likes me. I believe if the baronet were free to-morrow to woo her, I should stand as good a chance with her as he does.'

Mr. Damerel looked into Charles Vigo's honest, flushed face, and wisely held his peace. He knew that another word on this subject would rouse angry blood; and feeling that if together they would be sure to converse on it—for Charles Vigo, like a true lover, would even rather hear his mistress abused than not talk of her at all—he let him seize his hat, and call to Bolster, and depart for a walk alone.

Through the grounds of Bosvigo, through the soft green meadows, lying park-like around it, down by the stream, where the trout glistened, and the kingfisher darted to and fro in the sun, and on over the uplands to the down, Charles Vigo hurried with a swift step. But on the down he lingered, and gazed around him. The beauty of the scene tempered his hot blood with calmness; and every breeze that blew freshly from the sea, brought with it some cooling balm for the fever fretting in his spirit.

Facing him lay the great Atlantic, its blue depths wonderfully smooth, as it rolled on beneath the sapphire sky. Away to the right waved the green woods of Trewavas, every height verdure-crowned, and every fragrant slope bringing down to the sea the perfume of leaf and flower. Glistening among the myriad leaves, there flashed at times upon the sight a glimpse of the old mansion, standing white, pure, and stately among its protecting guard of noble trees.

As Charles Vigo gazed on it, his face gathered a wistful look. The girl he loved lived in that stately, time-honoured,

ancient house, and yet the respect that grew round the name of Trewavas never touched her with its halo. Though she lived among them on a seeming equality, some unseen hand had struck her down beneath their level, and the result was that she had grown bitter. He could see this in her reckless air, her defiant look, the angry scornful flash of her eye, and in the fierce temper, which broke bounds at times, and revelled at sinning against decorum. No, not a good girl! —Damerel was right. Not a good girl, as the world counts goodness, but one who might be good, if loved and cherished. Keep a plant from the light, and it will dwindle, or twist and grow crooked; and sting a human soul with scoffs and scorn, and surely that too will writhe and bend to evil. Damerel was unjust. Let him try to feel as Olive felt, before he dared to judge her. Because she showed some little fierceness of temper, some natural girlish jealousy of Eleanor's wealth and position, it was cruel to deem her therefore capable of crime, and suppose she nursed in her heart a burning love and hatred, impelling her passionately on to sin. He did not believe a word of it. Sir Hilton and John Trewavas were brothers to her, nothing more; and let them look to it, if they strove by unkindness to break the spirit of a defenceless, motherless, fatherless girl! Sir Hilton, the other day, was ungentlemanly, uncivil in his speech to her; and even now Charles Vigo's cheeks tingled as he remembered he had stood by and heard a man use uncivil words to a lady. No, he exonerated John. John was a kindly, good fellow—weak, perhaps, but always well-meaning, and full of courtesy. What if he made John his friend, and told him of his hope? Yes, that would be a good plan. It was too soon to call at Trewavas again, but he might find him somewhere in the park.

It wanted but the excuse of this thought to make Charles Vigo turn his face from the sea, and bend his steps towards the woods of Trewavas.

The air was delicious, the day sunny, the sky without a cloud; and as the heath bent to the young man's elastic step, his spirits rose, and the wild heavings of his heart grew smooth and even.

'It's hot work here, Bolster,' said he. 'Come on, good dog—there's shade at hand.'

Beneath the trees at last, where the shadows fell in cool patches on the sward, and the soft moss yielded refreshingly to the tired feet.

Under this shadowy green vault Charles Vigo grew still more thoughtful. He ceased to whistle, and his step became slow and languid, making no sound upon the velvet turf. Then came irresolution. He would not try to see John. He had promised Damerel he would do nothing in this business yet awhile. At all events, he would go up to the Lady's Bower, and think it over—there was no hurry.

Now, the Lady's Bower was in the very depth of the wood. Paradise was not more solitary, ere Eve sprang from Adam's dreams, than was this tiny soft green glade in the midst of the forest—a spot covered with brightest moss, and shut in all around by giant beeches, whose great branches stretched about it like green arms in leafy strength, wonderful and beautiful to see.

Close against the tallest beech, and curiously interlaced with its branches, a lovely Lady Ida Trewavas, an earl's daughter, had built the Lady's Bower. It was covered with starry flowers of jasmine, trailing honeysuckle, climbing roses, and great hanging clusters of cianthus blossoms, gleaming like big blood drops on the green foliage: a beautiful spot, but with a touch of sadness in it, for the lady who had loved it died young. Some said she had brought a broken heart to Trewavas, and had built this bower for a hidden place of refuge, wherein to weep unseen. No matter how that might be, the spot was solitary enough for tears or sorrow, or any human woe or sin that sought to hide itself from curious eyes.

The moss sloped down from the bower to the edge of a lake, lily-lined, and so wondrously clear and silvery, that beneath its waters one might count the gleaming pebbles, and watch the fish gliding to and fro. The great beeches spread their branches over this pool half way across, dipping their leaves in the water lovingly; and in the dark shadows they made, there was a depth and coolness lovely to the eye in the summer heat. The pool was very still, and so shaded by its guardian trees, that the sun did but glint on it, falling in narrow lances and shafts of light, mingled with fluttering shadows of myriad leaves.

In sunlight or in moonlight this lake was like a gem set in the forest, but in the greyness of evening there was a gloom about it; and if the night was dark, perchance the mind might feel a kind of horror in coming on it suddenly. It seemed then like a cold death lurking among the trees, praying the weary and the sinful, with soft murmuring voice, to come to its chill bosom and rest.

As Charles Vigo drew near this spot, he heard voices, and he saw the soft folds of a dress—pale lilac—gleaming through the green bushes. Because of the deep shadows and intervening trees, he could not for a moment see the form of the other speaker; then it came upon him darkly, clothed in black, with a scarlet cord about the waist for a girdle.

He held his breath, and his heart beat loudly, for it was Olive, and he saw by her crimson cheeks and small hand clenched in the air that she was speaking in furious passion. What should he do? Should he steal away softly as he came, or should he let the ladies know he was here?

No. They would feel hurt that a man should come upon them, and catch them quarrelling thus. But while he hesitated, words reached him so fierce, so threatening, that he turned pale, and resolved to stay.

‘I promised Damerel I’d watch her,’ he said. ‘I shall never again get an opportunity like this. I do not stay meanly to listen, but to protect her against herself, to hinder perhaps—’

Mischief! that was the word young Vigo felt, but he did not say it even to himself. ‘Down, Bolster, down!’ he whispered, and the dog lay panting and silent on the sward.

Eleanor sat within the bower, her slight form shrinking against the leaves, her pale delicate face scarcely visible, a book in her trembling hand. Olive stood without, with the sun flashing on her scarlet cheeks, her raven hair, her brilliant eyes, and her small nervous fingers, through which, as she talked, she pulled to and fro, with a writhing motion, the silken cord which hung from her waist.

‘Miss Maristowe,’ she said, ‘there is no mercy in you, no pity; it is a cruel thing that you are doing, and I have appealed to you in vain. But beware! You shall not enjoy your coveted happiness in peace. You have made me your enemy,

and I am dangerous. You do not know what you have done in rousing a nature like mine.'

'Do you threaten me?' said Eleanor, proudly. 'Every word you say only further convinces me that I am right, when I insist on your quitting Trewavas.'

'My home, my only home!' said Olive, and her voice softened. 'You drive me forth into the world, you exile me into a great desert of miseries strange to me, you expose me to peril and sorrow, and all only selfishly to secure your own happiness. You shall not have it—I will kill you first!'

'Miss Varcoe, let me pass,' returned Eleanor. 'You shall not frighten me thus. I will not stay to hear such language.'

Olive laughed, and barred the entrance of the bower with her arm.

'Stay, and hear me out,' she said; 'I shall not trouble you again. When we meet in the house I shall be placid, well-bred, and as mute as a fish. Give me here in the woods full liberty and bitterness of speech.'

'What have you to say?' asked Eleanor, in a trembling voice. 'You have no right to make it a matter of complaint against me that you quit Trewavas. You cannot expect me to keep beneath my roof a woman who loves my husband. It is my duty to guard my own peace and his.'

Olive's whole face flashed as she heard these words.

'How dare you say that I love Hilton in any other way than I have a right to love him!' she exclaimed. 'Remember, I have lived beneath the same roof with him longer than you. His home has been my home for ten years. I have been his sister, his playmate, his friend—'

Her voice broke, and she covered her face with her hands; then, dashing her tears away, she went on more passionately.

'I should be hard indeed if I did not love him. It is you who are to blame—you, the stranger, who have come between him and me, and planted dissension and strife among us; and you are afraid that he has yet some tenderness for the child, the girl he once loved. That is your cowardly fear, and so you drive me out into the world to perish!'

'Let me pass, Olive Varcoe!' said Eleanor.

'No,' said Olive, 'stop and hear me. An heiress like you, a petted, only child like you, seldom has such a chance as

this of hearing the truth. You are so accustomed to get all your wishes gratified, that you don't know when you are wicked. I shall tell you. You were wicked, when, for two years, you led poor, honest, kindly John to believe that you loved him——'

'I never did so!' cried Eleanor, indignantly.

'Then you were blind,' said Olive. 'I have greater cause to accuse you of loving John, than you have to accuse me of loving Hilton. I do accuse you of it. I say that you loved him, and forsook him when you found you could get the elder brother. More than that, you have been callous, heartless, cruel; you have never given a thought to his sufferings. Mine has been the only eye to see them; mine the only voice to cheer him.'

'This is a false and wicked charge, Miss Varcoe!' exclaimed Eleanor. 'I never loved John; I even dislike him. You are not a lady, and I am; therefore I cannot condescend to forget myself as you do; otherwise, I might answer you in language as strong as your own.'

'No,' said Olive, 'I don't belong to that sisterhood which is so cut to one pattern, that a shipload of herrings is not more cold, or more like each other. I think, speak, and believe what I feel. I do not act lies, and sell myself for a title. In these respects, truly, I am no lady. And I repeat it, you loved John; you have made him love you, and you have trampled over his heart to reach his brother.'

'John will never dare to say so!' cried Eleanor, excitedly! 'If he does, I will answer him with all the contempt I feel for his weak, wavering, unmanly nature. And you, Miss Varcoe, how shall I speak the disdain with which you fill me? You compel me to listen to you by a barrier stronger than iron; because you know that rather than thrust you aside, rather than touch that arm that bars my way, I would die!'

'No, don't touch me,' said Olive, laughing again more bitterly. 'A touch of yours would turn me mad! You are right not to try it. In all things you are my superior, Miss Maristowe—in birth, in beauty, in wealth, in happiness, in temper. Give me the one bitter privilege of having a more biting tongue than yours; and let me use it—let it sting its worst; it will not be for long. When you are Lady Tre-

wavas, you will never be troubled by the sound of my voice. Will your bridal be the happier because I am sacrificed as a victim to your jealousy? Will no thought of me and of John intrude at the feast? Do not deceive yourself—you have wrecked his happiness. He will live to be a wretch. I see signs breaking through his quiet misery, that your selfish, thoughtless eyes have never noted. And as for me—as you, and the husband you have won, live at ease, I shall be a wanderer, a woman without a name, without a home—unloved, utterly forsaken! Yet in one thing I shall have my triumph—in one thing I shall yet sting you to the heart—Hilton will feel my miseries, not I; and your eyes will see his anguish, not mine. As he seeks for me, as he strives vainly to thrust his money and his charity on me, you will witness his distress; you will work uselessly to root from his heart his long love for his playmate; and you will see your bands upon him broken like threads, and your fancied happiness crumble to the dust. This is the legacy I leave you when I quit Trewavas. You thought to have all things your own way. I was to accept the home you chose to find me; I was to take the pittance that you chose to dole out to me. But no—I tell you a thousand times, no!—I will accept nothing from a Trewavas. No cold charity shall crush me to the ground. I will keep my place in their hearts and in their home, or I will have nothing from them. I will compel Hilton to know, that while he lives in luxury, the rain descends on my defenceless head, and the earth denies me food and shelter. Now pass—I have finished.'

The shapely arm that had barred the way dropped by her side, and taking up the cord again, and pulling it somewhat listlessly through her fingers, Olive Varcoe moved slowly away. Down the soft slope, to the edge of the gleaming lake, she went with measured, resolute step; then, still skirting the brink, with the hem of her robe touching the shining water, she passed out of sight among the tall ferns and leafy branches of the sweeping beech.

To his dying day Charles Vigo will never forget the look that Olive Varcoe wore as she crossed the greensward in the sunshine, her face stern, and set in passionate grief, her white hands playing with the crimson rope, her black dress clinging sombrely to her firm, lithe figure.

The sound of Eleanor's weeping reached him in his ambush; and, ashamed that he had listened, he crept silently away.

For hours young Vigo wandered in the wood. Except that he knew his steps were not tending homewards, he was scarcely conscious whither he went. His heart yearned towards Olive. In spite of her faults he loved her, and he longed to fold her in his arms, and comfort her.

'She is sorely tried,' he said to himself, softly. 'It is a hard thing to be driven from one's home by a stranger. Trewavas might have spared her such a trial. He has acted without tact and delicacy. I was sure she did not love him—a fellow all family pride and worldliness. Of course she couldn't like him; but then it was satisfactory to hear her say it. "Friend, playmate;" those were her words. I always told Damerel there was nothing else.'

Thus sometimes do a lover's own ears deceive him.

'I admire her spirit,' he continued. 'She won't accept anything of them. No; why should she? Bosvigo shall be her home. Who wants a penny of their money? Not the Vigos, certainly. I shall care nothing now for what Damerel says. It is my duty to protect her at this point in her life. I cannot let her go out into the world to fight her way, as she talks of doing, brave little thing! No, mine must be the roof to shelter her when she quits Trewavas.'

Thus, in solitude, with thoughts coming to him brokenly, mingled with visions of happiness, and doubts as to his father's approval of his love, Charles Vigo turned from one narrow path into another, plunging deeper and deeper into the recesses of the wood.

Once he thought he heard a cry—a wild, solitary cry; and startled by this strange sound among the summer leaves, he stopped to listen, but it was not repeated; and, deeming it the cry of hawk or heron, he wandered on again amid the song of birds, and the hum of innumerable bees.

At length the wood deepened in gloom, and the evening shadows fell grey across his path; but the strange shrinking from home and from companionship, that had kept him solitary so many hours, held him still in its bonds, and he stood irresolute beneath the leaves, thinking with curious

repugnance, of the noise, the cheerfulness, and the guests awaiting him at Bosvigo.

As he stood thus in the waning light, the sounds of the wood growing still about him, there broke on his ear the note of the great bell at Trewavas. Floating on the rustling waves of foliage, startling the stillness of the twilight, it came with an inexpressible mournfulness, like the sound of a passing bell, heard at sea, when the hearts of mariners returning home are fevered and anxious. Almost at the same instant there rose clearly on the breeze a low cry—this time unmistakably the cry of a woman—and listening scarce a moment, young Vigo dashed aside the branches, and strode through the underwood, in the direction whence the sound approached him; in a little more than a minute he had reached a tiny, cleared, open glade; and here, lying with her face on the grass, was Olive.

The young man ran towards her, and lifted her in his arms. She seemed scarcely sensible; there was a wild look of horror in her fixed eyes, and there broke every moment from her pale lips, her heaving chest, a rending sob, like a groan.

‘Olive! Olive!’ exclaimed her lover, eagerly, ‘who has hurt you? What has happened? Oh, she will die—she will die!’

‘No, no,’ said Olive, in a strange unnatural voice, ‘I am not dying—I am not ill. Let me go, Mr. Vigo. To-morrow you will be sorry you have shown me kindness.’

She struggled from his protecting arm, and sank down again on the grass.

Greatly distressed the young man bent over her, full of love and pity.

‘You do me injustice, Olive,’ he said. ‘I am always proud to be your friend.’

‘Are you?’ she said, in a desolate tone. ‘It is not safe to be my friend. Leave me, Mr. Vigo, I entreat you.’

‘Not before I know why I find you in this state,’ he replied; ‘not before I know what has happened.’

‘Happened! what can have happened? Nothing has happened,’ said Olive wildly. ‘Where have you been walking? how long have you been in this wood, Mr. Vigo?’

'I have been here some hours,' he replied: 'all the afternoon, I think.'

Olive started to her knees, and clasping her hands, she gazed at him with a haggard look.

'Here!' said she, 'on this side of the wood—all the afternoon! Have you seen anyone? Sir Hilton or—or his brother, or——'

'I have seen no one but you,' replied Charles Vigo, a little evasively. 'Will you not trust me, Olive?—will you not tell me what has happened?'

'Nothing has happened!' exclaimed Olive, passionately. 'Why will you persist in saying so?'

'Then why are you so distressed?' he asked. 'Even now you can scarcely steady your sobbing voice to speak.'

His words seemed to wring Olive's very heart; she clenched her hands together, and bowed her head upon them, while her frame shook with a convulsive sob. Mingled always with the sound of her anguish came the quick, impatient clash of the bell at Trewavas.

'Oh, why will they ring?' she cried. 'I cannot go in to dinner.'

'Is it for you they are ringing the great bell to-day?' he asked. 'Let me assist you home. Surely you are better in the house than here.'

She rose unassisted, for she did not touch the hand he held forth to her.

'Yes,' she said, 'you are right. I had better go home. They will wait dinner for me, and Lady Trewavas will be angry.'

'Don't annoy yourself for that, Olive,' said he. 'Let them wait; and perhaps they are not ringing for you; some other member of the family may be missing.'

Olive glanced at him hurriedly.

'Oh no,' she cried—'they are ringing for me, only me, I am certain. Let us make haste.'

'Take my arm, Olive,' said Charles Vigo.

She took it, but only for a moment, for her hand dropped suddenly by her side, and she stood still.

'Hark! Do you hear anything?' she asked.

'No, I hear nothing,' he replied.

'I hear it,' she said—'a voice calling me, "Olive—Olive!" I have heard it all these hours.'

'My dear Olive, you are ill—you are excited,' said young Vigo. 'There is not a sound in the wood. Even the bell has stopped now.'

'Has it stopped?' she asked. 'Why has it stopped? Good heavens! why has the bell stopped?'

'My poor Olive,' said Charles; 'how nervous you are! I dare say Sir Hilton or his brother, for whom they were ringing, is come in, and I suppose——'

He hesitated, and then went on with a tinge of bitterness in his tone.

'I will say it out, Olive—I suppose they consider you too insignificant a person in the household to ring for. Do you know, Olive, that for your sake I often hate them?'

'Do not hate the only friends I have—the only people who love me,' she said. 'I am a wild, wicked, ungrateful girl! Oh, how I have repaid them! I have always been the cause of hatred, bitterness, and sin. And now I am going away. I shall never see dear Trewavas again!'

'Is it for this you gave way to such keen distress, Olive?' said he. 'Do you indeed love Trewavas so deeply?'

'It is my home, my only home,' she replied; 'and I am driven out of it, Mr. Vigo—driven out like Cain, to wander miserably on the earth!'

'No, Olive, never!' he returned. 'My house awaits you; my home shall be yours. I love you better than my life! Give me your hand. Tell me that I may hope——'

Olive gazed at him with sad eyes. The fevered excitement of her manner seemed suddenly chastened into calmness.

'You know not what you do,' she said, in a sweet, low voice.

'I know right well, Olive,' he replied; 'I am asking you to be my wife.'

'With all my faults and sins black on me, as they are this day?' she said, in a tone of constrained quiet.

'Yes,' said he; 'for I am not ignorant, Olive, that you have faults, but they arise from your position. You have been galled, and, like a proud steed, you have winced, and shown temper. In another position you will be another woman. Honoured, respected, beloved, my life on it, Olive, you will show yourself outwardly as noble as I know you to be inwardly at heart.'

Olive fixed her gaze on his face, till her eyes filled with tears.

'I shall never forget those words as long as I live,' she said. 'A moment ago, Mr. Vigo, and I was hesitating whether I would snatch at hope, safety, and honour, in your home, and give you in return my cold hand and my forced gratitude. No, I will never do you that great, that lasting wrong. I will never be to you that basest of the world's deceits, an unloving wife. But, Mr. Vigo, you shall be my friend; and may heaven keep you from dishonour and disgrace in the name!'

Her mournful eyes, fixed on his, thrilled Charles Vigo's heart with a strange agony; they spoke of a despair, a pain, a grief, which he could not measure.

'Is there no hope, Olive?' he asked. 'Do not refuse me so resolutely. Let me wait; and, meanwhile, I will be your friend, your brother. Oh, Olive, Olive!'

He utterly broke down, and hid his face from her, that she might not be pained by his grief.

'Yes, be my friend, my brother,' she said, taking his hand in hers; 'and who can tell how soon I may put your affection to the test?'

'Command me in all things, Olive,' said he. 'You shall find me better than a brother.'

Olive regarded him earnestly with her deep, passionate eyes. The workings of her face, the trembling of her lips, told of some fearful agitation within; but she calmed herself to speak quietly.

'I believe you, Charles Vigo,' she said; 'and I will trust you.'

'Trust me altogether, Olive,' said he; 'trust me with your life's happiness, and you shall never repent it.'

Olive shook her head, sadly.

'Why do you refuse?' pleaded her lover. 'If Sir Hilton were not engaged to Miss Maristowe, if he were not on the eve of marriage, I would never ask you. I should think an attachment between you inevitable, and I would stand aside and see him win you, without a murmur. But now, when he not only chooses another lady, but, to please her, refuses you any longer a home beneath his roof, how can I bear to suspect that, for love of him, you reject me?'

Olive was deadly pale, and leant against a tree for support. 'Do not speak to me of Hilton,' she said, faintly, with white lips. 'He can never be anything to me more than he is. What do I say—more? No; he will soon be far less. In a little while I shall be an outcast and a stranger, and the very name of Trewavas will be a curse in my ears.'

'Oh, Olive, you will not steal away from Trewavas, and not let me be your friend?' said Charles Vigo. 'You will come to me for help, for counsel? Remember you have made me a Knight Defender of the Friendless. Here is my order. I am going to have it framed in gold.'

He drew from his pocket the tiny end of crimson cord which Olive had given him in the billiard-room; and as it flashed before her eyes a ghastly change came over her face, her knees shook, and her hands involuntarily clutched his arm for support.

'I feel ill—I am faint,' she said.

As young Vigo put his arm around her to support her, he saw that the cord, which she had worn as a girdle, was no longer round her waist. It was not a time to make a remark on so trivial a circumstance, so he held his peace.

'Will you rest here on the grass,' he said, 'and let me run to Trewavas for a carriage?'

'No, I will trouble no one at Trewavas,' she replied. 'I am better. I can walk now. Do leave me, Mr. Vigo. See, we are close to the house, and I would rather go in alone. Promise me that you will tell no one that we have met.'

Thinking their meeting an affair that concerned only themselves, Charles Vigo readily gave this promise, wondering not a little at the fear she showed lest he should break his word.

'Thanks!' said Olive. 'Good-bye, Mr. Vigo.'

She held out her hand, and again her earnest look, her pale lips, her strange manner, affected the young man singularly. His fingers clasped hers, and as they stood there with joined hands, the echo of furious galloping reached their ears.

'That's a horse from Trewavas!' exclaimed young Vigo. 'Whoever rides him is going at a tremendous pace. I trust there is no one ill.'

He long remembered the look of Olive's face, and the clasp of her small fingers burning his hand.

'You forget we are on Echo Hill,' she said with a sickly smile. 'A canter echoed here sounds like the gallop of Death on the pale horse. Do not be alarmed; no ill will touch Trewavas.'

'Nevertheless, I have a presentiment that something is wrong,' said Charles Vigo. 'Let me go on with you.'

'No, no; you will see that I am a witch,' said Olive, making a ghastly effort to be playful. 'No sorrow, no sickness, no shame can come nigh Trewavas. Farewell! Adieu, good Bolster! Take care of your kind master.'

She ran down the slope of the hill towards Trewavas, and as she went, the great bell suddenly clanged out again, sending the boom of its heavy tongue far over the wood. The curious echo on this spot repeated the sounds and scattered them flying—flying down the leafy hill after Olive's swift steps, like messengers of doom.

There was a chill foreboding lying heavy at the heart of the lover, who watched her, which like a sympathetic chord vibrated to the note of the bell; and as the gloomy echoes floated out, dying—dying over Olive's head, he shuddered, and strained his eye, longing to see her face again. He had his wish. At the park gates she turned, and as the last ray of sunset shone redly on her brow, and streaked her ebon hair with fire, she smiled, waved her hand to him, and vanished.

In the fervour of his love he thanked her silently for that kindly smile, and with a great load lifted off his heart, he went homewards through the dew. And yet ere another sun had set he cried bitterly to himself, 'Oh, to think that she could smile!'

CHAPTER VII.

THE Lovers' Seat stood on the cliff, overlooking a tiny sheltered cove in the bay, on the silvery, glistening sands of which the waves broke ever gently. The cliffs here were a mass of foliage. Arbutus, almond, laurel, rhododendron, hawthorn, clung to the rocks, and flung their flowers in luxurious profusion, even to the water's edge.

Availing herself of the natural beauty of the place, Lady Trewavas had turned the face of the cliff into a garden. Winding walks climbed from the beach to the park above; and midway up, overhanging the sea, was the ledge of rock which tradition called the Lovers' Seat. An arbour had been formed here, and trailing plants hung all around it, while the platform on which it stood was, by gardening skill, covered with a mass of flowers.

From this point stretched one of the loveliest views in the West. Spread out below was the silver sheet of sands, and the tiny cove, shut in by two sharp headlands, which, like a gateway, opened on the bay of Trewavas. The amphitheatre of hills and woods, the blue sky, the passing birds, the changing shadows of the day; all lay mirrored in this limpid sheet of blue-green waters.

It was a lovely afternoon of the loveliest of summer days, when Sir Hilton parted with his friend at Trewavas Cliffs, and sailed across the bay towards the Lovers' Seat. The sea was azure glass, the sky a sapphire, the breeze came from the south, filling the sails with a soft rushing sound, while the ripple of the waves laved the sides of the little skiff in loving music, like the whisperings of mermaids floating upwards from the cool caves below. Life with the young baronet was calm and fair and smooth as the sea on which he sailed; and the murmurs of coming sorrow, like the beatings of the surf on the shore, only reached him at intervals, faintly. Thus dimly did he feel the danger of the circumstances he had created. On the whole he was tranquil and self-satisfied. He had resisted the temptation to commit a gigantic folly—the folly of an imprudent marriage; Eleanor had saved him from this; and if he was safe, the whole house of Trewavas was safe, and the entire family owed him gratitude.

And so in smooth sailing the prettily painted boat glided on, and the soft wind whistled and sung in the sails, and the waves kissed the keel in musical murmurings, whispering of cool depths, and sweet delights in the summer sea.

Nearer and yet nearer the shore drew towards them. Then, while the rays fell hot upon him, Sir Hilton shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked upward over the steep green slope of that garden cliff, overhanging the sea.

'Eleanor is certainly waiting for me,' he said.

As the thought spoke within him, he saw her. She sat on the rocky seat among the boughs and fresh green leaves, with her face turned seawards. She was pale, and her hair hung loose upon her shoulders in a fashion he had never seen her wear it. The folds of her lilac dress gleamed in dainty contrast against the shaded varied tints of green, and her small hands were crossed meekly on her bosom.

Sir Hilton waved his hand to her, and smiled; but, as the boat shot swiftly to shore, and the sun's rays that had shone hotly on him glanced past him to the east, the vision vanished.

'She is hiding behind the trees,' he said to himself, softly. But his heart beat faster, and there was a vague fear upon him, which made the summer breeze feel chill.

The keel of the boat grated on the sands, and the old boatman sprang ashore, and held it while Sir Hilton, with a shiver on him, stepped upon the land.

'Do not wait for me, Tregellas,' said he; 'I shall walk home through the park. Go back to the boat-house quietly; you are tired.'

'It's so uncommon hot, your honour,' said the old man.

'Is it?' said Sir Hilton; and as he spoke, a cold shadow crept over him, and the vague fear that had touched him on the sea grew to a deadly horror that seemed to clutch his very heart. Battling with it, he went up the sands, his figure appearing and disappearing behind green trees and jutting rocks, as he climbed the winding paths upward to the Lovers' Seat. When he reached it, the place was bare and empty. He waited, he lingered, he watched, he walked to and fro, sometimes chafing, sometimes with that cold, dull fear hanging heavy on him; but Eleanor never came. And all the time he lingered, awaiting her step, he fought against an instinct that told him she would never come; he fought against a hot longing at his heart to rush away, and seek her in some wild, doomed place. And at last, as the old church, ivy-covered and embowered in trees, within the park, rang out from its grey steeple seven strokes, Sir Hilton turned away and strode homewards.

As he quitted the sound of the sea, and came upon the tall shadows lying silent round about the mansion, the sharp ring of a bell met him. With it came cheerful thoughts of daily

life, with all its round of cares and comforts ; all the smiling stream of home love and happiness, set in luxury and ease of riches, tempered by order and kindly rule ; all the bright play, the music, and the dance of his youth, crowned with wealth and honour ; all this passed before him, and made him glad.

‘They wait dinner for me,’ he said, and his step grew quick and light. ‘That was a strange illusion the sun’s rays made on the cliff. I will tell Eleanor I have seen her ghost.’

In the hall Lady Trewavas met him.

‘How late you are, Hilton!’ said she. ‘And where is Eleanor? Is she gone up to dress? Her mother has been anxious ; do not keep her out so late again, Hilton.’

‘I have not seen Eleanor,’ he replied

‘Not seen her?’ said Lady Trewavas. ‘She left the house hours ago to walk to the Lovers’ Seat to meet you.’

‘I was there a little after five, and waited until seven, and saw nothing of her,’ replied Sir Hilton.

Lady Trewavas and her grandson looked in each other’s face. Both were pale ; both felt in their hearts the shadow of that fear that had tortured Sir Hilton on the sea.

‘Have you enquired of the servant?’ he asked ; ‘or has John seen her?’

‘John has been in nearly all the afternoon,’ she replied. ‘He has not seen her since she quitted the house.’

‘Good Heavens! she has lost herself in the wood, or a viper has stung her!’ he exclaimed ; ‘or can she have approached too near the cliff, and fallen over!’

‘Do not frighten yourself so easily,’ said Lady Trewavas, with assumed calmness. ‘She took a book with her, and doubtless she became absorbed in reading, and has forgotten the time. She will be here soon. I will have the great bell rung ; she will hear that, even if she has strolled a great way from the house.’

But the bell sounded out over the green woods in vain ; and Mrs. Maristowe, overcome by terror and anxiety, became so alarmingly ill, that John flung himself on horseback, and galloped away for a doctor. It was the echo of his furious riding, which reached Olive and young Vigo as they stood together on the hill among the leaves and shadows.

Olive crept towards the house cautiously, by the garden. It was evident she wished to avoid meeting any member of

the household. At any slight sound she turned, with a strange dread on her face, and hurried away in another direction.

The library window opened on a secluded part of the grounds, and towards this she bent her steps. Choosing the loneliest paths, she succeeded in reaching it without being seen; but even now she stood behind a tall hedge of laurustinus, and scanned the house earnestly before she approached nearer. Just at this part there was but one window, a large bay one, which had been added to the library; no other window looked over this portion of the garden. Olive glanced within the room with eager eyes: it was empty. The window, opening to the ground, swung gently in the evening air, and a branch of trailing passion-flower, stirred by the wind, tapped against the glass. Setting this aside with trembling fingers, she entered with a soft, swift step, and gazed round with frightened eyes. All was silence and solitude. Apparently gaining courage by the stillness, she opened the door gently, and passed through it.

There were cranky corners and strange surprises in the old house of Trewavas, and one of these was a little dark, spiral staircase, just without the library door, which ran up through an ancient tower. This staircase was never used now, and the small arched door at the foot was kept locked. Nevertheless, as the place was curious, it was shown to visitors, and the key was usually to be found in the drawer of the library table. This time, however, it was in Olive's pocket; and withdrawing it, she placed it in the lock softly, and turned it with a strong hand. As the stout, nail-studded oak door opened outwards unwillingly, she slipped within, and closed it after her. This staircase went up direct to the leads, passing only two rooms on its way. One of these was Olive's bed-chamber; the other, the higher one, was John's painting-room. Both these apartments were reached by the ordinary staircase, and no one ever went to and fro to them by the one Olive was now using.

She passed her own room without stopping, and went on to the upper one. At the door of this she paused, and listened. Not a sound met her ear. Then she tapped gently, and, in a breathless voice, whispered, 'John—John!' There was no answer; then, drawing her breath like one in

deep fear, she tried the door with a silent, cautious touch, and found it yield readily to her hand. As it opened, she clung to the massive oak for support, saying to herself, in a low voice of anguish, 'I thought so! Merciful Heaven! did he see me?'

On the table lay a pair of pistols, some boxing-gloves, and fishing tackle; on the easel was a painting, still wet, and by it were the palette and brushes, and John's easy chair. Olive gazed curiously at the drawing, as if to note how much work had been done since last she saw it. Then she took up the pistols and gloves, and searched on the table as if looking for something. Papers, letters, brushes, she turned over with a careful hand, apparently without finding the object of her search; and as she replaced article after article on the table, the aspect of her face grew stranger, and the burning colour on her cheeks seemed a very fire. When she had examined everything on the table, she stood a moment bewildered, then she turned to the chimney-piece, and bestowed on that the same minute search that she had given to the table.

It was noticeable that in John's room no drawers or cupboards were locked; all was open to Olive's inspection. The place was so solitary, and so seldom visited by anyone but himself, that perhaps he never deemed it necessary to use lock and key. Hence Olive was able to glance rapidly at his diary and letters. It was wonderful with what quickness she did this, and with what a swift hand she tore out whole pages, and after crushing them in her palm, placed them in her dress, which she held up in one hand.

In ten minutes Olive had examined the whole room, and still her face wore the expectant and painful look which had characterised it on entering; gathering up the crushed leaves of the journal in her dress, she seemed about to quit the chamber, when her restless glance fell again on the table. Once more she approached it; and, as the unnatural lustre of her eye grew fixed and feverish, as some dreadful fear within her rustled in her very hair, and shook in every fold of her dress, she seized, doubtfully, a small packet labelled 'Carmine.' With hurried fingers she tore off the outer covering, disclosing a little parcel wrapped in white paper. She did not undo this. She had found the object of her

search, and, holding it tightly clenched in her left hand, she drew a long breath of relief. There was no need for her to open this little package, for on the white paper in large letters was written a word which told her what it was. On the inside of the wrapper labelled 'Carmine' she wrote her name—'Olive;' then she placed it on a conspicuous part of the table, and slowly moved away. Slowly, too, her eyes travelled round the room as though bidding it farewell; and her glance falling on a picture unhung and standing against the wall, she went towards it, and turned it. It was the face of Eleanor Maristowe.

Uttering a low shriek, she covered her eyes with her hand, and put the portrait back without glancing at it again; but the colour had fled from her cheeks, and even her lips were white, as, sustaining her trembling limbs by leaning against the wall for support, she ejaculated, in a low tone, 'Great Heavens, she haunts me! There are too many of these portraits here,' she added suddenly.

Swift as thought, she seized from his portfolio many of John's sketches, and crushing them with the other papers gathered in her dress, she quitted the room with a faltering step, closing the door softly behind her.

Olive's room in the tower of Trewavas had two windows. Both were Gothic, both opened with a casement; but the one looking west on the sea was so covered with trailing plants and flowers, that even when set wide open, it admitted only a pleasant trellis-work of leaves, intermingled with blossoms of magnolia, myrtle, and fuchsia. The room also had two doors, one opening on a corridor communicating with the rest of the house; the other opened on the old spiral stone stairs. But this door, apparently never used, was masked within the room by a closet. Thus, when you entered by the spiral stairs, you came at first into this closet, and from that you entered the room. The former was hung with shelves and pegs for dresses; and as the chamber was sparingly furnished, Olive had placed here not only her wardrobe but her store of books.

The place was very dark; yet Olive, on entering, carefully abstained from opening the door leading to her room, which would have admitted light. On the contrary, she tried this door, to ascertain if it was still bolted, as she had in fact left

it in the morning. Finding it firmly fastened, she placed slightly ajar the old Gothic door on the stairs, and this brought her a dim light from the narrow loophole cut in the ancient wall of the tower. By this thin ray of fading twilight she tied the papers she had taken from John's room in a handkerchief, and hung it on one of the pegs behind two or three old dresses.

'The more careless the place,' she said to herself, 'the less likely is anyone to find them, supposing they are looked for before——'

She paused and faltered, seeming afraid to pursue her own thoughts. Then she shut the door on the stairs, inclosing herself in blank darkness, and it was not till she had waited many moments listening in intense silence, that she drew back the bolts on the other door, and emerged into her room.

The western window was open; and through the shining magnolia leaves, through the starry myrtle and jasmine blossoms, through the pendent fuchsias, came a glimpse of the sea. At the first glance it seemed streaked with blood, for the red bars of sunset shone on it, intermingled with dark lines of heavy clouds, blackening the waves, while near in-shore the water gleamed silvery, trembling beneath the faint ray of the Summer moon. There was a wonderful look on Olive's face as she gazed on it; a look deepening in grief as she slowly turned her eyes round the pleasant chamber on all the old familiar things. It would seem as if before she had only seen them with an outward vision, and now was looking on them with the awakened eyes of the soul.

'Heaven forgive me!' she murmured, falling on her knees, with both hands pressed against her forehead. 'And this morning I deemed myself unhappy! What am I now?'

Approaching footsteps made her start to her feet, and she stood up trembling. 'What am I to do?' she said. 'Now I must try to be my old self. But my old self is gone—gone for ever! And how shall I bring it back? How act so as to deceive——'

There was a knock at the door, and a voice cried, 'Miss Olive! Miss Olive! are you never going to answer?'

'What do you want?' said Olive in a sharp voice.

'Let me in, please, Miss, and I'll tell you,' said the maid.

'How can I let you in when I've been locked up here since lunch time?' asked Olive, in her most passionate voice, shaking the door as she spoke.

'Good gracious, Miss, who locked you in?' said the maid.

'How can I tell?' said Olive. 'But I am not a child to be treated in this manner; and if this was done by Lady Trewavas, I shall let her know that, if I bore ill-usage as a child, I am not going to be insulted as a woman. If I am to be made a prisoner of at Trewavas, I will quit this house at once.'

'Oh, don't be in a passion, Miss Olive. I'll go to my lady for the key.'

As the servant went, Olive clasped her hands on her forehead again, and looked upwards wildly. Then, as the girl's retreating footsteps sounded through the corridor, she hastily divested herself of her black dress, which she threw into the closet, and arrayed herself in a long trailing dress of lemon silk. She had time to do this, and even to arrange her hair, and change her wet boots for satin slippers, before the servant again approached the door. Then the key was turned in the lock, and a keen-looking girl with grey eyes entered. 'My lady is very sorry, Miss Olive,' she said; 'but in the commotion here you was quite forgotten.'

'What commotion?' said Olive, turning sharply on the girl. 'How dared they lock me in my room? Who did it?'

'Really, Miss Olive,' said the girl, 'if you give way to such passions, you can't wonder people lock you in for safety sake.'

'Did Lady Trewavas send you here to insult me?' asked Olive, as her eyes flashed. 'Who made me a prisoner here?'

'Well, Miss, if you must know,' said the girl, drawing back, 'it was Mr. John.'

'John!' said Olive; and the blood forsook her face with such swiftness that there seemed to be a sudden white shadow fallen over it.

Lady Trewavas's maid shrugged her shoulders impertinently.

'You and Mr. John are such very good friends, Miss,' said she, 'that I dare say you are surprised; but I'm not telling you an untruth. He brought the key to my lady, and I heard him say just now he had locked your door,

because you was in that towering passion this morning, that he was afraid to let you come near Miss Maristowe again.'

Olive essayed to speak, but her lips shook so fast, that no sound issued from them.

'There you are again, Miss Olive!' said the girl. 'I wouldn't give way so if I was you, Miss. My lady says she is very sorry she forgot you, only her mind has been that anxious about Miss Maristowe, she couldn't think of nothing else. Dinner is over, and they are all at dessert. Will you have a bit of something in the breakfast parlour, Miss?'

'No, I'll have nothing!' said Olive, fiercely; but, as she spoke, a sudden sickness seized her, and she fell forward, almost fainting.

'You are wisht as moonlight,' said the girl, catching her in her arms, 'and as white as a ghost. That's with going without victuals for so long. I shall bring you a bit of dinner up here, Miss.'

Olive seemed to hesitate a moment, and then she said 'yes,' faintly.

When the woman was gone she rallied all her strength, and recalled her shrinking courage.

'I must eat and drink,' she said to herself. 'I have much to do; and I have not been curious enough. I must ask questions. And yet how can I—how dare I?'

'Here's a bit of chicken for you, and a glass of wine,' said the servant, returning with a tray. 'Why didn't you ring your bell, Miss Olive, at dinner time? Some one would have come to you then.'

'I was too angry,' replied Olive. 'I would have stayed here for ever first. And why did they keep ringing that great bell to-day till I was sick of hearing it?'

'We rung for Sir Hilton and Miss Maristowe, Miss Olive,' said the girl; 'and that's what we are in such a way about, for Sir Hilton did not come in till long past seven, and dinner was put off again and again.'

'Well, they are come in now, I presume,' said Olive, carelessly. 'You said they were all at dessert.'

'Only my lady and old Mr. Vigo, and Dr. Burton, Miss,' replied the girl. 'Miss Maristowe isn't found yet, and her ma is dreadful alarmed. She've had fit after fit, and Mr. John tore away on horseback for Dr. Burton.'

'That's strange,' said Olive. 'Where can Eleanor be? Has she lost herself? Did she go out alone?'

'She went out alone about three o'clock, Miss,' was the reply; 'but it seems she promised to meet Sir Hilton at five, at the Lovers' Seat on the cliff. And he got there first, and waited for her till he heard the bell going; then he came home, expecting to find her here. And when he heard she wasn't come in, he was in a fine way. He would have gone out again directly, only my lady made him take a bit of dinner first. Now he and Mr. John are gone together, with the gamekeeper and two more.'

'What a fuss!' said Olive, laying down her knife and fork. 'I wonder poor Mrs. Maristowe frightens herself so much.'

'Well, I don't know,' said the girl; 'my lady is rather frightened too. Miss Eleanor is usual such a timid young lady. She isn't one to stop out late like this by herself. I'm afraid she's took ill somewhere, and I shall feel awful upset till she comes in. That's how we all come to forget you, Miss Olive, being in such a flurry. It was Mr. John who thought of you at last. "Where's Miss Varcoe?" he says to the butler, when they were all eating a hurried dinner. "Is she out too?" Then Mr. Craye comes out of the dining-room, and tells me to call you down; and I came to your door, Miss Olive, twice before you answered me.'

'I did not hear you the first time,' said Olive—'I suppose I fell asleep over my book; and the next time I was too angry to answer. How do I look? Can I go down in the drawing-room?'

'You are looking beautiful, Miss,' replied the girl. 'Your colour is come back now you've had a bit of dinner.'

Olive went to the glass, and certainly she saw on her face something more than the servant's gaze could discern, for her cheeks gradually paled as she regarded herself, and the pupils of her eyes dilated.

'I am looking horrible,' she said; 'I don't know what is the matter with me to-day. Who is in the drawing-room, Tamson?'

'Only my lady and old Mr. Vigo, and the Doctor, Miss,' replied Tamson.

'Then I'll go down,' said Olive, drawing a long breath.



'But I don't feel fit to see anyone. When I fall into a passion I am always ill the whole day afterwards. I dare say I shall say some wild, mad things.'

Tamson seemed perfectly well acquainted with Olive's fitful humour. She held her now a moment by the dress.

'If you please, Miss,' she pleaded, 'don't make no bother to-night; don't go off into one of them outlandish fits of rage—leastways, not till Miss Eleanor is come in. I know it's very trying to be locked up a whole afternoon, but, you see, Mr. John didn't mean that——'

'Well, well, don't let him come near me, that's all,' interrupted Olive. 'If he does, I shall go mad.'

The strange gleam in Olive's eyes, and the tight clenching of her small hands, convinced Tamson she was in earnest.

'I'll keep him out of your way, Miss,' she said, eagerly; 'I will indeed.'

'Mind, that's a promise, Tamson,' said Olive, in a clear, rapid whisper.

As Olive's small figure passed down the corridor, with the glimmer of the pale moon gleaming on the yellow satin of her dress, and shining with faint flickerings on the thick coils of her black hair, Tamson watched her with a shudder.

'She makes my blood run cold this evening somehow,' said the girl; 'she's so little and so unearthly, and there's something in her ways that gives me the horrors.'

Through the park and gardens; through the bosky glades and glens where the trees grew thickest; out beyond, among the narrow lanes, where honeysuckles trailed from hedge to hedge; and all along by the yellow borders of the sea, Sir Hilton Trewavas searched for his bride. And ever through the feverish hours of the night, as the searchers met at stated points, in park, or wood, or on the glistening shore, where the waves sprinkled silvery light, as they fell softly on the sands, with a Summer rush and ripple, the cry was still the same—No tidings! In the wood, no sound but their own footfall, and the rustle of the leaf, and the flutter of the startled bird; on the hill-side, mournful echoes, like unseen spirits coming on them fitfully, bringing back the hurried steps, the murmured voices, the sharp cry, the despairing call, 'Eleanor! Eleanor!' then fleeing mockingly, even as the strained ear seized a hope. On the sands, long

dark shadows of rock, and cloud, and little glistening pools, holding the moon, and waves, silver furrowed, rolling on the shore in a soft rush of melancholy music—nought but this, and solitude, and the night silence, star-lighted.

How describe a night like this, how tell, as the hurried hours ran by, how hope rose, fell, sickened, and died? As the searchers met, they ran towards each other, calling aloud; but, as the sad answer came back on the wind, feet slackened, hands drooped, and the cheeriest face grew pale. A thousand conjectures floated from men's lips, and seemed to fill the air.

The day being warm, had the young girl bathed, and been carried away by the tide? If so, it was vain to search till morning; then they would get boats and drags, and find her. Had she walked along the cliffs, venturing too near the edge, and slipped upon the short dry herbage, then fallen? If so, the coming waves had washed her dead into some lonely cavern, or between some ledge of narrowed rock, and, when the day rose, she would flash upon them suddenly, white and awful from such a death. Or had she, in the wood, stepped upon the Cornish viper, which lies among the fallen leaves, brown like them; and unsuccessored, terror-stricken, and in anguish, had she died alone? Then, when the sunlight crept in upon her and the deadly snake, they might come upon her as they walked; but now, beneath the moon, 'twas useless amid the dark foliage to seek for such a sight. As the men talked and whispered thus, the sun for which they longed rose upon them, and the lingering hope which the night had kept alive fled with the darkness.

Some had thought, when the day came, they should find her sleeping—perchance in some soft glade, or beneath a giant tree,—having lost her way, and grown weary and sad with waiting for the help that came not. But when the sun rose, the promise and the hope that the night had whispered of vanished with his first beams, and the men, in the chill morning air, looked in each other's faces, and saw them doubtful, uncertain, and grey with fear.

Dispirited and weary in every limb, Sir Hilton returned to the house, and met in silence the women who pressed around him, eager for tidings.

After one glance upon his haggard face, Lady Trewavas

took him by the arm, and led him away. She put wine and food before him, and forced him to eat and drink; then, refreshed and strengthened, he rose up to go forth again on his search. She had let him eat in silence; but now, as he took his hat in his hand, she held him. 'Do you think that she is dead?' she asked.

'Heaven forbid!' he replied. 'I think she must have met with an accident—have fallen—sprained a limb or broken it; and perhaps she lies somewhere, fainting, weak, unable to rise or cry.'

'But you have searched—you have called aloud through all the night?' said Lady Trewavas.

'Yes,' said Sir Hilton; 'but still there is hope, unless she has fallen from the cliff, and the tide——. But we will not believe the worst just yet. Now the day is come, we shall find her.'

'At home here we have passed a fearful night,' said Lady Trewavas. 'But for John, Mrs. Maristowe would have gone mad, or died.'

'How is she?' he asked.

Sir Hilton and Mrs. Maristowe had never loved each other much, but now his voice shook as he asked for the mother of Eleanor.

'She sleeps—worn out with grief and tears,' replied Lady Trewavas. 'I have not waked her to tell her you are here, since it would be but useless pain.'

'You have done well,' said Sir Hilton. 'When I come again, I will bring her daughter dead or living.'

Lady Trewavas looked into his face, so woe-worn and changed in a night, and her heart trembled for him.

'You are very weary,' she said. 'Take a few hours' rest, and let John search the while.'

All through the night, John, at Sir Hilton's urgent request, remained to comfort and guard the wretched mother, who had clung to him in querulous, exacting, helpless grief. His had been a bitter task, but he had fulfilled it gently, with wondrous patience, intermingled with fits of tears like a woman, and now and then a burst of wilder grief than even the bereaved mother's, whose hand he held.

'Let John go,' continued Lady Trewavas. 'He has passed a weary night; the excitement of the search will be

better for him than this heavy inactive grief, and rest will do you good.'

'No, no,' said Sir Hilton, resolutely, 'I will not rest, or cease my efforts, till I have found her; and I will give to no one a task that is my own. I know to remain here inactive is a more trying part than the one I take, but at such a time John will oblige me. Tell him I thank him for his care of that poor woman this night; and say, I cannot bear to think of her and you unguarded, else I would not ask him to do so hard a thing for my sake. Where is Olive? Has she not watched with you?'

'She has been to and fro,' replied Lady Trewavas, hesitating at her words; 'but, for some strange reason, Mrs. Maristowe would not bear her presence. Once or twice she assailed her cruelly; she even said that had she not been locked in her room, she might have thought——'

She stopped, and looking up, met Sir Hilton's eyes anxiously. His fell, and a rush of colour flew over his changed face.

'Did Olive bear such words patiently?' he asked.

'I never saw her so patient, so pitiful, so silent,' replied Lady Trewavas.

Sir Hilton sighed deeply, and bowing his head in sad silence to the aged lady, whose furrowed face seemed newly lined with care, he stepped out through the window upon the lawn. The dew was fresh beneath his feet; the lark sang high above him; the perfume of a thousand flowers met him on the morning's breath, and the ceaseless roll and dash of the unwearying sleepless sea, woke the peopled earth to life. But he, like one dead in grief, neither heard, nor saw, nor listened. The sun had risen that he might find Eleanor; the day was come for this, nought else. So with eyes on the ground he walked swiftly towards a group of men awaiting him, who held in their hands drags and oars; and one had a large white sheet, loosely folded over his arm, to wrap the dead in.

From the western window of her room, behind the trellis of leaves and flowers, Olive watched them go down to the sea, and falling on her knees she wept bitterly.

CHAPTER VIII.

As the sun rose flashing on the eastern windows of Bosvigo, the news fell on the careless household, waking all to wonder and sad thoughts. It seemed to young Vigo that the light brought the dreadful words to him, and with them a fear, a surmise, that curdled his blood as it came.

'Searched all night, and have not found her, dead or living.'

It was the fop, Mr. Damerel, who spoke. All his languor gone, and his face set to lines of suspicion and cruel thought, he sat by young Vigo's pillow, and met the earnest, deprecating gaze of his blue eyes with a stern shake of the head.

'It is useless, Vigo,' he said; 'duty must be done. I am bound by every law, human and divine, to divulge now what you told me last night in confidence.'

'Good heavens!' exclaimed young Vigo. 'You cannot think——'

'No matter what my thoughts are,' said Damerel. 'Every fact must be related that may help to elucidate this mystery.'

Young Vigo sprang from his bed, and dressed himself hastily.

'You are unjust—cruel,' he said, as he hurried on his clothes. 'You shall not make use of my confidence to fasten a suspicion on the innocent.'

'The innocent clear themselves easily,' returned Damerel. 'And I pledge myself to this: I will not mention that meeting between you and her, which you promised not to name. I will speak only of the interview between her and her unfortunate victim, which you witnessed secretly.'

'You cannot be so mean! You will not make me such a coward!' cried young Vigo, flashing into rage. 'If you do, you and I are enemies for ever.'

Mr. Damerel walked up and down the room silently; the nerves in his temples stood out like cords; his face grew pale; suddenly he stopped, and seized his friend by the hand.

'Vigo,' said he, 'will you let a woman part us?—and such a woman! I must do my duty, even if you hate me. Heaven knows it is bitter to me, and bitterer still if it is to

lose me your esteem. We have been friends from boyhood ; will you desert me for such a cause as this ?'

With clasped hands they looked in each other's faces, both with earnest eyes, both pale, both steady and firm.

'Damerel,' said young Vigo, 'I tell you yes, this will part us for ever, unless you listen to me. You have no right to betray my confidence.'

'Not when I suspect a murder has been committed ?' said Damerel.

The low soft voice in which he spoke, made his words thrill through young Vigo's ears with a keener pang, than if he had uttered them in passion. His very softness seemed to show such settled certainty of purpose, such firm belief of crime.

'There is no murder,' said Vigo. 'If she is dead, she has fallen over the cliff. But she is not dead—she will be found.'

Mr. Damerel, in deep thought, grasped his friend's hand tighter.

'Listen,' said he. 'Let us make a compact. If she is dead, murdered, will you speak ? If so, I leave all to you—I will not utter a word.'

'If she is murdered, and I see cause to suspect——'

The unhappy young man stopped, overcome by the horror of his thoughts.

'Enough,' said Damerel. 'In that case you will speak ?'

'I will,' replied young Vigo. 'So may Heaven help me to do the right ! I promise in all security, for she is innocent. It was a childish quarrel, a silly quarrel—empty sounds. Women fight with their tongues a hundred times a day, and never harm each other.'

'Not such a woman as this,' said Damerel. 'But I will be silent. We are friends—fast friends. This matter shall not part us—let us swear to that ; and to show you that I will not breathe a word, or act in any way except in concert with you, I will not leave your side to-day. I propose that we both go together to that place, where you saw them, and search it well, telling no one of our intention. It will be time enough to speak if we find cause.'

'Agreed,' said young Vigo, in a low voice. His lips were so pale they scarcely formed the words, but his eyes were fearless, and his whole face wore a resolute air of unbelief.

The young men took a hurried meal together; but before he quitted the house, Charles Vigo went to his father's room. The old gentleman, suddenly aroused, stared blankly at his son.

'Father,' said the young man, 'the news you brought home last night of Miss Maristowe's being missing was far more serious than you thought. She cannot have lost her way, or have met with some slight accident, as was supposed, for the Trewavas people have searched for her all night without finding her.'

'God bless my soul!' cried the kind-hearted squire. 'What can have happened to the poor young lady?'

'No harm, I trust,' said Charles Vigo in a trembling tone. 'There is some mystery, which we cannot understand; let us hope it will be cleared up to-day. Perhaps she has some other lover besides Sir Hilton.'

'Young ladies don't elope now-a-days, Charles,' said the old gentleman. 'And besides, she seemed to me to love Sir Hilton very much.'

'Never mind, father,' observed Charles. 'I still think something very commonplace will account for the young lady's absence. I am not a miracle or murder-monger.'

'Heaven forbid, my dear boy, Heaven forbid!' said the squire.

'Father, I am going out for some hours,' continued Charles. 'Just shake hands, and wish me well before I go, will you?'

Something in the tone of the lad's voice—for he was but a lad—made Mr. Vigo raise himself to look on his son's face. The frank blue eyes were filled with tears, and the young ruddy cheeks were white as ashes.

'Why, my boy—my dear boy—what's the matter?' said his father.

'Nothing particular, father,' he replied. 'I'm a little out of sorts this morning—a little anxious, that's all.'

'Take care of yourself, my dear lad. Don't go far,' said Mr. Vigo. 'And as to anxiety, surely you need not be pale with grief, even if Miss Maristowe—poor girl!—be dead.'

'No, father. There is no need to grieve,' returned his son. There was a grey shadow of care on his face as he turned away.

'Good-bye, governor,' said he. 'What a jolly dear old fellow you are!'

'God bless you, Charlie,' returned his father. 'Don't stay long—don't go far. You look ill.'

They shook hands, Charles Vigo holding his father's hand in a nervous clasp; then with a slight laugh he stooped and kissed him, running off before the old man had time to ask another question. Bolster followed the young men as they went out.

'Let him come,' said Charles, as his friend strove to drive the dog back. 'Poor Bolster! good dog! You are a true friend, Bolster; you will not betray confidence. I have trusted many a secret to you, and never repented.'

Damerel made no reply in words, but he laid his hand on his friend's arm.

'Don't think hardly of me, old fellow,' he said. 'I have promised you I will not utter a word. I leave all to you. I rely on you. I know you will not shirk a duty, let it be ever so bitter.'

There was a sickening throb of pain at young Vigo's heart as he bowed assent to this, but he gave no vent in speech to his fears and sorrow.

They walked on in feverish silence nearly a mile, a desultory word or two, a whistle-call to Bolster, alone breaking the quiet of the way. When they reached the hill that looked down on the sunny slopes of Trewavas, both young men, moved by a simultaneous feeling, paused and stood still. Here, in the morning sun, flashed and glittered the old mansion, glorious in beauty and strength; here lay the soft green glades of mown turf, lovely in the sunshine; and dotting the wide-spread park stood noble groups of trees, with many-coloured foliage trembling in the morning breeze. It was a picture of peace and safety, honour and love—a picture not of present honour only, but of past; for it told of generations gone by, all living within the safety-guards of wealth, birth, and rank. It told how, within this triple wall, the old name of Trewavas had been carried on unscathed, and hoary heads had gone down in honour to the grave, and children had played peacefully, kept unspotted from the great world of sin and sorrow lying without their pale. It told of all this and more—much more; for it appealed, as only these grey old mansions can, to the memory, the reverence, the imagination, and tenderness of the human soul. Never before

had the peace and beauty of the scene spoken so powerfully to Charles Vigo's heart ; never before had it appeared to him that the peace might be a false peace, and the beauty might hide deformity.

Thus it stood—an English home, a sanctuary within whose safe roof lay honour, affection, happiness ; or dishonour, hatred, crime. Which did it cover and hide ? And whose hand was to bear the canker now festering within those honoured walls, and show it to the astonished world ?

Young Vigo turned and looked in his friend's face. Both read each other's thoughts ; both walked on silently. Damerel broke silence first.

'A fair scene,' said he, 'but not so fair as it looks. What anguish, doubt, and suspicion must be raging beneath that shining roof to-day !'

'I would give much to know whose guilty conscience was too troubled for sleep last night, whose courage quailed, whose black, miserable heart quaked with fear and agony,' returned Charles Vigo.

The tone in which he spoke was one of defiance and contradiction. It said plainly—'I despise your suspicions. My thoughts are not your thoughts. I throw down the gauntlet in behalf of injured innocence. Take it up if you dare.' But Mr. Damerel would not accept the challenge.

'Look,' he said mournfully, 'there are the boats ! They have found nothing. That is Sir Hilton, standing up in the stern of the boat. It is easy to recognise his figure. I am glad we cannot see his face.'

'How do you know they have found nothing?' asked Vigo, gravely.

'Cannot you see how they row to and fro, and peer into the water?' said Damerel. 'Come away—the sight is dreadful ! And they will not find her there.'

'By Heaven, Damerel, you madden me !' exclaimed Charles Vigo. 'If you utter another word like that, I shall blow your brains out. Let us search this accursed place, and then you shall apologise to me for your hideous suspicions, or never more be friend of mine.'

Young Vigo strode on fiercely, not looking back. Damerel followed, with a flush on his face, and his lips set firmly together. In this order, neither speaking, they plunged into

the wood, and pursued the narrow path leading to the Lady's Bower.

'It was there I saw them,' said Charles Vigo, in a whisper, pointing to the bower. 'I stood here behind this screen of trees. Neither saw me. She walked away on that side of the pool, her black dress trailing in the water.'

'Then you search on that side, and I on this,' said Damerel.

'No,' said Charles; 'let us look together.'

They stepped forward, both in deep excitement, both wonderfully silent. The bower was beautiful and still as of old; no trace here of death or crime. Clusters of blood-red clematis hung down around it in marvellous profusion, mingled with snow-white jasmine, and glossy myrtle, and trailing honeysuckle, all sweet with the dew of the morning. Flecks of sunshine and fluttering shadows of myriad leaves lay on the untrodden grass around it, and not a sound, save the song of birds, broke the stillness of the time and the place.

Beneath the long, low, level branches of the beeches standing stately round the bower, the young men searched eagerly; then further back among interlaced boughs of hazel, dwarf oak, and larch; then further still, making a wider circle round the pool, beneath pine-branches, lying low and dark, and between thick brushwood, and in the hollows, shining like golden basins with the glory of the gorse, and all among the crimson foxglove, high as their hot hands, and down amid the sweet-smelling fern, they sought feverishly, finding nothing.

'You see,' said young Vigo, 'how cruel you are, how wickedly suspicious and unjust!'

'We have not looked in the pool yet,' said Damerel, walking towards it.

As if by mutual consent, though without a word, they had left this to the last. Charles Vigo now followed his friend, holding in his thoughts and fears that rushed before him, and steadying his eager pacing feet, and trembling hand to quietness. Gently, not to befoul the water, they set aside the floating lily leaves and blossoms, and kneeling on the brink, they peered into the pool. The water was exceedingly clear, but a thousand roots lay intertwined beneath the surface, and these intercepted the view. Moreover, the

gentlest hand in stirring these from side to side disturbed the soil, and this loosened, bubbled upward, mingled with the soft mosses lying below, which floated to and fro, deceiving the eye.

'You perceive there is nothing here but weeds and water-lilies,' said Charles Vigo, rising from his knees. 'Are you convinced your suspicions are vile and vain? Say you are sorry, Damerel, and let us go on to Trewavas and make enquiries, before we turn homewards.'

'I am convinced only that without a drag we shall not find what we seek in this pool,' said Damerel. 'Ha! what is that Bolster has found?—a snake?'

It was no snake. Young Vigo knew it at the first glance—the crimson silk cord which Olive had worn as a girdle; and, turning ghastly pale, he leaned against a tree, with a deathly sickness creeping through his veins.

The cord was lying in the water, partly tangled round the roots of the great beech, whose wide-spread branches shadowed the pool; and Bolster swam round and round, holding it in his mouth, vainly striving to bring it to land.

Throughout the search the young men had made that morning, the dog had followed them, excited and eager, hunting to and fro, as for something lost; and though they had held him back from the pool, lest he should stir the water, yet, escaping from them, he had plunged in on the side opposite the bower.

'Vigo,' said Damerel, 'come with me to aid the dog. He is yours—I will not touch him.'

Like one in a dream, Charles Vigo followed the footsteps of his friend as he ran round the pond in fevered haste.

'Shall I leave all to you, or will you have my help?' asked Damerel, grasping him by the arm.

'Bolster, Bolster! what have you there?' cried young Vigo.

His voice was so hollow, so strange, that the dog did not recognise it; he still swam about anxiously, holding the cord tightly between his teeth.

'Help me,' said Charles Vigo; 'hold my feet while I stretch over. Here Bolster! hi! bring me the cord, good dog.'

Bolster was in strange excitement; he beat the water with his paw, and dragged at the cord, uttering a low whine; but

evidently it was so tied or tangled, that he could not obey his master.

In a moment young Vigo sprang to his feet, and dashed into the pool. The water reached nearly to his neck.

'Throw me your knife,' he said to Damerel, in a low calm tone.

He threw it, the young man catching it in his wet hand; then stooping and swimming, he cut the knot that had baffled the retriever; and as he did so, the dead face of Eleanor Maristowe floated upwards, pale and pure, just beneath the surface of the water. A huge beech branch lying level, with leaves dipping in the pool, hid her body; but between the shining green gleamed the lilac robe, and the small white hands crossed on her bosom.

Done to death, cruelly murdered, there she lay, wonderfully beautiful, the expression on her face calm as might be an angel's sleeping in Paradise.

Stooping and holding by the branch, Charles Vigo raised her in his right arm. Then he saw her fair hair streaming over her shoulders, and the crimson cord that Olive had worn tied about her wrists.

The unhappy young man staggered, and would have fallen back into the water with his burden, but for Damerel's aid.

'Let the poor girl go, Vigo, and get ashore yourself,' said Damerel; 'you are overcome.'

'I have her safely,' he replied. 'Bolster will help me. Go! I will not stir till I see *this* on the grass.'

With a mist before his eyes, and hands beating the water like a dying man's, Charles Vigo reached the shore. Here he lay on the soft turf, fainting, sick, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, till he felt his friend's hand upon his brow.

'Are you better, Charlie?' he asked. 'Can you listen, dear fellow, to what I have to say?'

Charles Vigo took Damerel's hand and pressed it in his; then tears burst from his eyes, and turning his face to the earth, he sobbed aloud.

'Thank heaven, it was not I who found her,' said Damerel, bending over him tenderly. 'I knew she was here, but I am glad it was not my hand that drew her forth. You would have hated me for ever. Bear up, dear fellow, bear up!

You have escaped the toils of a murderess ; be glad for that, and think only of your duty.'

Charles Vigo looked up at his friend, and stilled the workings of his face ; in a moment more, the burst of sudden grief in which he had indulged was over.

'It is of my duty, I think,' he said ; 'but it will be a hard one. Yet, never fear, I shall carry it through.'

'I know you will,' returned Damerel ; 'I rely on you entirely. And, to show you how much I rely, I ask you to carry the news to Trewavas, while I remain here with the body. You see, I do not fear that you will take advantage of this to whisper a word of flight and warning to that wretched girl.'

'Damerel, you are mistaking me altogether,' said Charles Vigo ; 'but I cannot explain myself now. Go to Trewavas ! I have not the courage to carry them these tidings, and I feel weak and faint. I cannot go and return as swiftly as you can. Make all speed. I will remain here the while with this poor murdered girl.'

Vivian Damerel made no demur ; he was glad to take this share of the task. Now, at least, Olive Varcoe should have no chance of escaping justice. In a moment he had disappeared behind the green wall of trees hemming round the pool, and Charles Vigo was left alone with his own thoughts and the corpse of Eleanor Maristowe.

'Great Heaven ! what a mockery seems this bright morning sun, so full of joy and life ! How bitter the contrast between its warmth and glory and this death, murder, and shame !'

Thus thought Vivian Damerel, as, with swift feet, he brought his evil tidings nearer and nearer Trewavas. Hastily brushing the dew from leaf and flower as he ran, and heedless of the song of birds greeting him from every bough, yet inwardly conscious of the beauty and peace of the scene, as contrasted with the anguish and crime of which he bore the tidings, he traversed the glades of the wood without pausing an instant ; but out upon the open slope, looking down clearly upon the village and mansion of Trewavas, he stayed his steps, and lingered a moment in doubt.

Surely it was his duty to go first to the little police station, and report there the discovery he had made ; but he dared

not do this without divulging also his conviction that Olive Varcoe was the murderer; and then he must appear at Tre-wavas, not as a friend, but an avenger. He would come in company with police officers, bringing with him a double misery, the news of death and crime. He shrank from the task. A thousand times he had accepted friendship and courtesy from that house; his hand should not be the one to bring infamy and shame beneath its roof. No! let the police do their dreadful work themselves; he was not called upon, surely, to be an officer of justice. It was for Sir Hilton Trewavas to send to the police, and do all that was right and befitting a man to save the honour of his family, and avenge the murder of his bride. If he failed in his duty, it would be time enough then for him to speak. Sir Hilton had discrimination and judgment. He must have seen and known long ago that his strange cousin was a passionate, vindictive girl, ambitious, resolved herself to be Lady Tre-wavas, and full of jealousy and hatred towards the unhappy young lady now lying cruelly murdered by the pool. Let Sir Hilton do his duty by that poor girl, whose drowned corpse the sun was shining on so gaily—a girl but yesterday so full of life and happiness, and whose sorrow and whose death came through her love for him. Let him bewail her, and avenge her as he should; it was but courteous and friendly to leave this part to him; and if he showed signs of quailing, if he dared connive—

Vivian Damerel paused, and struck his brow with his clenched hand.

‘In that case,’ he said to himself, ‘I will speak to his brother, and John and I will drag that wretched girl to justice with our own hands.’

He turned away from the village as he spoke. He hurried down the slope and through the park; he reached the great door of the mansion, and laid his hand upon the bell. But before he had time to sound the note that would have clamoured of such death and woe, a tiny figure stood before him, and Olive’s silvery voice rang in his ears.

‘Come in this way—by the window,’ she said, softly. ‘Mrs. Maristowe sleeps; so does John. Let them sleep a little longer. You bring tidings! I see it in your face.’

Agitated as he was, Mr. Damerel nevertheless stood for a

moment silent, and amazed at the quiet self-possession of the woman, upon whose head lay all this guilt. But as he gazed steadily into her eyes, he saw her shrink; he saw all the pain, the anguish, the horror, that she strove with such wonderful courage to conceal. The rich colour that her cheek had worn came and went in flashes, and over all her aspect there was the shadow of an indescribable change. It was as though she had passed through a fire, or had gone down into the grave and seen the secrets of death. It was terrible to behold this girl, whose soul was surely in a flame of torture, playing her part calmly, bearing on her face, as a mask, the common conventional sympathy and pretence of sorrow the time demanded, dropping from her lips the commonplace words of every-day life, and hiding, with all the force of her character, the horrible secret that was rending her spirit.

Mr. Damerel shrunk from her with ill-concealed loathing. He could scarcely persuade himself to reply to her greeting. All his affectation of speech and manner was gone: he was pale, earnest, and determined.

'Lead the way, Miss Varcoe; I follow,' he said, in a cold, hard tone. He pretended not to see the hand which she extended to him, and he shrank back against the carved buttress of the wall as she passed him. Olive saw this, and turning her head for a moment, she gazed into his face.

Vivian Damerel never forgot that look. Olive's cheeks were white as ashes—white with a pallor like death; but in her eyes there was a great light—the light as of a fire that burned with a living flame.

What did she mean? What did her eyes say? Did they entreat mercy? Did they ask for justice? Was it a fire of murder, or of martyrdom? And how was it that this strange girl, yet fresh from crime, could send through his soul a thrill of pity, and a prayer to Heaven to spare her?

As he stepped on, blind in his pain, following mechanically the graceful figure whose robe swept the gravel, there rose up before his eyes a vision of the drowned girl whom he had drawn from the pool, lying on the grass, with white upturned face, appealing mutely to Heaven for justice. Before that sight his old distrust and dislike of Olive sprang up active again, and it was with a thrill of renewed horror, and a glow

of shame for his false pity, that he bowed his head and entered the library, by that window through which Olive had crept so silently the evening before.

In this remote room stood Lady Trewavas and Sir Hilton. Both were pale, both haggard with watching and suspense. The upright frame of the aged lady, which seventy summers had striven in vain to bend, was bowed now in a single night, and the wrinkled hand resting on her grandson's arm trembled, and clutched him nervously for support.

'Damerel,' said Sir Hilton, not guessing why he came, 'you see us under sad circumstances. I am just returned from the beach. I have not found her. I have gained no clue——'

But at this moment he caught the look of horror on Damerel's face, and his speech remained suspended, and his eyes grew fixed in sudden expectation and terror.

'She is dead!' said Mr. Damerel. 'Vigo and I have found her.'

'Dead!' exclaimed Sir Hilton; 'dead!—How?—Where?'

There was a breathless silence for a moment; then Damerel, with earnest gaze fixed upon Sir Hilton, said slowly, 'She is murdered! We found her drowned in the pool by the Lady's Bower.'

Lady Trewavas, struck senseless by his words, fell forward on her knees; her grandson held her up, and placed her in a chair.

'Leave us, Olive, and go for help,' he said in a hollow voice.

Before obeying him, the girl knelt down, took Lady Trewavas's hand and kissed it. Tears were streaming over her cheeks, her lips were white and trembling. In passing Sir Hilton, she stopped, and clasping her hands she extended them towards him.

'Hilton!' she said.

He neither turned, nor looked, nor moved.

'Hilton!' she said again. Her voice was a cry of anguish; but he remained immovable, not turning even a glance towards her.

Then Vivian Damerel constrained himself to speak.

'Miss Varcoe,' said he, 'let me counsel you to be silent. It is painful to have to listen to words, which perchance we may be compelled to repeat in public.'

Olive gazed at him in seeming wonder; then she riveted her eyes on her cousin's face; but what she saw there of stern sorrow and pain made her turn away in despair.

'I care not where you repeat my words, Mr. Damerel,' said Olive. 'Hilton,' she continued, turning to him, 'I wanted to say "forgive me! forgive all my unkindness to Eleanor!" I thought I hated her. Now she is dead, I know I never loved her; but I know, too, I never hated her. I am sorry, Heaven knows it, for this dreadful deed. Now, sir,' she added, turning fiercely on Damerel, 'make what you can of my words.'

The next moment Olive Varcoe was gone, closing the door sharply on the lifeless woman in the chair, and on the two young men, who looked at each other with resolute faces.

'The first thing to be done is to give information to the police,' resumed Mr. Damerel. 'I came hither at once, Sir Hilton, feeling that to be my first duty, and I now leave the rest to you.'

'I will listen to all you have to say in a moment, Mr. Damerel,' replied the baronet. 'For the present instant, my grandmother is my first duty.'

Sir Hilton turned as he spoke to the servants who entered, and gave minute orders respecting Lady Trewavas's quiet and comfort. The faintness with which she had been seized had left her, but she looked utterly exhausted, pale, and haggard.

'Promise me,' said the young man, bending over her, 'that you will remain in your own room, and try to sleep until I return to the house. You cannot tell how much need I shall have of your help; nurse your strength and health, for both will be sorely tried. We shall have to defend ourselves.'

'I certainly must go to Mrs. Maristowe,' said Lady Trewavas, nervously clasping his hand.

'No; I forbid it,' said Sir Hilton. 'Let her sleep on; it is only merciful. If she wakes before I return with—with Eleanor——' (the young man broke down here, and for a moment his voice was lost) 'then, in that case, let John go to her and break the news,' he resumed; 'but I prefer doing so myself. It is my task. All the bitterness of this misery is mine by right. Let no man interfere with me.'

The fiery glance of his eye fell on Mr. Damerel, who stood upright before it, unquailing, and resentful of this delay.

'I will do all you wish, Hilton,' said Lady Trewavas; 'only try not to be long away.'

'I will be here before Mrs. Maristowe asks a question, if that be possible,' he replied.

He then looked up, steadily facing the wondering gaze of the servants.

'Miss Maristowe has been found drowned in the pool by the Lady's Bower,' he said. 'In all human probability her death is the result of accident; but that we shall discover on inquiry. Until my return, I desire silence—above all, in the apartments of Mrs. Maristowe. I expect to be obeyed implicitly.'

'Certainly, Sir Hilton,' they replied.

'Give my orders to the household,' he added; 'and take care of your mistress. Go and call my brother, and bid him come to me.'

This last command was given to a man-servant standing at the door.

'John is fearfully worn-out,' said Lady Trewavas, turning, as she was supported from the room.

'Never mind,' answered Sir Hilton. 'He will bear his share of this bravely, I know.'

Once more Sir Hilton Trewavas and Mr. Damerel sat over against each other, silent and alone. After a moment's hesitation, Vivian Damerel rose and spoke.

'Sir Hilton,' said he, 'I have observed with great regret, that you have as yet given no orders to your servants to go to the police station.'

'I see no necessity, sir,' replied Sir Hilton. 'The police received full information last night of Miss Maristowe's absence. They searched with me this morning: they are still searching. I expect one of the men here every moment. When he arrives it will surely be time enough to send the news of our sorrow through the gossiping world.'

'As you will, Sir Hilton,' said Damerel. 'But my opinion is not yours. Excuse me also for saying that I should consider it best to let a bereaved mother hear at once the fate of her daughter.'

'Mrs. Maristowe is a guest in my house, Mr. Damerel,'

replied Sir Hilton. 'I hope I know my duty towards her. I deem it wisest to ensure her a few hours' sleep after a night of terror and anxiety. I take the responsibility of that and of all else on myself.'

Mr. Damerel bowed. With admirable presence of mind he kept the same tone of cold courtesy that Sir Hilton had assumed, but on his face there grew a deeper and deeper shade of anxiety.

'Excuse me, Mr. Damerel,' said Sir Hilton; 'I expect my brother here in a moment. I wish to speak to him privately for a short time.'

At this Vivian Damerel again rose, flushed and agitated.

'Sir Hilton,' said he, 'pardon me. Let me entreat you not to do this at present. Remember the sad necessity I may be under, to repeat every detail of your conduct and words in open court. It is my miserable duty to be obliged to say, that I more than suspect a member of your own family to be the slayer of this unhappy young lady. If, after a secret interview with your brother, that suspected person escapes from this house, the world will judge you guilty of connivance. Give me, I beg of you, the power to say, with honourable indignation, that I have seen no symptom in you of a wish to let the guilty escape.'

Who can paint the agony of Sir Hilton's face as he listened to these words? He never asked who was the suspected person—he knew too well. He strove to command himself—he succeeded. He steadied his white lips, and spoke again like a man.

'Mr. Damerel,' he observed, 'if you constitute yourself an inspector of police, I bow to your commands; but if you remain a gentleman, and my friend, I speak to my brother in another room.'

'What right have I to prevent you, Sir Hilton?' asked Damerel. 'Only I feel it is not generous towards me. I came here first, instead of going to the police. I am responsible to my own conscience and the world for that act. You should be careful not to make me repent it.'

'I do not thank you for coming hither first, Mr. Damerel,' replied Sir Hilton. 'It can be a matter of no consequence to me, or my family, whether the police are apprised an hour sooner or later of the accidental death of a young lady,

surely dearer to me than to any other in the world, her mother not excepted.'

'Sir Hilton, I do not presume to discuss your affection for Miss Maristowe,' said Damerel. 'As a bearer of evil tidings I am unwelcome. I will leave you. But be careful how you speak of "accidental death." I repeat, that poor girl has been murdered! Her hands were tied together by that red silk cord which Miss Varcoe wore yesterday as a girdle round her waist.'

The worst was spoken, and Sir Hilton staggered beneath it like a man smitten by a heavy blow. Surely till now he had been deceiving himself with the hope, that Eleanor had *fallen* into the pool. His face fell forward on his hands, and he remained aghast and speechless. Another voice broke the silence—it was John's.

'Heaven have mercy on us!' he said. 'This is too terrible!'

'Mr. Trewavas,' exclaimed Vivian Damerel, 'I appeal to you. Let measures be instantly taken to put this affair in the hands of the police. We linger too long here in discussion; and we forget that the corpse of this murdered girl lies still upon the grass.'

At these words Sir Hilton Trewavas started up like a man wakening to his bitter grief.

'Let no man dare to touch her till I am there!' he cried. 'John, I wanted you for this; my courage is gone; I cannot give the dreadful orders. Will you see to all things? Will you come with me, and help me bring her home? And see that there is a cloth—a shawl—a something to cover her poor face. Merciful heaven! what have I done that this horror should come upon my house?'

Touched by this outbreak of grief, Vivian Damerel, in his respect for it, walked to the window, and turned his face away from the brothers. In that instant of time Sir Hilton's lips whispered—'Olive!'

'Heaven alone knows the truth,' said John, in a voice of anguish. 'I cannot tell you. I will do what you bid me.'

He left the room hurriedly. He seemed bewildered, scarce knowing what he was doing. Sir Hilton gazed after him, deeply disappointed.

'He has not understood me,' he said to himself, 'or else he

will not help her to fly.' Then he turned bitterly towards Vivian Damerel. 'You perceive, sir,' said he, 'that if the murderer of my affianced wife be indeed beneath my roof—which I deny—neither my brother nor I aim at defeating the ends of justice.'

If Vivian Damerel felt inclined for a moment to answer hotly, the sight of the bearers standing silently on the lawn checked him.

'The men are here, Sir Hilton,' he said, softly. 'Let us go with them.'

The affianced husband of Eleanor Maristowe looked out from the window upon the dreadful group, and shuddered from head to foot. Perhaps at that moment he remembered he had been but a cold lover to the murdered girl; he remembered he had wooed her more for his own sake than for hers; he had wooed her to save himself from a more loving and less prudent marriage. And she lay dead now, the victim of this mistake—this sin—the victim of his worldliness and Olive Varcoe's jealousy.

The sight of grief is so softening to the human heart, that anger fades away before it; hence Vivian Damerel's ire melted, and his distrust vanished, as he witnessed the anguish that neither manliness nor pride could control. It was but yesterday, when he would have pointed out Sir Hilton Trewavas as of all men the most happy, and the most favoured of fortune. Now all was changed, and the cup given to him to drink was bitter indeed. A most foul, a most treacherous murder had been committed on a young, defenceless girl, who was not only his guest, but his affianced bride. And circumstances of his own making had surely led to this dire event. Nor was this all: the murderer was one of his own household, his own blood—a lady, young, beautiful as her victim, and one whom, in his youthful folly, he had loved or feigned to love. And now honour, the rites of hospitality, the respect due to his betrothed's family, and to the murdered victim herself, demanded that he should not shield this unhappy, maddened girl beneath his roof, or connive at her escape, but yield her up to the hands of justice. No matter that perchance his was the fault, because in his pride of rank, his pride of worldly position, his pride of power, he had played with a human heart as with a toy. No, it mattered not for

this. Still it was his task to give up the criminal to the blind vengeance of the law, and to tear out his deepest secret for the rabble to read and rend. And when this girl, whom he had maddened by his love and his indifference, should kneel down lonely in prison to pray or to despair, how would he feel? Great Heaven, how would he bear the sight and live?

Somewhat in this way ran Vivian Damerel's thoughts as he followed Sir Hilton's steps silently through the shrubbery; and Sir Hilton's own thoughts went much in the same current, except that they had a bitterness of remorse and anguish too deep for words to express. Vainly he might tell himself that hundreds of men and women had done idly what he had done, and no tragedy, no deed of blood had followed. No, his conscience answered; not visibly, perchance, had crimes come, but surely sorrow has been heaped upon sorrow through the sins of heartless vanity; and love won and flung away comes back to the human soul in countless shapes of vengeance. Not always certainly with the dagger and the bowl, and the red hands of murder, but such things are. And at times, when they ooze upwards through the smiling surface of life, and appear in our daily journals, they startle for a moment the idle and the careless into a passing thought of fear. For one brief instant a light flashes through the soul, showing that human passions are earnest and true; weapons for good or evil; and that man, or that woman who dares for pleasure, or for vanity, to crush a heart, and fling it away bruised and bleeding, sows seeds in it of sorrow and of sin, of which fleshy eye may not see the root, but which the spirit of the sufferer feels, as he curses in bitterness the hand that planted them. Long after love has faded, sin remains, and ruin devastates, and the sands of life run down to join that great desert of waste and misery, where so many victims lie slain or perishing.

'Good Heaven!' said Sir Hilton Trewavas in his heart, 'what have I done? If Olive had been one of the girls of the world, if she had crushed all feeling from her heart and had married for wealth, and had gone through life a hypocrite and a liar, I should have flattered myself I had not sinned. Or if, discontented and soured, with all the springs of her life turned to bitterness, she had lived and died useless, I should still have walked on, unscathed in conscience. But

she was not a woman to do either of these, or to pine away and die with gentle, half-uttered reproaches on her tongue. No; she is a creature of fiercer blood. I have been blind. I should have seen and known that I was playing with fire, and it would scorch me. Heaven keep me my senses! My brain gives way! How shall I save her?’

‘Hilton,’ said John’s quiet voice as he separated himself from the group of men, ‘I have been thinking I had better not go with you to the wood. The police, who have been searching on the beach, are come up, having heard the news; and the inspector tells me he is bound to leave a couple of men in the house for the present.’

‘So they suspect one of my household!’ exclaimed Sir Hilton.

‘It seems so,’ replied John; ‘and since the ladies have no protector——’

‘You are right,’ interrupted Sir Hilton. ‘You are always thoughtful and kind, John; Heaven bless you, old fellow!’

Hearing a conference between the brothers, Mr. Damerel, moved by the instincts of a gentleman, retired a pace or two, and Sir Hilton, bending forward as he grasped John’s hand, found a moment to whisper, hurriedly, ‘Save Olive! Take a boat! The steamer at Falmouth, for Lisbon, leaves at nine.’

With a swift, dark flush upon his face of horror, pain, and astonishment, John started back, and gazed at his brother.

‘Olive!’ he murmured, ‘Olive! Is it possible you think that she—— My brother—my dear brother, do not be led away by appearances. My life on it, Olive is innocent.’

John spoke vehemently, and, catching a single word of the sentence—Olive’s name—Mr. Damerel’s momentary pity faded.

‘It is a hard thing to utter,’ he said, in a low voice, to the inspector; ‘but I think it my duty to say that you ought to keep a strict watch, and not allow any one to leave Trewavas.’

‘I have given orders to that effect, sir, already,’ was the reply.

All this took but a few moments to utter, and then the party moved forward rapidly towards the wood. As they disappeared within the line of trees, Sir Hilton turned, and waved his hand impatiently to his brother, for John was standing with his head bent and his hands clasped, like a man stunned, bewildered, and powerless.

CHAPTER IX.

ON every side a wall—a wall of dislike, suspicion, distrust ; and Olive, beating her hands against it in vain, ceased at last her efforts, and sat down in silent despair. The horrible secret that her heart held was killing her ; yet she would not tell it. Bewildered in every other thought, numbed in every other faculty, in this alone she was clear and firm : she would die rather than confess the truth. Shut up in her soul for ever, the secret of this crime might kill her, but it should not make her a babbling coward. She had yearned for revenge—revenge for what she had once fancied and called life-long injuries ; and now vengeance was in her hands, and she found the cup bitter as poison and gall.

What shadows now seemed the little slights she had suffered, the small spite of servants, and the sneers of a mean world ! Was it worth while for these to draw down upon their heads death and disgrace, and all the unutterable anguish of the murderer's doom ? No, a thousand times no. Better brave, better bear all things, than bring the shame of a public death upon them. How should she escape ? What should she do ?

The unhappy girl looked around upon the walls of her room, as upon a prison, and flinging herself upon the floor, she lay there silent and helpless. She had no tears, no sobs, for hers was a grief that reached down to the soul's utmost depths, long passing that surface sorrow which finds an interpreter in groans and cries.

As she lay thus, a slight sound at the door aroused her. She started up in her terror, and passed her hand hurriedly over her face, as though by the gesture she sought to wipe away the dire shadow there, the dreadful look of haggard woe and pain that sat upon it.

'Come in,' she said, in a clear voice.

She unbolted the door noiselessly as she spoke, but there was no response, and the lock was not turned ; then she opened it, and looked out into the corridor. There was no one there, and not a shadow or a footstep near : yet again the slight sound smote her ear, and closing and bolting that

door softly, she ran to the other—the one opening on the ancient stairs—and stood there listening. There was a shrinking terror in her eyes, a nervous clasping of her hands together, that told her fear; but this time she did not speak. Doubtless she herself expected to be questioned; she looked for some human voice, some accent she dreaded to hear, but a dog's whine answered the low tap of her fingers on the panel, and in surprise she opened the door to Bolster. He came bounding in, and laid at her feet a red cord, drenched with water, and soiled with weeds and slime.

Olive gazed at the cord with distended eyes, and face from which every vestige of colour slowly departed; then, falling on her knees, she placed her arms round Bolster's neck, and, leaning her head there, she wept.

Perhaps these tears saved her life, for when she rose again the unnatural tension of her features was gone, and the ghastly look they had worn was changed to one more healthful, speaking more of life and hope. Patting the dog on the head, and whispering, 'Silence!' she made him lie still, while she crept softly down the turret stairs. Overhead she heard John in his painting-room, and this accounted for the door at the foot being partly open; but there was no other sound, no other creature near. Had any one seen Bolster? Oh, that he could speak, and tell her!

Then a joyful thought struck her. Of course no man had seen him, for then he would have stopped the dog, and taken the cord away. No, he had not been seen. He had come through the deepest recesses of the wood, and entered the house by this secluded window, near which it was rare indeed for any foot to stray.

Olive clasped her hands in thankfulness, and a smile of joy broke over her face. Then she called, in a whisper, 'Bolster, Bolster!' The dog heard her, and came panting down the turret stairs, bounding on her to lick her face and hands. She knelt down, and clasped his neck again.

'Bolster! good Bolster!' said she, 'go back to your master, and say I thank him. Say he has saved a life, and made me his for ever.'

Tears streamed down Olive's face now, and the dog looked at her with wistful eyes.

'Go!' she whispered; and Bolster obeyed her. She

watched him bound through the library window, and disappear among the thick shrubs ; then she crept softly to her room again.

On the floor lay the red cord. Olive regarded it with a look of horror. Twice she laid her hand over it, and twice she snatched it away, shrinking from the hideous contact. Then nerving herself, she gathered it up at last, and gazed upon it with a perplexed, uncertain eye. In a moment she went to the chimney, and opening the little door or valve which closed the stove, she thrust the rope as high up as she could place it. This position did not seem safe, but it was as safe as any she could think of now.

Scarcely had she done this, and washed her slightly soiled fingers, ere a man's hand tapped at her door—the door on the spiral stairs. She seemed to know instinctively it was John, for she uttered his name in a low voice, and in a moment he stood before her. He was very pale. He had been weeping bitterly.

‘Olive,’ said he, ‘Hilton has begged me——’

‘Hilton ! what of Hilton ?’ she cried, with her old fierceness. ‘I want to hear nothing of Hilton.’

John stood before her meekly, not lifting his eyes.

‘I do not wonder at that,’ he said. ‘Olive, I am not come to insult you, yet perhaps you will think I am if I tell you what Hilton says.’

‘What are a few insults more or less to me ?’ said Olive. ‘Who is there in this house who has not insulted the poor relation ?—the wretched girl dependent for her bread on the Trewavas bounty ?’

‘Not me, Olive,’ replied John, in the same sad voice ; ‘nor Hilton either, I hope.’

‘Hilton has insulted me most of all,’ she said. ‘His kindness was an insult. His love—for he did make love to me—a keener insult still ; for he showed me it was but an idleness—scarce worth an explanation to a poor girl like me—a pastime flung away when he sought a wife.’

‘Don’t, don’t speak of her !’ shrieked John. ‘Be ungrateful if you will to all who have cared for you ; but let the dead rest.’

Olive looked on his white woe-worn face, and was softened.

‘Heaven help you !’ she said. ‘You loved her, John.’

The workings of John's face were terrible; he sank down in a chair, and gave himself up to the grief that convulsed his frame. Olive did not aid him, or go near him with a kindly word or friendly touch; she simply waited silently till he had calmed himself; then she said, 'Try to tell me what Hilton says. I will listen.'

'He did not say it, but he thinks it,' said John. 'Mind, Olive, it is not I who so mistake you.'

John looked in Olive's face imploringly, then dropped his eyes.

'He thinks you guilty of this murder,' he said.

There was a moment's silence, and the beating of Olive's heart could be heard.

'And how did you answer him?' she asked.

'Oh Olive, I told him not to be deceived by appearances. I said I would stake my life on your innocence.'

Olive gazed into John's face a moment, then she covered her eyes with her hand, and shuddered visibly. It was strange that she did not assert her innocence, or utter one word exculpatory of herself.

'Here is money,' said John, 'all gold—notes might be dangerous—and I have a boat hidden under the rocks by the Lovers' Seat. There is time to get you on board the steamer—'

'What do you mean?' asked Olive, rising, and shrinking away from him.

'I am only obeying Hilton,' he replied. 'Don't think that I counsel you to go, Olive. Hist! is any one listening? Hilton said, "Save her—take her by sea!" Now, will you go—will you escape, Olive?'

'No!' exclaimed the girl, in a resolute voice. 'Tell Hilton I would not let him save me. I will stay here and bear the worst.'

'You are right, Olive,' said John, in his saddest voice. 'Let the guilty flee. Let the miserable secret villain who has done this deed give up his neck to the hangman, or lie down in some ditch and die, as he doubles and turns to escape justice. But, Olive, why should you suffer? Will you let me save you?'

Olive hesitated, then she raised her eyes, and looked him steadily in the face.

'No,' she said, 'you shall not save me, John. The whole world should not bribe me to take safety from your hands. Go in peace. I will save myself.'

John turned away, groping for the door like a blind man. He had not given her his hand, he had not spoken to her with any of his old affection and kindness, and yet Olive called him back.

'John,' said she, 'promise that you will do nothing rash in the hope of screening me. Leave me to defend myself. Circumstances may be strong against me, but not strong enough to hurt a hair of my head. Go; do not be afraid for me.'

'Are you cunning and secret enough, Olive?' asked the young man, turning on her his mild, wistful eyes.

Something in this question tried her sorely.

'How dare you ask me?' she said. 'Go; I want to be alone.'

But still he lingered. 'You will tell Hilton,' said he, 'that I asked you to escape?'

'I will tell him that I utterly scorn and reject any offer of his to aid me,' replied Olive. 'I will bear this alone, as I have borne all else. No, not all. You helped me, John, to bear my rejection, my love, my jealousy; but you cannot help me in this. Would to Heaven I had given you better counsel, and not have added fuel to your misery—I who knew you!'

Her whole aspect changed as she spoke, and she burst into bitter tears. John looked at her with an anguish equalling her own. His tears seemed to scorch his eyes, for he pressed his hand upon his brow, and went away softly, uttering not a word.

Imagination may be vivid and faithful, but how both pale away in the presence of reality! It is the sorrow *seen* which is mightiest in its appeal to the soul, and before it all hearsay, all relation, seem feeble as a shadow.

Death in connection with Eleanor was unnatural, and murder horrible, and in hearing of them and believing them, Sir Hilton Trewavas fancied he had felt the worst. He was mistaken. It was only when he saw her that he realised the truth, and felt in every shuddering fibre of his frame how cruel a murder he had indirectly helped to do. So young,

so beautiful, so beloved, she lay before him on the damp grass, dead, her long hair escaped from its net, streaming over her shoulders, her wet garments clinging to the rounded limbs, her fair young face, with the seal of death upon it, upturned to Heaven, crying mutely, pitifully for vengeance.

It was a sight never to be forgotten. Men wept as they looked upon it, and for a moment all self-possession and calmness were lost. The man who should have been her husband knelt down by her side, and took her hand in his. On the cold finger glistened the diamond ring of betrothal—the ring which, only a few days ago, he had replaced on her warm hand, with the kisses and tears of reconciliation. Tears fell on it now, burning tears of bitterness, of remorse, of agony.

‘Let no one touch her but me,’ he cried, fiercely, as the inspector of police knelt on the other side of the corpse, and took up the right hand.

‘Excuse me, Sir Hilton,’ said he; ‘I am bound to do my duty, sir. Mr. Damerel spoke of a cord—a red cord—tying the wrists. I do not see it. I am looking for it.’

Sir Hilton Trewavas started to his feet, and retired a step or two from the body. This search was more than he could bear. Is was not enough that Eleanor was murdered, but Olive must be the murderess! Fate was too bitter against him.

‘Mr. Damerel,’ said the inspector, ‘you spoke of a cord. I don’t see it, sir.’

‘It was here when I left this place,’ said Vivian Damerel, looking up, angry and bewildered. ‘Look for it, pray! It was hanging loosely on the wrist. You will remember I told you we cut the knot, which was caught or entangled in a branch.’

‘It is not here, sir,’ said the inspector. ‘Perhaps Mr. Vigo has it. He watched the body while you were away.’

‘Vigo!’ cried Vivian Damerel, ‘Vigo! do not go away. You are wanted.’

When the party came up from Trewavas, they found Charles Vigo seated in the place where Vivian had left him, with his face turned away from the corpse. After a greeting almost silent in its painfulness, he had quitted the group, out of respect to Sir Hilton’s grief, which he was unwilling

to witness. Now, on hearing his friend's voice, he came towards them slowly.

'We cannot see anything of any cord here, sir,' said the inspector. 'Have you got it, sir?'

'No, certainly not,' replied Charles Vigo.

'But, Vigo,' expostulated Vivian Damerel, 'no one has been here but you, and the cord was on the poor girl's wrists when I left you.'

'Indeed!' said Charles Vigo, turning on his friend; 'are you sure of that?'—'I am positive,' replied Damerel.

'Then look for it,' responded Charles Vigo; 'for if your statement be correct, and there was really a cord, it must certainly be here now, as no human being has been near this spot but me.'

'If there was really a cord!' cried Damerel, in indignant astonishment. 'You know there was.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Damerel,' said Charles; 'you are too warm. I am not contradicting your statement. I am taking for granted there was a cord, since you say there was; but where is it?'

In vexed wonder and annoyance Mr. Damerel aided the men in their search around the body, on the grass, by the brink of the pool, and beneath the branches. Of course there was no cord. They found, however, the book Eleanor had been reading, and a gold bracelet she had worn. Of these the inspector took possession.

'It was no robber who attacked her,' he remarked, 'for her ring is on her finger, and her purse is untouched. What sort of cord was it, gentlemen, that you found?'

'I am not saying I found a cord,' returned young Vigo. 'It is Mr. Damerel who asserts he saw one.'

'You will not dare to say that you saw no cord!' cried Damerel,—'that you did not see and handle the cord that Miss Varcoe wore yesterday on her waist for a girdle?'

'This is serious,' observed the inspector. 'It will be my duty, I fear, to arrest this young lady—that is, if you persist in your statement, Mr. Damerel.'

'I persist in speaking the truth,' he replied. 'Charles Vigo, you are mad!'

Sir Hilton Trewavas here came forward.

'Gentlemen,' said he, sorrowfully, 'this is surely no time

for dispute. Aid me to take this poor girl home to Trewas, and leave the police to search for this missing cord, if there be one.'

He, too, had dared to say 'if,' and Vivian Damerel felt himself greatly exasperated; yet affection for his friend kept him silent. He imagined that Charles Vigo had hidden the cord, and that his infatuation for Olive was driving him mad.

'I persist in saying there was a cord, and it was Miss Varcoe's,' said Damerel. 'I saw her wear it three days ago.'

At this moment Bolster stole up silently, and licked his master's hand. Charles Vigo started violently, and his face flushed. Then kneeling down, he let the dog jump on him, and, with his paws on his breast, press his honest head against his cheek. When the young man rose from his knee, there was a gleam of hope in his blue eyes, which he hid with drooping lids.

'It is strange, gentlemen, that you cannot agree on this important point,' said the inspector. 'Sir Hilton, the men are ready. I await your orders.'

They took the dead girl up, and bore her gently along, her lover walking by her side, the others following—the most mournful procession that had ever entered the old mansion of Trewas.

Thus they came through the wood into the park, where a silent crowd met them, uncovering as they passed, and so on to the house, and up the great staircase into Eleanor's own room, where they laid her upon the bed. Then the men, with hushed tread, and tears upon their faces, stole away, giving place to women, who, mourning and weeping, arrayed her, with soft hands, for her bridal with the grave.

Sir Hilton had been obeyed. Through all the dreadful hours of this sad morning Mrs. Maristowe slept, happily unconscious of the ghastly truth. Voices and steps had both been hushed as they approached her room, and no hideous whisper of murder and of death had as yet fallen on her ears. Sir Hilton, true to his word, took the terrible duty upon himself of breaking to her the mournful news.

Awoke for that purpose by her maid, Mrs. Maristowe rose and dressed, feebly anxious for tidings, pitifully nervous and weak. She was a woman not used to strong emotions—one whom the world had used gently, and whose soul was too

narrow either to bear or to feel a mighty grief. When the dreadful words were spoken that struck her childless, she gazed helplessly on Sir Hilton's face, and then broke out into querulous, useless reproaches.

'It is your fault,' she said,—'yours. You are a cruel, heartless man. It was John who loved Eleanor, not you. I will go and see my dead child, leaning on his arm, not on yours. Where is John? Send for him.'

Her words struck Sir Hilton's heart like a dagger. John loved Eleanor! It was a revelation, but one so true, that all the shadows that before had pointed at it, now gathered together, like a cloud of facts, admitting no disbelief. Quiet, patient John! so silent, so forbearing, hiding his sorrow without complaint,—had he indeed given him so hard a burden to bear? Overwhelmed, he stood mute, shrinking at his own thoughts, trembling at the bereaved mother's cries and sobs.

'Drowned!' she cried; 'how can Eleanor be drowned? Then you rowed her yesterday on the sea, though you told me you had not.'

'No, no; she was drowned at the Lady's Bower,' replied Sir Hilton; 'they found her in the pool there. Doubtless it was an accident; she slipped her foot and fell in perhaps, and being unaided and alone——'

John had entered and heard this. He was white as ashes.

'Hilton,' he said, in his quietest, saddest voice, 'tell the truth; it is more merciful to tell it at once. Mrs. Maristowe, your daughter was murdered—cruelly, foully murdered. The wretch who has done it must hang; for if he be not hunted through the world he will live a horror, a curse to others and to himself.'

John took the shrieking woman in his arms as he spoke, as if to comfort her, and pressing her head upon his breast, he turned his white face towards his brother. Then Sir Hilton saw how woe-worn it was, how stamped with agony and living patience it was, and seeing this, he knew that the worldly-wise, the coldly-calculating love that he had given to the dead girl was like a feeble lamp compared to the burning sun of John's passion.

'You loved her!' shrieked Mrs. Maristowe, clinging to the stricken man. 'A mother's instincts are always true. I

will take comfort from your voice. I will be led by your hand to look upon her dead face. Oh, John, must we bear this ?'

The young man trembled from head to foot, but he bore up the shrinking woman bravely.

'Be it so. I will lead you to her,' he said. 'Hilton, stand aside. This is my task, think what you may. I loved her better than you. Let the stronger love have the deeper bitterness. You cannot drink my cup for me, though you try.'

It was true; and Sir Hilton, abashed, stood aside to let his brother pass. He had striven to take upon himself the hardest part; but his feeble, prudent love was trampled down by this rush of passion, and he stood silent, and felt like an intruder, as he gazed upon John's deeper agony; yet he followed them instinctively into that hushed and silent room, where she lay dead upon her white couch.

Conventional, a shadow of fashion and of the world as she was, Mrs. Maristowe was still a mother, bereaved of her only child; and all there was of depth, and of feeling in her unimpassioned soul, burst forth as she gazed upon the dead face of her daughter. Kneeling down, she pressed her in her arms, and shrieked 'Eleanor! Eleanor!' in a voice that rang through the old house, reaching Olive in her chamber as she too knelt, closing her ears with her hands, to shut out the dreadful sound.

The wretched mother kissed her child again and again; then she called John forward—John, who with hand on his eyes stood shrinking in the doorway.

'John,' said she, 'you loved her. You may kiss her before I shut her face away from the light.'

John rushed forward, and flung himself on his knees by her mother's side. His patience, his courage, his meekness were gone; he was wild, incoherent—almost savage.

'Mine now,' he murmured; 'mine in death! Oh, Eleanor! no worldly, selfish love can take you from me now! Here at last my despised affection, my broken heart are triumphant! Who has such a right as I to touch your dead lips? Oh, Eleanor! my love! my love!'

With his arm beneath her head, he kissed her, raining tears upon her face.

In the midst of her grief, Mrs. Maristowe glanced upon Sir Hilton a look of angry triumph. She was glad that he should see how much greater was John's love than his. But the look was lost, for Sir Hilton was too utterly broken down to heed it. He came forward slowly, and stood by John's side. His very soul within him was moved by his brother's grief and the secret of his love.

'John,' said he, putting his arm about him tenderly, 'come away; this is too much for you to bear. Mrs. Maristowe, she was to have been my wife. I am not without heart, not without love for her.'

He stooped as he spoke, and would have touched her cold cheek with his lips! but John—meek, quiet John—turned on him fiercely.

'Let her be, Hilton!' he cried. 'She was yours living; she is mine dead. You shall not touch her. I loved her; what does it matter telling my secret now? I loved her long before your prudent, cautious pride fastened greedy eyes upon her, and chose her for a wife. Let her be, I say! I did not intrude my wretched love upon you when she was yours; why intrude yours upon me now she is mine?'

He held his brother back with the force of a madman, and in the fixed glare of his eye there was a look of madness, or of wild grief akin to it, that startled away from Sir Hilton's mind all feeling of anger.

'John,' said he, drawing gently back, 'surely this is an unseemly struggle. I yield her to you dead, as I would living, had you been frank with me, and had she wished it. But I truly believed she loved me, and me only,' he added, in a sad, low tone. John looked upon him in a wild way, and Sir Hilton caught him in his arms as he fell forward senseless. They carried him to another room, and revived him slowly. He awoke at first for a moment calmly, then there grew a look of horror upon his face, followed quickly by the old meekness natural to him, and taking his brother's hand, he thanked him, and said he felt better, and would go away and try to sleep.

'Hilton,' he pleaded, in that quiet voice of his, which came back now in all its old sweetness, 'I fear I have talked wildly. I could not help it. Even now I am not myself. Mrs. Maristowe, you will give me the key of that room to

keep? I cannot bear that any other hand than mine should guard her.'

Mrs. Maristowe yielded to his wish. She had locked the door, and she now gave him the key; he kissed it with a sad smile.

'No one can touch her now,' he said, with a ring of mournful triumph in his voice.

Sir Hilton led him away kindly; for he needed kindness and attention more than the unhappy mother, who sank down on her bed to weep and cry. In his own room John looked sorrowfully upon his brother.

'I gave your message to Olive,' he said, 'but she would not listen; she would not go. She is at Trewavas still. She scorns your aid, she says, and she will not be saved by you. She will save herself.'

'It wanted but this to fill my cup,' said Sir Hilton, bitterly.

'Do not fear for Olive,' continued John. 'She is a marvellous girl; she will clear herself. And besides, I swear she is innocent; she has not done this deed, Hilton.'

'I wish I could think so, John,' said his brother, with a heavy sigh. 'Try to sleep for an hour, and then I will come to you again, and we will see what can be done. It is useless to talk now; you are too weary, too worn, to understand me.'

John acquiesced, seemingly glad to be left alone with his grief; and Sir Hilton, closing the door softly, went with a heavy heart to the hall, where the inspector of police awaited him.

'Mine is a hard duty, Sir Hilton,' said the inspector, rising, as the baronet entered, 'and I wish to do it with every respect to your feelings, and, as far as possible, to your wishes also. I went to the little station here, sir, and telegraphed for orders. In the message sent back I am commanded to gain all information possible, and I am told to remain here, and take every precaution that—that none of the household——'

'Escape,' concluded Sir Hilton. 'Do your duty, inspector. I can have nothing else to say to you but that.'

'Of course, Sir Hilton,' continued the inspector, 'respected as you are in the county, you will be anxious, for the sake of your family, to clear up this mystery; and you may rely

on my using my utmost skill to discover the right party. Have you suspicions yourself, sir, pointing to any person ?'

'None,' replied Sir Hilton, abruptly. 'My belief is, that the poor girl slipped into the pool accidentally, and was drowned.'

'Then you don't regard Mr. Damerel's story of a rope, sir ?' inquired the inspector.

'No,' replied Sir Hilton. 'I always took him to be a nervous, effeminate sort of man, given to exaggeration. I would take young Vigo's word a hundred times against his ; and if he says there was no cord, I should believe him, and not the other.'

The inspector was silent, and Sir Hilton went on warmly.

'It is far more likely, more natural to think, that she was drowned by accident,' said he. 'What human being could have a motive for killing so young, so gentle, so innocent a creature ?'

'Jealousy is a cruel thing, sir,' said the inspector, looking him in the face suddenly. 'Jealousy has committed many a murder.'

Sir Hilton Trewavas coloured to the brow.

'Have you anything more to say to me that must necessarily be said ?' he asked, coldly.

'Very little, Sir Hilton,' began the man, and then he hesitated. 'The fact is, sir,' he resumed, 'Mr. Eslick, the superintendent of the district, will be here in an hour or two. I thought it best to send to him, sir, as I know you, as a magistrate, would like this matter cleared up as quickly as possible. I hope you'll excuse my not having waited for your orders, Sir Hilton. I saw you were much flurried, sir, so I took upon myself—'

'You telegraphed for Mr. Eslick ?' said Sir Hilton.

'Yes, sir, and I have taken the liberty of asking Mr. Damerel and Mr. Vigo to stop here to see him,' replied the man. 'You are not offended, sir, I hope ?'

'Offended !' said Sir Hilton. 'You have done your duty. I must do mine. I must send a message to the coroner.'

Blindly hoping something from the clash of pompous magistrates with the fussy little coroner, Sir Hilton sent his telegram in feverish haste. With answering speed the coroner fixed the inquest for two o'clock the next day at the

Trewavas Arms, in Trewavas Church-town. And the jury—all men from the parish of Trewavas, and all dependent in different ways on the Trewavas family—were summoned by the constable that evening, and desired to attend punctually.

All this did not prevent the arrival of Mr. Eslick, who, driving to the house in a light dog-cart, entered freely and affably into conversation with every human being he met on the road. By this means that smiling gentleman soon collected a mass of information, that would have filled three columns of a daily paper, but was scarcely useful for any other purpose. Nevertheless, his seeming energy and his presence soothed and pleased poor, sobbing, feeble Mrs. Maristowe, who implored him to find the murderer of her child at once. Then she plunged into her grievances, her suspicions, her dislikes, and, rambling as her talk was, she nevertheless instilled a large amount of distrust into Mr. Eslick's mind concerning Sir Hilton and Olive.

For motives of his own, he had presumed that it was due to Mrs. Maristowe, as the mother of the murdered girl, to seek a private interview with her before speaking to any of the Trewavas family; and now, having seen her, it was with a mind doubly prejudiced that he sought a moment's conversation with Lady Trewavas.

Somewhat surprised that he asked for her instead of Sir Hilton, that lady, leaning on the arm of her grandson, entered the room, and bowed to him without speaking.

'Cannot I see your ladyship alone?' asked the affable Mr. Eslick, with a beaming smile.

Much amazed, Lady Trewavas hesitated; but Sir Hilton spoke for her.

'This matter concerns me, Mr. Eslick,' he said, haughtily; 'and I consider, therefore, that all you may have to say to Lady Trewavas, you can say with more fitness to me. I am ready to hear you, sir.'

'You will excuse me, Sir Hilton,' said he; 'I wished to make things pleasant, that was all. And as I have a few remarks to make respecting yourself, I thought it would be more agreeable to your feelings not to be present. Duty is often disagreeable, Sir Hilton, and I am sure you will feel for me, if I am obliged——'

'I need no apologies, Mr. Eslick,' interrupted Sir Hilton; 'pray proceed. Nothing you can say will affect me.'

Receiving this rebuff with the same happy smile with which he would have taken a compliment, Mr. Eslick turned to Lady Trewavas.

'You have seen no reason to suppose that Miss Maristowe would commit suicide, madam?' he asked.

'None, sir,' was the reply.

'But she was unhappy,' he continued; 'she was jealous of a young lady in your house, named Varcoe. Your grandson—excuse me, Sir Hilton—showed symptoms of a greater affection for this lady than for his affianced wife—at least, so I have been informed.'

Sir Hilton bit his lip in silence, and Lady Trewavas replied, coldly, 'You have been misinformed, Mr. Eslick. I never saw Miss Maristowe unhappy but once, and that was when there was a little quarrel between her and my grandson.'

'Ah,' said Mr. Eslick, 'they quarrelled!'

'And were reconciled immediately,' said Lady Trewavas.

'Excuse me, Mr. Eslick,' interposed Sir Hilton, impatiently, 'I look upon these questions as impertinent. They in no way conduce to the discovery of the manner in which Miss Maristowe met with her death.'

'You think so,' returned Mr. Eslick, smilingly. 'But don't you perceive, Sir Hilton, how much more agreeable it will be to the feelings of all concerned, if I can gain evidence of this young lady being likely to commit suicide? If she did not throw herself into the pool, the inference is, some one pushed or flung her in.'

'Or she may have fallen in accidentally,' said Sir Hilton.

'With her hands tied tightly together?' asked Mr. Eslick. 'Really, Sir Hilton!'

Mr. Eslick's smile as he said this was delightful; it beamed with the milk of human kindness.

'There is no proof that her hands were tied,' said Sir Hilton, hurriedly. 'The evidence of this is so slight, so conflicting, that I have not even named the matter to Mrs. Maristowe.'

'I am aware of that fact,' said Mr. Eslick, with another smile; 'but I have deemed it my duty to mention it to that

lady. And, although the rope has mysteriously disappeared—rather singular that—the chief proof rests in the black marks round the wrists of the unfortunate young lady.’

Sir Hilton had not heard of this; he turned pale, and for a moment could not recover his self-possession.

‘I cannot see the necessity of prolonging this conversation, Mr. Eslick,’ he resumed. ‘The inquest will take place to-morrow; and then, and not until then, I shall be ready to answer any questions put to me.’

A most courteous and delighted smile illumined Mr. Eslick’s countenance as he replied to this.

‘As you please, Sir Hilton,’ said he. ‘Only I am sure you can enter into my feelings, and understand how agreeable it would be to me to be able to say, that I found you eager to reply to all inquiries, and thirsting with anxiety to discover the perpetrator of this crime. For the honour of your house and your name, Sir Hilton, and your position as a magistrate, I expected to find you, of all men, most desirous to penetrate this mystery. A mystery excites all minds, Lady Trewavas, even when it is not a secret so near home as this is; but really, Sir Hilton—setting aside all higher motives—appears to have no curiosity respecting this murder. Upon my word, one might almost suppose he had found out all about it.’

The strictly amiable smile with which this was said made Sir Hilton start forward, as if to grasp the man by the throat; but Lady Trewavas drew him back with a nervous hand.

‘Your remarks are of little consequence to us, Mr. Eslick,’ she observed. ‘Sir Hilton Trewavas is too well known to need your evidence as to his honour, or his anxiety to discover the mystery of a crime perpetrated on his own domain, the victim of which is his guest and his affianced wife. Your language, sir, is an insult.’

With her thoughts upon that little turret chamber, where Olive—shunned, avoided, forsaken by all—sat alone, Lady Trewavas trembled as she spoke, and her lips quivered painfully.

‘Madam, I am delighted to hear you speak indignantly,’ said Mr. Eslick, beaming with smiles. ‘I should be so grieved to be compelled to suppose that you and Sir Hilton Trewavas were withholding information, which might materially assist the police in their efforts to discover the truth.’

'I withhold no information!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, hot with anger. 'My evidence will be forthcoming at the right time. And I desire to know by what right you came hither, when as yet there has been no inquest, and no reason seen to suspect a crime at all?'

'No reason, Sir Hilton!' cried Mr. Eslick. 'Then your brother magistrates and you differ.'

The serene, smiling man here drew from his pocket a slip of paper.

'You perceive, madam—my lady,' said he, 'your family is one of such distinction in this county that I would not presume to act without orders. I called on my way hither on the deputy-lieutenant, Sir Anthony Roskelly, and he, being willing to take the painful duty off Sir Hilton Trewavas's hands, has commissioned me to investigate the matter,—but with every delicacy, my lady, and with every regard to your wishes. Would you like to see Sir Anthony's written orders, sir?'

'I have not the honour of Sir Anthony Roskelly's acquaintance,' said Sir Hilton, thrusting the papers aside. 'His orders, I presume, are for you—not for me.'

'Have I your permission, sir, to carry them out?' said Mr. Eslick. 'It would be very painful to my feelings to place myself in antagonism with you, sir; and you see it would look bad in the eyes of the world, if we did not agree on these points. It would look very bad if I were obliged to say that Sir Hilton Trewavas threw any obstacle in the way of the police.'

Mr. Eslick's smile was seraphic in humility and kindness as he uttered this.

Indignant, sorrowful, and exasperated, Sir Hilton Trewavas felt, nevertheless, that he must submit to the pressure of circumstances around him. A ruthless, cruel murder had been committed on a young girl, his guest, his betrothed wife; and it was, therefore, not for him to cavil at the officiousness of the police, and of his brother magistrate, and enemy, and neighbour, Sir Anthony Roskelly.

There is no spite like neighbourly spite. In country towns and country places, the man who lives next door to you commonly bears you no good-will. Sir Anthony Roskelly had been in youth a lawyer's clerk, who married his master's

widow, and prospered. He traded in coal and copper, iron and tin. An energetic, unscrupulous, wily, grasping man, he grappled with fortune and held her fast. Poorer men went down before him like straws, and he took their places, and grew fat on their spoils. The world said he deserved success, and applauded him; but a few, standing out of the world, held aloof from his prosperity, half angry at it, half indignant, that such vulgar insolence, such cruel rapacity should be crowned with riches. Among these was Sir John Trewavas, Sir Hilton's grandfather. The lawyer's widow died when Sir Anthony—then Mr.—Roskelly was still young enough to woo a second wife. Elated by wealth, he proposed to Miss Tregwythan, a lady belonging to one of the oldest families in the county. She refused him, and married his enemy, Sir John Trewavas. Thenceforward there was a thorn in the rich man's side. Disappointed in his own county of marrying for birth, he went to London, and married for wealth. He espoused the heiress of a baronet brewer, and at his father-in-law's death the baronetcy was bestowed upon him. But his marriage was not happy, and domestic squabbles filled up the measure of his discontent. Adding acre to acre, he brought his fields hedge to hedge with the Trewavas estate; and all that a money-loving, soured mind could do to irritate and annoy, he did relentlessly.

This was the man who, availing himself of the time and the opportunity, now flung a missile into his enemy's household, in the shape of a police spy, who, with smiling face, spied out the weakness of the land.

True, Sir Hilton Trewavas need not have endured his presence; but, torn by anguish and horror, at times believing Olive innocent, at times guilty, and through all seeking blindly to save her, he submitted to the yoke imposed on him, fearing to bring down suspicion on her head if he appeared too unwilling to second the officious effort of Sir Anthony Roskelly to discover the murderer of Eleanor Maristowe.

'Do your duty as you think best, Mr. Eslick,' he said, in that cold, calm voice that commands respect; 'but remember that I, too, am a magistrate, and I do not approve of the manner in which Sir Anthony Roskelly has thought fit to act. In conjunction with my brother magistrate and

friend, Mr. Vigo, I shall take steps to discover the mystery of this unhappy death, if there be a mystery. Meanwhile, if you imagine you can further the ends of justice by hearing the details which Mr. Vigo and Mr. Damerel may be willing to furnish you, you are welcome to speak to those gentlemen in my justice-room. But I object to having my servants questioned and examined. They will give their testimony to-morrow at the inquest, when I shall do my utmost to bring everything fully before the coroner; and that I consider a better and clearer way to gain the truth than this un-English manner of hunting up evidence which Sir Anthony Roskelly pursues.'

Mr. Eslick beamed with smiles while he listened to this.

'Very good, Sir Hilton,' said he. 'Would you like to be present, sir, when I speak to these gentlemen?'

'No,' replied Sir Hilton.

'But I should,' said Lady Trewavas, who had hitherto remained quiet during this interview. 'I choose to be present at every conversation which an emissary of Sir Anthony Roskelly's may hold beneath my roof.'

She rose and came forward as she spoke, and Sir Hilton glanced with sorrowful pride on her noble bearing. It is sad to see a bitter misfortune fall upon the last days of the aged; but Lady Trewavas was equal to the burden. Not a shadow of her stateliness was abated, not a quiver broke her voice.

'Go, mother,' said her grandson; 'I can trust to your courage.'

CHAPTER X.

SIR HILTON listened, and heard the door of the justice-room shut; then he sought feverishly through the house for Olive. Now this smiling, cunning spy of Sir Anthony's was safely engaged, he might speak a word to this wretched girl, and urge her to fly. Why should he let his enemy triumph over him, and gloat upon the shame and agony of his household? But he could not find Olive.

'Miss Varcoe, sir?' said a servant. 'I saw her go into

the garden while you were talking to Mr. Eslick. Are you going for her, sir? Mr. Damerel will not see Mr. Eslick till she comes in.'

Sir Hilton hurried through the shrubberies, never catching a glimpse of her form till he reached the entrance to the fruit garden, and there, at the most secluded side, standing near a large pile of burning weeds, he saw her. He stood still a moment to look at the small resolute figure that, unconscious of his presence, gazed down upon the smoke and flame with large, wistful eyes; but as he drew nearer, he did not even glance at her, or approach closely.

'What are you doing here, Miss Varcoe?' he said.

His voice was not harsh, not unkind, yet it had a touch of coldness—almost of hatred—in it, that rang through Olive's heart. She shivered as she heard it, but she did not turn her face upon him, or lift her eyes from the ground, as she replied, in a quiet way, cold as his own, 'I am waiting for the gardener. I have sent him to gather me some flowers.'

'What a time to wish for flowers!' said Sir Hilton.

Olive was silent. The burning pile of weeds stood between them, and the crackling flames and their wreath of smoke went up like a pillar of separation. Sir Hilton did not cross it to approach her.

'You had better not wait for the flowers, Miss Varcoe,' said he. 'My enemy has found me out. Sir Anthony Roskelly has sent the superintendent of police here: he is speaking to Damerel. I hear that Mr. Vigo refuses to utter a word, except in your presence. Will you go up to the house?'

Did Sir Hilton see the crimson flush of fear, and then the dead whiteness on her face? She clasped her hands together, not with the old passion, but with a nervous restraining of herself, pitiful to see.

'I cannot go just yet,' she replied. 'I want to stay here a little while.'

'In this smoke?' said Sir Hilton. 'It will be more prudent not to show any fear, any avoidance——'

This last was said in a low voice; and leaning forward to speak it, he could not but see her face. It was deathly white, but there was something in it he could not read—a something, half scorn, half sorrow.

'I want no advice, Sir Hilton Trewavas,' said Olive. 'It will be more prudent in you to leave me. Think of yourself.'

Sir Hilton's face flushed. Was she daring to call him selfish and a coward? Great Heavens! if she were innocent, what horrible injustice he had done her in his thoughts.

'You want no counsel and no friendship?' said he. 'Do you guess what people are saying—are thinking?'

'I guess all,' she replied. 'Will you go away, Sir Hilton?'

He hesitated, feeling an indignant heat again within his blood. Why would she not say that she was innocent, and spare him all this shame and horror!

'Have you nothing to say to me before I go?' he asked.

'Nothing,' was the reply.

As the words passed her lips, Olive glanced up at Sir Hilton with an appealing agony in her eyes, and saw his look of anxiety change to disappointment—change to loathing and horror.

'When this is over,' he said, 'I shall leave England, perhaps for years, perhaps for ever. And after to-day circumstances may occur to render speech between you and me impossible. If you have a word to utter, say it now.'

'Go away! go away!' she cried, impatiently; 'you try me too much.'

'You will say nothing?' he continued.

'Yes, I will say this,' she replied, clasping her hands together tightly. 'Do not leave England on my account. I shall soon spare you the pain of my presence. I stay here only to answer any accusation brought against me; then I leave Trewavas for ever.'

'Good heavens!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'And you think to escape—you who would not fly this morning, when there was time?'

'The offer came from you,' she replied. 'I could not accept honour, safety, friendship from you, much less a cowardly flight.'

'It is only innocence that can stay and face justice,' he said. 'Olive, are you innocent? Speak! for the love of mercy, speak!'

His passion had broken bounds, and burst forth in voice and gesture as he spoke. Olive did not answer him. A dead silence was creeping through all his veins, a dead

silence blanching lip and cheek, and then Olive sank upon her knees, with head bowed down and hidden in her hands. For one horrible moment of agony Sir Hilton thought she was going to confess; but she sprang up, as though strengthened by that short failing of her courage, and showed him her face, not tear-stained by remorse, but proud and defiant, though sorrowful.

'Go!' she said; 'I will never bring shame and disgrace upon your house. Do not fear it. You desire to hear me say that I am innocent, because I am beneath the Trewavas roof, because I have Trewavas blood in my veins—simply for that; nothing more. I am sorry, for your pride's sake, that I can tell you nothing. Do go away,' she added, with a burst of her old petulant, imperative manner. 'I hate your questions. You annoy me. I want to be alone.'

'You have not answered me,' said he. 'Will you answer me?'

'No, never!' cried Olive, fiercely. 'Will you leave me alone, Sir Hilton? Can you not see I am mad, miserable, and longing for solitude?'

He would have left her, but at this moment there was a footstep on the gravel, and Olive's white face turned so deathly at the sound that he stood still, uncertain and alarmed. It was only the gardener, holding in his hand a bunch of lovely flowers, all white.

'There is no jessamine here,' said Olive, taking them in her trembling fingers. 'Go, Simon; do gather me a spray or two of jessamine, and take Sir Hilton with you—he is wanted at the house.'

'And so are you, miss,' said the old man. 'The folks were asking me just now where you were. You'll pass the jessamine bush as you go in, miss.'

He took his spade in his hand, and would have turned the heap of burning weeds, but Olive thrust him back.

'Will you stifle us with smoke?' she cried, angrily.

Her eager manner sent a thrill of strange suspicion through Sir Hilton's mind. He caught up suddenly a garden rake lying on the ground, and thrust it among the pile of embers, Olive's eyes being fastened on him all the while in terror. A bright flame burst up as he stirred the heap, and among the weeds there lay a coil, half dust, half ashes, which scattered as the rake touched it.

‘What is that?’ said the old gardener, bending forward; ‘a dead snake, be it.’

‘It is nothing—only a weed,’ said Olive, faintly.

Sir Hilton threw down the rake, and, with a sickness on him like death, he leant against a tree speechless. Was this the missing cord? and how had she gained it? Had she crept up to the wood by a quicker way, and with love speeches and promises bribed young Vigo to give it into her treacherous hand? Was it to burn it here she had sent the gardener away under the pretence of wanting flowers; and was it for this she had striven to rid herself, too, of him? It was too much. Let her lover, the boy Vigo, save her now if he would. For him, he would never more stir a finger to keep her from the murderer’s doom. He would do his duty. To-morrow, at the inquest, he would give his evidence truly, as became a man, even if grief should kill him. Pity should no more make him false to justice. He had wronged this girl, because as a boy he had loved her, and as a man, being proud, prudent, and worldly, he had forsaken her for a fitter choice. But was that a reason why he should screen this great, this horrible crime? Yes, Heaven help him! it was a reason; because love for him had driven her to murder. But she had gone to Vigo, trusted Vigo—let him help her now.

Olive’s voice broke upon his terrible thoughts—Olive’s voice, indignant and angry.

‘Are you satisfied?’ she said, clenching her small hand with passion. ‘You would not go away. I only prayed to be left alone. Have I asked anything else of you? Have I accepted any help or succour from you? I will not have it. I will die a thousand deaths rather than let you help me to live. I will give my life in drops of blood, if I choose; but take it from your ungenerous hand—no, never!’

Her eyes flashed upon him as she spoke, and her words fell in rapid indignation from her lips.

‘Quarrelling again!’ mumbled the old gardener. ‘Miss Olive was always a poor temper, but I can’t make head nor tail to this row.’

Both Sir Hilton and Olive heard him. He had understood nothing then, and there was no suspicion in his dense mind. A heavy sigh of relief burst forth from Olive’s bosom.

'Do as you will,' she said to Sir Hilton, in a low voice, as she passed him. 'Give words to the foolish shadows and suspicions of your mind if you choose—there is no proof,' she added, glancing triumphantly at the flaming pile; 'a weed—a trailing vine-stem—is not a snake, or worse than a snake, except to you.'

She swept on proudly, but, as she passed him, she saw Sir Hilton start back, and shrink from contact even with her robe; and when the trees hid her from his sight, her pride drooped, her eyes filled with tears, and her face grew wan with the shadow of a great pain.

With the flowers in her hand, Olive went straight towards the justice-room. At the door of the hall, pacing to and fro, flushed, restless, and excited, she met Charles Vigo. He seized her hand and kissed it, holding it in an impassioned, earnest grasp, and bending on her the honest light of his deep blue eyes.

'You will explain everything, Olive,' he said, eagerly; 'they are mad to talk of you as they do. Promise me you will explain all.'

'All I can tell I will,' replied Olive, smiling mournfully.

'One word,' said the young man, eagerly. 'You will give me leave to say I met you in the wood? You will release me from my promise?'

Olive hesitated, and remained in thought a moment.

'No, I cannot,' she said, earnestly. 'You must keep your word with me.'

'But I have already betrayed you,' said Charles Vigo, turning pale as death. 'I have told Damerel in confidence that I met you.'

'I am sorry indeed to hear that,' she replied; 'but I believe mere hearsay is not permitted in evidence; so if you yourself do not witness against me, his testimony will not avail.'

'I witness against you!' he cried. 'Never, Olive! But why not clear yourself? Why let so horrible a suspicion rest on you for a moment?'

'I cannot clear myself,' she said, in a low voice. 'I can escape; that is all I can hope to do. And without your help I dare scarcely hope that.'

Charles Vigo gasped for breath. What was she saying?—

what was she going to do? His senses swam, and he saw this pale, resolute, passionate girl as in a mist, a halo of fiery suffering about her head. His eyes, blinded or cleared by love—which was it?—saw no guilt, no sea of blood, round the small trembling hands clasped pleadingly on her bosom.

‘Olive!’ he cried, passionately, ‘I will not stand by and see you sacrifice——’

But at this moment the door of the justice-room opened, and the smiling face of Mr. Eslick beamed out upon them, newly creamed, as it were, by the shining milk of human kindness within him.

‘Ah! here is the young lady at last,’ said he. ‘Miss Varcoe, I believe?’

Olive bowed in silence.

‘Perhaps you are aware, Miss Varcoe,’ he continued, ‘that I am sent here by Sir Anthony Roskelly to investigate the circumstances of Miss Maristowe’s mysterious death? For the honour of the county, all our magistrates are anxious to have the matter cleared up quickly. Mr. Damerel has been giving me some very interesting information, which I think will materially assist us. He and Lady Trewavas have been waiting for you for some time. Will you enter and take a seat?’

Without a word, Olive obeyed him. Young Vigo followed her. On entering, she glanced for a moment at the aged lady, between whom and herself so many bitter words had passed. The sight of her grey hair, her worn face, with the quiver of pain passing over it, seemed to give Olive some unaccountable strength; a smile broke faintly on her lip, then left it trembling, but not with weakness, and she took her seat more calmly, more self-possessed than any there, except the smiling man, who watched her as a tiger watches his prey.

‘Before you speak, Miss Varcoe,’ he observed, ‘I am bound to caution you not to say anything to criminate yourself. I grieve to say Mr. Damerel’s statement throws very grave suspicion on you.’

Olive’s face flushed, and she turned a scornful look on the embarrassed Mr. Damerel.

‘May I be permitted,’ said she, ‘to hear what you have said concerning me; Mr. Damerel?’

Like a true Englishman, strong in his ideas of duty, he

conquered the feelings that rose up hot within him, and spoke manfully.

'I have made a short statement of the painful truth, Miss Varcoe,' said he, 'namely, that you were seen in the wood a short time before the murder, and after it; you were heard using threatening and violent language to Miss Maristowe; you were known to be her enemy; you were anxious to hinder her marriage with Sir Hilton Trewavas, for reasons of your own, but, above all, because the marriage would deprive you of your home at Trewavas; and, lastly, when she was found dead, her wrists were tied with a silk cord, of a peculiar make, which you were seen that day wearing as a girdle.'

'And who is the person who saw and heard all this?' asked Olive, unfalteringly. 'Is it you, Mr. Damerel?'

'I saw the cord on Miss Maristowe's wrists this morning at six o'clock, when I drew her dead from the pool at the Lady's Bower,' he replied. 'I decline, and have declined, to say who saw you in the wood. I leave the person with whom you had an interview to speak for himself.'

'Which he will certainly do, now the young lady is present,' observed Mr. Eslick, rubbing his hands softly together, and turning his face on young Vigo, with an expression of amiable contentment.

'Pray do not answer for a moment, Mr. Vigo,' said Olive, quickly. 'Mr. Damerel, may I ask at what hour this unknown person had an interview with me in the wood?'

'I do not know the exact hour,' he replied; 'but it was between three and half-past seven.'

'Yesterday?' said Olive. — 'Yesterday, Miss Varcoe,' he replied.

'Then, Lady Trewavas,' said Olive, rising, with a proud flush on her face, 'I call upon you to refute the malicious and cruel suspicion which this statement of Mr Damerel's brings down on my head. You know that I was locked in my chamber yesterday from three until past eight, and the key of my room was in your possession the whole of that time. Your maid, Tamson, released me at that hour, and brought me some dinner, as, my door being locked, I was, of course, unable to present myself at the family dinner.'

The amazement with which Damerel heard her, the astonishment and pain with which young Vigo listened, and

the relief that lightened Lady Trewavas's heart, cannot be depicted. As for Mr. Eslick, he forgot to smile, and he picked his twitching lips with a fat forefinger.

'It is true,' said Lady Trewavas, steadily. 'In the dreadful excitement of the time I had forgotten this fact. It can be proved by my son John, who locked Miss Varcoe in her room, and by the maid who released her.'

'And did the key never leave your possession, madam?' she was asked.

'Never!' she replied.

As this short dialogue went on, and Mr. Eslick kept his sharp green eyes fixed on Lady Trewavas, a momentary glance passed between Olive and Charles Vigo. It was a look of great pain on his part, of triumph on hers. He grew paler and paler, but her cheeks were flushed with pride and excitement. Mr. Damerel saw the look, and, full of sorrow for his friend, and stifling with indignation at Olive's wickedness, and her power over him, he lost his prudence, and cried out angrily, 'I do not believe a word of this. I ask you, Miss Varcoe, direct, were you not in the wood yesterday?'

'Sir!' exclaimed Olive, 'I recognise no right in you to ask me questions. If any traducer ventures to accuse me of this crime, I shall answer through my counsel; he will know how to fling away the shadows which your malice throws around me.'

With his clenched hand resting on the table, and his face quivering with emotion, Charles Vigo heard her, and wondered. Mr. Eslick, growing more and more interested, regained his smile, and turned his sharp eyes in a mild, blinking way, very much like a leopard, from one to the other of the agitated party.

'Vigo! my dear Vigo!' cried Mr. Damerel, 'I appeal to your honour, your sense of duty! Remember your promise to me when we found that poor murdered girl this morning. You would denounce the murderer, you would do justice, you said.'

'And so I will,' he replied, 'so help me, Heaven!'

The clenched hand that had rested on the table was raised in the air, and came down again with a force that resounded through the room.

The flush died from Olive's face, she grew pale as ashes, and her eyes fell before Mr. Eslick's gaze.

'We must all do our duty, however painful,' observed that gentleman, with a serene expression of goodness. 'Mr. Vigo, I am pleased to see you so eager in the cause of justice. Perhaps you will have no objection to tell me how far your statement corroborates Lady Trewavas.'

'I have every objection,' replied the sturdy Charles Vigo. 'I object to answer any question put to me by a confounded spy, sent here by an enemy to annoy a distressed family. If you choose, on your own responsibility, Mr. Eslick, to arrest any innocent member of this family, I shall appear at the examination, and answer any question the magistrates put. I shall also open my lips fully to-morrow at the inquest. Until then, I bid you good day.'

Olive listened to him with parted lips, and as he concluded she sprang to his side, and laid her hand for a moment on his arm. The smile with which Mr. Eslick observed this was seraphic.

'Ah, your friend defends you wonderfully well, Miss Varcoe,' he said. 'I hope you will live to reward him. I am not going to arrest any one on my own responsibility to-night, Mr. Vigo. We can afford, I think, to leave it till after the inquest; meanwhile, madam, I will telegraph to Sir Anthony Roskelly the result of my inquiry here, and, if you will permit me, I will await his reply. I am sorry, as a respectable man, merely doing my duty, to be denounced as a spy; but Mr. Vigo's motive is so transparent that I excuse him.'

The manner in which Mr. Eslick smiled and rubbed his hands during this speech was horrible; but the way in which he blinked, fastening his eyes on Olive with a cruel fascination and mild cruelty, was more horrible still. He seemed a snake waiting placidly for his victim to fall into his coils. He quitted them in great benevolence and pity, as though bestowing his blessing upon them in a paternal and forgiving spirit. But all, except Damerel, felt as he closed the door that he had done it like a gaoler; and in his own mind he was busy fastening about them the chains and bolts of a dungeon.

'I have shut that door upon a strange lot,' he said to himself as he crossed the hall. 'If those four could see each

other's spirits, there'd be a queer scene. She isn't deceiving that blue-eyed young man; he is sticking to her because he is in love, but she is taking in the old lady nicely. She was shut up in her room yesterday just about as much as I was. I must find out the geography of this old house, and see how she escaped. There's a low window, a ladder, another door, or something. Ah! she can't take me in. I was born in a menagerie, and bred in a lunatic asylum. I'm used to these creatures—they are all alike; and they must be treated with kindness—great kindness. Humanity!—that's the grand thing! And, for the sake of humanity, we must sometimes use a red-hot iron bar, a straight-waistcoat, or—a gallows.'

Very self-satisfied, and full of humanity, Mr. Eslick betook himself to the servants' hall, where the quiet inspector awaited him, whose intelligence and manners were quite of another order.

'Inspector, you see how it is here,' said Mr. Eslick, pompously.

'I think I do, sir,' he replied.

'Very well,' said Mr. Eslick. 'The less we say the better. I am going to write a message for Sir Anthony, which one of the men must take to the Telegraph Office.' He wrote it rapidly, and handed it to the inspector to read. 'You approve of that?' said he. 'You are quite of my opinion, I suppose?'

The man read it, handed it back, and nodded assent. The message ran thus:—

'One of the family—can put hands on the right party at any time. Shall we arrest now or to-morrow?'

The smiles that ran rippling over Mr. Eslick's face as he folded and sealed this were a sight to see.

'I think the money and the place are pretty sure to me now,' he said to himself. 'This is more than Sir Anthony bargained for, so I shall of course expect more. This is a very nice little circumstance to happen to one's enemy, this is—murder, publicity, disgrace; all his private affairs and feelings overhauled by the newspapers! Really one wouldn't wish it better if one had arranged it all oneself—no, upon my word, not if one had arranged it all oneself, upon the very kindest principles.'

Night and darkness fell down upon the ancient mansion of Trewavas, bringing sleep to few, peace to none. The day

closed in storm, with a north-west wind, rolling in upon the beach a heavy sea, which echoed and thundered far inland. In the sky, dark clouds, hanging low, whence fell a continuous downpour of thick rain, pitilessly beating on summer flower and green leaf, rustling mournfully in the woods, laying low the cianthus and the myrtle round the Lady's Bower, falling on the pool like passionate tears for lost love, and beating fiercely against the windows of the old house, where watchers wept for the dead.

As the darkness grew intense, as the winds rose, and the rain fell, a fear and a gloom that the sunshine had held back crept through corridor and hall, gathering the servants into groups, and chilling the hearts of the stoutest. Each one knew that a murderer hid amongst them; each one knew that he must sleep that night near the tortured spirit and haunted conscience of guilt. And as the rains descended, and the winds beat upon that ancient roof—now for the first time, after ages of power and pride, sheltering a felon—white faces gathered together, and voices whispered with horror of the cruel hand that had taken so young, so innocent, so fair a life.

The desire in the hearts of all that the murderer should be discovered and taken grew in intensity, and the suspicious gathering like shadows round the figure of Olive crept closer to her, pointing her out as a mark for indignation and loathing.

'She was always fierce—an evil-tempered little thing,' said one.

'And she hated Miss Eleanor,' said another.

'And she certainly loved Sir Hilton,' whispered a third. 'Ah, that's the secret of it—love is at the bottom of all.'

A selfish feeling of uneasiness pervaded the servants' hall. One of them might be suspected, unless the right person was found.

'Why don't they take her?' asked Mrs. Maristowe's maid, angrily.

'Because she was locked up all yesterday afternoon; therefore she couldn't be in the wood,' said a man-servant, one of Olive's few supporters.

'Don't believe that tale,' returned Tamson, lifting her pert nose victoriously in the air. 'I went to her door ever so

many times, and couldn't hear nobody stirring, and I knocked and called, and got no answer. She got out somehow, I can tell you. There's they little old stone stairs; nobody hasn't thought of they yet.'

'The door at the bottom is always locked,' said the man.

'You never mind,' said Tamson; 'I'll swear she was out. I can tell something, if I like.'

'What is it, Tamson? Tell us, Tamson, dear, do.'

Eager eyes pressed round the girl, greedy for the words that should assure them of Olive's guilt.

'Well, it don't matter,' said Tamson. 'I've got to tell it to-morrow at the inquest, so I may as well let you know what it is. Her black silk dress was wet, as if it had been dragged through a pool. What do you think of that? And that isn't all: she tried to light a fire last night in her room to dry her things. Ask Phœbe there about it.'

Phœbe was a girl who sometimes waited on Olive, being too coarse and too great a rustic to be deemed worthy of waiting on any one else. Being thus appealed to, Phœbe lifted her face stupidly from her red arms, and began to cry.

'I wish I hadn't told,' she said; and down went the honest face again, sobbing more piteously than before.

'Don't be a fool, you great gawk! You must tell everything, or go to prison yourself,' snapped Tamson fiercely. 'And moreover, she burnt a heap of things last night—old letters and papers; Phœbe found the ashes in the grate.'

'Oh Tamson, Tamson!' cried Phœbe; 'I never thought you'd go and make mischief of what I told you. What's the harm of burning letters?'

'What's the harm, indeed!' broke in Mrs. Maristow's maid. 'Why, she must have had something to hide, else she wouldn't have done it. On such a night, when we were all sitting up frightened and miserable, she takes to innocent sorting and burning of old letters—don't tell me such trash as that! I'll never sleep in this house again if she isn't took to prison. I'm afraid of getting killed myself, I am. Them as does one murder can do two.'

Thus the lorn household discoursed, while policemen slumbered in the kitchen, or paced through the rain on the gravelled walks without.

CHAPTER XI.

THROUGH the pitiless storm, through the rain, wind-driven, beating against their resolute faces, two men rode at a hand-gallop, slacking not their pace for hill or dale. One of these was Sir Hilton Trewavas, the other was Dr. Burton. Both rode silently, scarce exchanging a word, though they kept their horses well together. Journeying as they were along the north coast of Cornwall, they met but rarely some solitary wayfarer, who, with a kindly 'Good night,' stood aside to let them pass, or stared in wonder after their fast-retreating figures. The country was wild and sombre. Great hills and bleak treeless moors swept on from point to point, and ever and anon, between the pauses of the storm, there broke upon the ear the dull thud and roar of some great breaker rolling in, in mighty fury, upon the rock-bound coast. At times the spray, dashing far inland, touched the lips of the riders with salt, as the wind brought the foam of the sea in its shriek and whistle, as it howled around them.

Down into a deep glen, the rocky sides of which were clothed with fir, and elm, and ash, the horsemen descended. Here the storm lulled, and the rain fell with a softer touch, while the scent of leaf and flower mingled with the briny air of the sea.

'We are nearly arrived,' said Sir Hilton to his companion. 'He lives there, in yonder house gleaming with a solitary light. It is as lonely a spot as any in Cornwall, but he likes it. After the din of life, silence suits him. Speak frankly to him; it is useless to hold anything back.'

The tone of pain in which Sir Hilton spoke moved Dr. Burton with pity.

'My dear friend,' said he, 'I trust that what I have to say may not appear to him so conclusive as it does to us.'

'I have no hope,' replied Sir Hilton, gloomily.

They reached a tiny lodge as they spoke, honeysuckle-covered, and a woman, in answer to their summons, admitted them within the gate.

'Is Mr. Heriot at home?' asked Sir Hilton.

‘He is at the house, sir,’ replied the woman; ‘but I cannot tell if he will see strangers so late.’

‘Thanks. We will try to see him,’ said Sir Hilton: and they rode on slowly over the sounding gravel.

Mr. Heriot had been one of the most eminent of Old Bailey counsel. Harder and drier than an Egyptian mummy, he had lived through work that might have killed a camel, and wisely retiring while there were still a few drops of blood left in his parched body, he had come down into lonely Cornwall, and bought himself a house by the sounding sea. An old bachelor, loving no one, and believing the whole world a nest of thieves, his life might appear to some solitary and cheerless; but he enjoyed it. Above all, he delighted in his sense of security from interruption, work, and noise. No faint echo of the toil and din of his old life could reach him here; no thieves and lawyers could break in upon his rest.

‘Ah,’ said he, in a sharp, quick voice, ‘I knew this house had one great fault—it is too near London. You have just arrived, I suppose, with Fish Street Hill in one pocket, and the Monument in the other. What do you want with me, and at such a time of night?’

‘I am not from London,’ said Sir Hilton, pointing to his card. ‘I am almost a neighbour, Mr. Heriot.’

‘A neighbour without neighbourliness, Sir Hilton Trewavas,’ returned he. ‘Why, Hodge the hedger is more of a neighbour to me than you.’

Sir Hilton’s pride was broken. The hour was come when he could be sorry he had not made a friend of this hard lawyer.

‘Mr. Heriot, I am but a young man,’ he said, modestly, ‘and you are old. You must make allowances for me, as age allows must for youth. My life has been a blunder hitherto—a sad one; and you see me now bowed beneath a bitter burden of grief, and come to implore help from you—you to whom I have never shown the civility and kindness of a neighbour. I accept your rebuke. Will you accept my apology? and, more generous than I, will you hear my trouble, and help me?’

Even the hardest old age, having sight and hearing, is touched by the wondrous charm of youth in man or woman.

It was not Sir Hilton's words, though they were soft and courteous, but his bearing, his voice, his look, and all that nameless magic which pertains to the presence of some favoured few, that broke the crust of the old lawyer's hardness, and made him extend a parchment hand, and say, in a voice having the ghost of the cordiality of his dead youth in it, 'Not a word more, Sir Hilton. What's your trouble? It must be a queer one indeed if it be anything I can help you out of.'

'Is it possible you have not heard the dreadful news?' asked Dr. Burton.

'I have heard nothing,' replied Mr. Heriot. 'I dare my people to tell me any news. I live here that I may never know anything that goes on outside my garden.'

'Then we must tell you,' said Dr. Burton; and in a few words he laid before him the facts of Eleanor's disappearance, and the finding of the corpse in the pool.

'Is it an accident, a suicide, or a murder?' asked the old barrister, his eyes gleaming with the ancient fire of unforgotten fights.

'A murder,' replied Dr. Burton, in a low voice.

With eyes full of pity he glanced at Sir Hilton's agitated face; Mr. Heriot's keen gaze followed, and his brows were slightly raised in curiosity or surprise.

'Stop!' said he; 'this is no common murder, I suppose—no ruffian, no tramp, no robber? Then what is it?'—'Jealousy,' replied Dr. Burton.

'Whose?' demanded the lawyer.

'A woman's,' replied Dr. Burton.

'Tush!' said the old barrister. 'A woman would never have the strength to drown a rival like a dog. She would have poisoned her.'

'And so she did,' said Dr. Burton, lowering his voice.

The whisper ran through the room, and Sir Hilton hid his eyes with his hand as Dr. Burton drew from his pocket a small phial, and laid it on the table.

'Chloroform!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot.

'Yes,' said Dr. Burton. 'You understand now, how a slight, weak girl could with ease fling a senseless, defenceless form into the water. Thus too, unresisted, she was able to tie her victim's hands. So, even had the shock restored her senses, she would have had no chance for life.'

'Ah!' said the lawyer; 'and how could she tie her hands? Cords don't grow in woods.'

'She wore one round her waist for a girdle,' replied Dr. Burton. 'She took that.'

'She did!' said the lawyer, with a look of surprise. 'Then she is either a monstrous fool, or else she did not commit the murder at all.'

Sir Hilton started up, with a momentary gladness on his face, which passed like a shadow.

'Thank you for those words, Mr. Heriot,' said he; 'but I fear you are mistaken. Tell the rest, Burton. I cannot.'

'The cord has disappeared,' continued the doctor. 'A man who loves her watched the body. When his friend and the police came, the cord was gone. The watcher affirmed he had not touched it—and he is a man above suspicion; yet, infatuated by love, he may have permitted her to take it.'

'What proof have you?' asked Mr. Heriot.

Then Sir Hilton spoke in a husky voice.

'To-day, at three o'clock, I saw her in the garden, standing by a pile of smoking weeds. She had sent away the gardener; she tried to rid herself of me. When the man returned, and would have stirred the pile, she pushed him back. I seized a rake, and thrust it among the ashes, and then I saw a cord—a coil that went to dust as I touched it.'

Mr. Heriot was silent. It was a dead, blank silence, having in it a world of conviction, and to Sir Hilton a world of hopelessness.

'Then it would appear,' said Mr. Heriot, 'the young man whom she has infatuated hid the cord, and gave it to her in the course of the day. Was he at Trewavas? Could he have done this?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Hilton.

'And how was Miss Maristowe her rival?' continued Mr. Heriot. 'Did she, too, love this young man?'

'No,' said Sir Hilton, 'she was engaged to me. She was to be my wife next week.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the lawyer. 'Where is the rivalry, then? Who is this girl whom you accuse of murder?'

Sir Hilton could not answer; his voice died on his lips, and Dr. Burton spoke.

'We are come to you to entreat your help, Mr. Heriot,'

said he ; ' we speak frankly, openly, relying on your honour, trusting to you implicitly. We know that to enable you to help us we must give you our entire confidence.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Heriot, gravely.

'Your skill, your learning, your experience, can be of infinite aid, if you will but use it in our behalf——'

'Pass all that, and go on with the story,' interposed Mr. Heriot, in his cold, calm voice.

'I obey you,' said Dr. Burton. 'The lady we accuse is Miss Olive Varcoe, Sir Hilton's cousin—a second cousin. She was an ambitious girl, and, until his engagement, she hoped that he would marry her.'

'Burton, be just!' broke in Sir Hilton, passionately. 'Olive loved me! Heaven forgive me, she loved me with her whole heart.'

'Then the rivalry and jealousy were between her and the murdered girl on your account?' observed Mr. Heriot.

Oh, the agony in the young manly face! the pain and shame struggling to hide, and breaking forth in trembling lip and shrinking eyes.

'Mr. Heriot,' said he, 'I am not a vicious man, believe me, or a vain man, or a fool; and yet this horror has fallen upon me. It has come through the sins that the world engenders; it has come through carelessness, selfishness, pride, blindness of heart.'

'Stop!' said the lawyer. 'Tell me all that by-and-by. Let me know now where the chloroform was found.'

'In the pocket of the dress she wore on the day of the murder,' resumed Dr. Burton. 'A servant, who dislikes her, found it, and brought it to me this morning.'

'And this made you examine the body, with a view to detecting chloroform?' said Mr. Heriot.—'Yes,' replied the doctor.

'And, as a medical man, you believe that it was used?' continued Mr. Heriot.

'Yes,' said he; 'but, with an autopsy, I could——'

'Never mind technicalities, and medical terms, and proofs,' exclaimed Mr. Heriot—'keep them for the coroner. I take your word without them. What other links are there in the evidence?'

Rapidly Dr. Burton repeated Mr. Damerel's statements

respecting Olive's interview with Eleanor in the Lady's Bower; to this he added many of those threads and shadows, small in themselves, but weighty when woven into one; and, lastly, he detailed the servant's story of the dress being wet, as though dragged through water, and the finding ashes of burnt letters in the grate.

'Strange to say, I have reason to believe these burnt papers were leaves from my brother's journal,' said Sir Hilton, 'for he found it torn; and, with great difficulty, I have got him to confess to me, that the missing pages related to conversations he had held with her respecting Miss Maristowe.'

'Then your brother will be a reluctant witness?' remarked Mr. Heriot.

'He will indeed,' replied Sir Hilton. 'He and Olive were great friends.'

'And this young man, who loves her, will be an unwilling witness also?' continued the lawyer.

'There is no doubt of that,' said Dr. Burton; 'and there are other circumstances in her favour. Her defence is, that she was locked in her room from three until eight, Lady Trewavas having the key of the door.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Heriot, looking up with sudden and renewed interest, 'this complicates the case amazingly. She must be a clever girl. Go on; explain all.'

Upon this the doctor sketched the plan of the room, with the closet, the spiral stairs, the locked door at the foot, and the library window close at hand, opening on the unfrequented shrubbery.

'But the door is always locked,' observed Sir Hilton, 'and the key kept in the table drawer. And it was there last night at nine o'clock—it was there this morning.'

'But you know not where it was between three and eight yesterday?' inquired Mr. Heriot.

'No,' replied Sir Hilton; 'but I never missed it from the drawer.'

'Well,' resumed Mr. Heriot, 'I presume you have laid before me now all the evidence which will be put before the coroner to-morrow, and you wish me to tell you the result?'

'Yes,' returned Dr. Burton.

Sir Hilton did not answer, but, leaning his brow upon his

hand, he gazed into the parchment face of the lawyer, with a world of agony in his eyes.

‘In spite of Lady Trewavas’s evidence of the locked door of the chamber, and in spite of the favouring testimony of unwilling witnesses, the result of the inquest will be a verdict of wilful murder against Olive Varcoe,’ said Mr. Heriot.

‘And then?’ asked Sir Hilton, gasping for breath.

‘And then she will be tried at the sessions,’ replied Mr. Heriot, ‘and——’

‘Good Heavens! condemned?’ exclaimed Sir Hilton.

‘No, acquitted,’ said the lawyer. ‘She is very young, very pretty, and a woman; the jury won’t hang her. There is only circumstantial evidence against her, and some of that doubtful. At her trial she will get the full benefit of that doubt. And by that time, her lover—how do you call him, Vigo?—will have made up his mind to swear through thick and thin for her. He’ll deny having seen her in the wood, and he’ll contradict his friend Damerel respecting that cord, though if I were her counsel I would not let him. The cord staggers me—a clever woman would not advertise her crime like that. I should make a point of it, to prove her innocent. There is no proof she had, or ever had, the key of the ancient staircase; so the fact of her having been locked in her room being proved by your brother and grandmother, and there being no proof forthcoming of her having got out, she must necessarily be acquitted. You tell me she asserts that Mr. Damerel’s statement is false, and she met Vigo in the wood, not yesterday, but the day before. Now, this will be her weak point, and his also; so, if you want to get her convicted, I tell you what you must do.’

‘Convict her!’ interrupted Sir Hilton. ‘Oh, Mr. Heriot, I am come to you to ask what I can do to save her—what I can do to spare her the agony of a trial, the shame and misery of a prison?’

‘Is that it?’ said Mr. Heriot, fixing his keen eyes on the unhappy young man. ‘Do? Why, nothing. You can’t save her.’

‘But I must—I will!’ exclaimed Sir Hilton. ‘My senses leave me at the thought of seeing her perish.’

‘You believe her guilty?’ said Mr. Heriot.

‘Heaven help me!—yes!’ he replied.

'Then she deserves to be hanged,' said the lawyer. 'She'll be mighty lucky in getting off with a few months' imprisonment.'

'But the shame, the agony!' said Sir Hilton; 'she will die under it. Oh, Mr. Heriot, tell me what I can do. Must I give evidence to-morrow?'

'You cannot escape that,' he replied.

'But I shall not speak of the burnt cord,' said Sir Hilton. 'It is only a shadow, a suspicion in my mind. I have no right to name it. You will not betray me? I can rely on Dr. Burton.'

'You need not fear,' said Mr. Heriot; 'I shall say nothing. I never talk when I am not paid for it. If you want to get this girl off, I can give you the address of a first-rate man, who will do it if any one can.'

Sir Hilton scarcely seemed to hear him. He leant back in his chair, pale and exhausted.

'Let him rest a minute,' said Dr. Burton, in a low voice, as Mr. Heriot wrote down the name and address of a celebrated counsel. 'You understand, his desire is to avoid a trial. It is his bride who is murdered; her family and all the world will expect him to aid in convicting, not saving, the accused. His is a hard position.'

'It is an awful mess,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Why did he not get the girl out of the way this morning?'

'He tried it,' replied Dr. Burton; 'she would not go.'

'What!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot, in a quick, sharp whisper.

'No; she was proud and sulky,' said Dr. Burton, 'and would not, she said, accept anything from his hands.'

The keen glance that fell from Mr. Heriot's eyes on Sir Hilton's pale face might have startled him, had he seen it.

'Ah,' said he—'and yet she loves Sir Hilton, you think?'

'Or she wanted to be Lady Trewavas,' said Dr. Burton.

'Very likely,' said Mr. Heriot. 'In that case she may love Vigo.'

The doctor thought within himself for a moment, and then was obliged to answer, frankly, 'No, I think not.'

Again Mr. Heriot's glance wandered to the young, worn face, regarding him so wearily.

'Sir Hilton,' said he, 'I am going to ask you an abrupt question. You need not answer it if you don't like. Were you much attached to Miss Maristowe?'

A swift flush went up to Sir Hilton's brow, leaving his face, as it passed away, wan and pale as a dead man's.

'You have asked me a hard question, Mr. Heriot,' he replied. 'To answer truly, I must say both yes and no. This may seem strange, but it is true. If I dared assert it, I would say it is possible for the heart to hold two loves, both different, and yet both being love. Let any man examine his soul, and say whether there has not been a period in his existence when such an anomaly has presented itself to his own experience. I liked Olive from a child, but, as I grew older, reason and prudence drew me from her side. It was for her own sake, at first, that I cooled towards her. I saw that my regard was drawing on her the unjust dislike of Lady Trewavas. My grandmother is in most things a kind, sensible woman; but in this her pride or her affection for me rendered her cruel, almost vindictive. She gradually lowered Olive's position in the household—meaning to degrade her in my eyes, and render it impossible for me to marry her. She did this in the sight of strangers and acquaintances, galling the girl often to the quick. To spare her further pain, I kept much away from Trewavas, and when I was there I paid as much attention as possible to others. For the last two or three years Lady Trewavas has been careful that, whenever I returned home, I should meet Eleanor and her mother. You will not think me a coxcomb if I say, that I saw Miss Maristowe liked me. She was very beautiful; she combined, in her person and position, every requisite that my friends or I could desire in a wife. I proposed to her, and was accepted. I did so, loving her, for her gentleness had greatly attracted me. In fact, I was fascinated for a time, and it was not till my engagement had lasted a month or two that I began to feel there was something tame and insipid about her extreme softness. I fought against this reaction. I was resolved to fulfil my promises, and, through all, I was determined to reinstate Olive in her proper position in my house, and make her the companion and sister of my wife.'

'Ah—indeed!' said the old counsellor, drily.

'Eleanor's unfortunate jealousy interposed,' continued Sir Hilton, 'and I found myself obliged to consent to Olive's expulsion from Trewavas. This was the last blow that

embittered that unhappy girl into madness and murder. I have told you the whole history now, Mr. Heriot. You will understand my grief—my compunction; you will see why I wish to save her.'

'I see the girl has been rather hardly treated among you all,' said Mr. Heriot. 'The truth is, you have jilted her, and your grandmother has ill-used her. Now, if you will take my advice, you will get her safe out of the way till this affair has blown over, or till the right man turns up.'

'Who? What do you mean?' said Sir Hilton.

'I mean the fellow who committed this murder,' replied Mr. Heriot. 'She is no more guilty than I am. Even assassins are scarcely such blunderers as you describe her to be. The cord and the chloroform are convincing proofs to my mind of her innocence.'

Sir Hilton Trewavas stared at him aghast; but, as the old lawyer yawned in his face, and laid his hand upon a bedroom candlestick on the table, there was nothing for it but to take the hint and go.

'I never accept a brief now,' observed Mr. Heriot, as they rose to say farewell, 'else I should be happy to defend this young lady; but, in the hands of my friend, she will be safe—that is, if she abides to take her trial. My advice is, don't let her. These secret murderers always turn up in a year or two, and then the world will see its injustice.'

'I wish I could think as you do,' said Sir Hilton, in a tone of despair.

He held out his hand as he spoke, and, strange to say, the old dried mummy of a man hesitated a moment to take it. He glanced at a bust placed above the door—the bust of a man with a small head, and mild, melancholy face.

'Well, I shook hands with him the day before he ended his existence in a solemn and public manner,' said the old cynic to himself; 'and so really I don't see why I should be so squeamish.'

Upon this, his wiry hand grasped Sir Hilton's, and the two men parted. As the noise of their horses' hoofs died away, Mr. Heriot rubbed his dry palms together, and shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, I don't wonder the young fellow feels uncomfortable,' said he. 'Of course he committed the murder himself.'

It is as plain as a pike-staff that, and this girl is trying to screen him. Ah, and she'll do it too.'

This was Mr. Heriot's opinion, and it sent him in a complacent humour to his late rest.

It was two o'clock when Sir Hilton got back to Trewavas. He went straight to his brother's room. John lay on his bed sleeping, but dressed, and Sir Hilton, bending over him, felt a keen pang on seeing how the lines of his patient face had sharpened, and the dark shadow beneath his sunken eyes had deepened. 'John!' he said, softly, shaking him by the shoulder.

John sprang up with a sudden and ghastly wildness in his manner. 'Unhand me!' he cried furiously. But, almost as he spoke, he saw it was his brother's grasp that held him, and the mad glare in his eyes died away, and the old patient smile broke over his face again.

'Hilton, is it you? I was dreaming horribly,' he said, with a shudder.

'Where is Olive?' asked his brother. 'Is she in her room?'

'No,' replied John. 'An hour ago she came and stood at my door like an avenging spirit, and she asked for the key—the key of that room where *she* lies. I could not refuse her. Do not tell Mrs. Maristowe of it, but I dared not say her nay.'

In his wild, weary manner, John seemed more like an excited child than a man, and Sir Hilton felt that it would be cruel to tax his strength further.

'Lie down again, John,' said he. 'I will go and find Olive.'

Sir Hilton descended the stairs with a soft step, and in a moment found himself in the corridor approaching Eleanor's room. A pale light streamed from the door, which was partially open. He looked within, and saw Olive kneeling by the bedside. She was weeping, her face hidden from his view; but the white flowers which he had seen in her hand that day were strewn about the bed, while a wreath of jasmine and myrtle rested gently on Eleanor's bosom.

'Eleanor, forgive me,' she murmured; 'forgive me if I escape, and hide this crime for ever in some drear solitude! Oh, merciful Father! have pity on me!'

'Olive!' said Sir Hilton; and his voice seemed almost like a groan.

Olive started up, and how his face hardened as she turned and saw him. His expression, too, changed; the sight of her here in this presence, beside Eleanor's still face, shocked him, and there was a sense of shame, of sin, of loathing about him as she passed him in the doorway.

'I cannot speak to you here,' he said; 'will you come to the library?'

She was locking the door again softly, and with fingers that scarcely trembled.

'I go to John to give him back the key,' she said. 'Step lightly, lest Mrs. Maristowe should hear you. We are watched. You do wrong to speak to me, and I do not wish it. There is nothing you can say will do me any good.'

As she turned the key with silent fingers, her lips whispered this, scarcely moving, then she fled rapidly away; and almost at the same moment that she disappeared, Sir Hilton felt, rather than heard, a step, and, turning, he faced the smiling visage of Mr. Eslick.

'Ah! you have been to look on a sad sight, Sir Hilton,' said he. 'You guard the key, I presume? I thought it better to stay here myself to-night. Mrs. Maristowe appeared to wish it so much. You have had rather a rough ride, Sir Hilton.'

'Mr. Eslick,' returned the young man, bitterly, 'I will hold no conversation with you. These hypocritical civilities disgust me. I know you for what you are—a spy. Tell Sir Anthony Roskelly that I fathom his malice and despise it. Let me pass, sir, if you please.'

Mr. Eslick skipped with undignified haste out of Sir Hilton's way; but he took his revenge by posting a spy at Olive's door, smiling to himself like an injured angel as he did it.

Sir Hilton paced the library in vain. The night wore away into morning, and Olive gave him no opportunity to urge upon her the necessity of flight; but when at last, weary and angry, he left the room to seek an hour's rest, he saw that an interview between them, at least here, had been rendered impossible; for Mr. Eslick, stretched on a large

hall chair, placed close against the door of the spiral staircase, slumbered serenely.

When Mr. Heriot spoke of the inevitable result of the inquest, he was thinking of a London jury. He did not consider the fact of the jurymen at Trewavas Church-town being all dependents of the family, with an intense belief in the immaculate truth and honour of all the Trewavas, down even to fifth cousinship. To them, what was Mr. Damerel's evidence worth, compared to the clear testimony of Lady Trewavas? In vain he might repeat his strong belief that Olive was in the wood; it weighed as nothing against my lady's word, and against John's timid, quiet testimony, that he had himself locked her door, and taken the key to Lady Trewavas. As to the ancient staircase, there was not a villager who did not know that it was never used, and that the old arched door at the foot was rarely opened even to curious visitors. Very little, then, did it avail, when Damerel hinted that Olive had availed herself of this, to escape from the house. Moreover, he created a prejudice against himself by his affected speech and manner, for he could think of no other way to show his disgust, indignation, and contempt, than by returning to that assumption of indolence and absurdity, which he had thrown off in the first horror of the discovery of this crime.

'Why did I put my finger in this pie?' he said to himself. 'It is better to let Cornish cooks alone. I have lost my friend and gained twenty thousand enemies, and the girl escapes scot free.'

Upon this thought he relapsed into his old manner, and watched the rest of the inquest with an appearance of languid indifference.

One important witness was wanting. Charles Vigo was not forthcoming at the inquest. No one had seen him since he had quitted Trewavas House the evening before. He had not returned home; this was all that was known of him. But as Mr. Damerel had proved the finding of the body, it was not considered necessary to adjourn the inquest because of his *mal-a-propos* absence.

Olive was not called at all. What could she tell them? If she had been locked in her room from three o'clock until eight, it was clear she could relate nothing concerning the

events that had occurred during that period. This view of the matter was placed before the jury with great affability by the coroner, but Damerel felt sure that Olive was spared by Sir Hilton's request.

The verdict was given amid breathless silence—'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.'

'Thank Heaven,' said John, in a whisper to his brother, 'Olive is saved.'

He leant back in his chair ghastly pale. The steadiness and courage with which he had given his evidence forsook him, and, to the surprise of all, he burst into childish tears. As Sir Hilton rose in nervous haste to assist him, half ashamed of his brother's weakness and agitation, he met the calm, intelligent face of the man Warne, the inspector who had aided him in his search for Eleanor. On this face there rested an expression that haunted his mind uneasily through all the excitement of that day.

Olive had escaped! This was the one great relief that lifted a mountain weight from Sir Hilton's heart; but none the less was she guilty, none the less was her stay at Trewavas an impossibility and a shame. He scarcely spoke a word, as friends pressed around him with kindly greetings; he scarcely noticed those who held aloof, whispering together ominously of guilt, and connivance at guilt. Passing through the throng, with Lady Trewavas on his arm, many eyes marked how pale and stern he was, and how, holding his head erect, he neither sought nor avoided any man's gaze. John, on the contrary, turned anxious glances right and left, seeking a kindly look, and his hand was stretched out often to grasp another, while his meek face was lighted up with an instant and sad smile, as sympathising words fell upon his ear. He had a dozen friends that day where Sir Hilton had but one.

At the door of the 'Trewavas Arms' stood the carriage that had brought Lady Trewavas hither. As her grandson placed her in it, she turned and bowed to the crowd. There were old faces there, that had looked upon hers when young—faces that had seen her a bride, a young mother, a widow, bereaved of her children; and as they saw her now, with her pride bent by sorrow, and the traces of tears on her wan cheek, their own eyes were scarcely dry; and women curtseyed, and men lifted their hats in silent respect.

Then John entered the carriage, and the servant still held the door open for Sir Hilton, but he shook his head.

'I shall walk through the park,' he said; and taking Dr. Burton's arm, he strode away.

At the park gate Mr. Damerel confronted them; he took off his hat gravely.

'I congratulate you, Sir Hilton,' he said, with a marked accent. 'This has been the most singular inquest which I have ever had the good fortune to attend. Its purpose has been, not to gain the truth, but to hide it.'

Dr. Burton felt Sir Hilton's frame quiver from head to foot.

'Send your opinion to the newspapers, Mr. Damerel,' said Sir Hilton; 'they may be glad to hear it—I am not. It is scarcely gentlemanly to trouble me at such a time with your vague suspicions.'

'Vague!' returned Mr. Damerel. 'No! I repudiate that expression; there is nothing vague about my opinion.'

'Then tell the coroner and the jury they have not done their duty; don't bother us,' said Dr. Burton, roughly.

Mr. Damerel gave him a languid stare, but vouchsafed no reply.

'Sir Hilton Trewavas,' he continued, 'yesterday I was sorry for you. I thought there lay before you a sad duty, which you would nobly fulfil. To-day I am more sorry for you still, because you have trampled duty under foot. Do you know that from henceforth no gentleman will ever enter your doors, no lady will ever sit at your board? Even as I speak, Mrs. Maristowe quits your roof with the remains of her murdered daughter. All hearts sympathise with her, and approve of what she does. One house cannot contain her and Miss Olive Varcoe.'

Once more he removed his hat, and, turning on his heel, departed, no sign or look from Sir Hilton staying him.

'Is this true what he says?' asked Dr. Burton.

The workings of Sir Hilton's face, its dead whiteness, and suppressed passion, were a sufficient answer. 'Mrs. Maristowe is weak,' he said, in a moment recovering himself, 'and she hates me. Nevertheless, this is Sir Anthony's doing. Let us hasten on.'

'He will not let the matter rest here,' said the doctor.

'There will be a warrant here to-night to apprehend Olive, and she will be examined before this enemy of yours, and committed. At the examination the fact of her having had chloroform in her possession will come out. I expected every moment to be questioned on it at the inquest. How it was Tamson did not betray herself, I cannot tell.'

'She dares not,' replied Sir Hilton. 'Her whole family will be ruined if she swears to that falsehood. They are tenants of mine.'

This was significant. Yet the doctor was a dissector, and loved probing.

'Then you do not believe the girl found that chloroform in Olive's pocket?' he asked.

'No,' replied Sir Hilton; 'she never had any. I have asked John, and he assures me he never saw any in her possession. My grandmother's maid hates Olive.'

Dr. Burton pretended to be satisfied. On the whole, he was not sorry that Sir Hilton offered him this salve for his conscience. If the finding of the bottle was a pitiful trick of Tamson's, there was no harm in being silent on the matter. Hurrying through the park as they talked, they soon reached the mansion, and saw the great terrace sprinkled with hearse and mourning coaches.

Sir Hilton was too proud to expostulate with Mrs. Maristowe on the unseemly haste with which she quitted his house; but he felt the insult, and knew what it was intended to convey. She meant to show the world, that she considered the roof that sheltered Olive Varcoe was not a fitting place for her and the remains of her murdered daughter. On entering the great drawing-room, he found her ready dressed for her departure, and saying adieu coldly and languidly to Lady Trewavas; while she, pale and stern, endeavoured proudly to hide her sense of wrong and sorrow. The moment Mrs. Maristowe caught sight of Sir Hilton and Dr. Burton, she burst forth into shrieks, and sobs, and wringing of hands, till, spent and worn, she was obliged to cease from sheer exhaustion. When some little quietness was restored at last, Sir Hilton bent over her, and said, gently and steadily, 'Since you have resolved on departing immediately, I will not urge you to delay your journey longer than the short time requisite to enable me to get ready to accompany you.'

Mrs. Maristowe, with an hysterical gasp and sob, waved him away with her hand.

'No, no, Sir Hilton; I cannot let you go with me,' she cried. 'I could not bear it. The sight of you is too painful to me. My daughter's love for you has killed her. Gloss it over as you will, cover up the crime as you will, hide it, excuse it, guard the criminal beneath your own roof, the fact is the same. Eleanor's love for you has brought her to a violent death. My poor girl—my poor child! I take you home dead! Oh, would to Heaven I had never seen this accursed house!'

Lady Trewavas and Sir Hilton heard this in silence. Her grief was too bitter, the circumstances of her bereavement too horrible, for them to feel aught but pity for her, say what she would.

'Considering the relation in which I stood to Eleanor,' continued Sir Hilton, his voice breaking slightly as he spoke, 'I think I have a right to accompany her to her last home.'

'No, no!' said Mrs. Maristowe, sobbing aloud. 'If you force yourself in this way on me, Sir Hilton, it will be cruel, most cruel. I will not bear it.'

'Madam, I forego my right,' said Sir Hilton. 'It is not my wish to force my presence on you, since it is painful; but I trust you will have no objection to accept the escort of my brother.'

'John has utterly broken down,' said Lady Trewavas. 'He is ill in bed.'

'Poor John!' sighed Mrs. Maristowe. 'I would gladly let him go with me, but he is really too ill. I thought he would have died just now, when he said farewell to my poor child.'

To Sir Hilton it seemed somewhat hard that John should be given a privilege denied to him; yet this, too, he bore silently.

'But it is better as it is,' continued Mrs. Maristowe; 'for the very name of Trewavas pierces my heart now. Mr. Damerel has promised me his escort and protection. He will see me safely to my desolate, childless home. He is a Devonshire gentleman, a neighbour, and I shall feel tranquil with him.'

'You seem to forget, madam,' observed Dr. Burton, bluntly, 'that this family shares your sorrow, and has perhaps to suffer the harder portion of the burden. I think, for your own sake, and that of Lady Trewavas—who is not strong—this painful interview had better end. Will you allow me to escort you to your carriage?'

Bursting into offended tears, Mrs. Maristowe rose at once.

'I am sure I can have no wish to stay here,' she said. 'No—not a minute longer.'

But at this moment the door opened, and a tiny figure dressed in black barred the way. It was Olive. Placing one hand on the back of a chair for support, she held the other imploringly towards Mrs. Maristowe.

'You are going away,' she said, 'and I fear it is because of me. I am come to tell you that 'tis I who leave. I quit this house instantly, and I depart from the shores of Cornwall to-morrow. I shall stay in the village to-night—I hope that will not offend you; but things will not be in readiness for my departure till the morning. Mrs. Maristowe, will you stay at Trewavas now? Do not add to their grief here by insult and unkindness.'

Was this Olive? Was this the proud, petulant, passionate girl, in whose nature there was no submission, no humility? Then, how utterly was her spirit broken down by remorse and guilt! It was so strange to hear humble accents from her lips that Sir Hilton was inexpressibly touched, and for the first time the shadow of forgiveness came upon his soul, covering her crime and blotting it with tears. He understood what she had suffered before she could thus humble herself. But not so Mrs. Maristowe. At the sound of Olive's voice, at the sight of her face, she shrank, and shivered and shuddered, folding herself up in her large shawl, and hiding her eyes with her hands.

'Will no one save me from this horror?' she cried. 'Will no one protect me? Am I obliged to bear the torture of this girl's presence? Send her away; she is killing me! Where is John? He is the only one of this family who has any heart or any honour.'

Her excitement, her feebleness, her tears, but, above all, her great grief, which rendered her an object of reverence, stifled the words of resentment that flew to Lady Trewavas's

lips. It was Olive who, quick as thought, replied to her, fixing her eyes on her mournfully the while.

'Do not torture John by sending for him,' she said. 'Leave him in peace; he will not trouble any of us long. Passion, and anger, and jealousy, have wrought an evil work among us—a work that will take him for its next victim. I go, Mrs. Maristowe. I will not grieve you by my presence. Do not proclaim to the world that 'tis I have driven you from this house. No! I leave it before you, Farewell, Lady Trewavas; I dare not say aunt now. There have been bitter words between you and me during the years I have found a home here. The fault was more mine than yours.'

Olive turned her face away; she did not ask forgiveness; perhaps she felt that, with Eleanor's mother standing by, her aunt could scarcely accord her pardon.—'Hypocrite!' murmured Mrs. Maristowe, bitterly.

Olive heard her, and for one moment the flash in her eye looked dangerous; then she smiled sadly.

'Hypocrite, if you will,' she said; 'if it be hypocrisy to bear and be silent.'

Mrs. Maristowe was speechless from indignant astonishment. What! was an assassin to play the martyr, and take her part from her before her eyes? Tears burst from her again, and she sank down on her cushions sobbing. Then Olive spoke once more in a low voice.

'Mrs. Maristowe,' said she, 'take your *posse* of police with you when you go. Let them follow my steps, and leave Trewavas in peace. I am easily found. It is not my intention to escape.'

She looked round the room half timidly, half proudly; but no eye glanced at her, no hand was held out to her, no voice bade her stay. Then a deathly whiteness crept coldly over her face, her lips began to tremble, her eyelids quivered; she groped blindly with her hand for the door, turned the lock softly, and passed out noiselessly as a shadow.

Sir Hilton knew that she was gone by the sudden emptiness, the chill that fell upon him. Yes, she was gone—gone for ever! and if she were guilty, it was love for him that had made her so, and driven her forth from the face of men, an outcast. She was gone, and she had not uttered

one word of farewell to him ; she had not even glanced at him as she crept silently away.

'Lady Trewavas, I breathe more freely, that girl being gone,' said Mrs. Maristowe. 'I can bid you farewell more kindly now.'

Yet it was but coldly that the two women took each other's extended hands, and Lady Trewavas's dropped listless by her side, as Mrs. Maristowe released it from her languid clasp. Then Sir Hilton offered that lady his arm, and, scarcely touching it with her fingers, she stepped from the window upon the terrace.

'Have no anxiety for me, Sir Hilton,' she said, coldly. 'Mr. Damerel meets me at the station, and I intrust myself to him with every reliance. This will be a terrible journey ; but I shall survive it. I shall live to see justice overtake the murderer of my child. These are not times when rank can long protect crime.'

With this last sting Mrs. Maristowe got into her carriage. When seated, she beckoned to the weeping Tamson, who stood with other servants among the laurels.

'Tamson,' she said, in a low voice, 'tell Mr. John Trewavas that the flowers he placed in the coffin are not touched ; the white garland lies on Eleanor's bosom still. It shall be buried with her—I promise it.'

One wave of the hand, and Mrs. Maristowe drove away, the hearse containing the mortal remains of her daughter having already departed.

'So John has not dared confess it was Olive who placed the wreath on Eleanor's bosom,' said Sir Hilton. 'I heard her ask forgiveness. Did the white chaplet seem to her a crown, and emblem of pardon ? And it will be buried with her. I wish Olive had wreathed a flower in the garland for me. There is no pardon for me, no flower from my hand resting on her. Psha ! what does it matter ? All this is folly. Heaven help me ! Eleanor is dead ; and Olive—what is she ? My life and my house are left to me desolate !'

CHAPTER XII.

Who can describe the ghastly quiet at Trewavas now the excitement had died out of it—now the body of Eleanor Maristowe was borne away, and the figure of Olive Varcoe had faded from all eyes? The house was empty and chill, and the echo of a footfall seemed unnatural, breaking on the ear with a sound inopportune and importunate. All life and laughter, song, and merriment had fled; memories alone haunted the rooms like ghosts, bringing reproaches and remorseful thoughts of the past and of the dead.

Amid these Sir Hilton sat alone, busy with papers and accounts, on which he strove vainly to concentrate his mind. He was looking over the short arithmetic of Olive's little fortune, counting and recounting, as if in the hope that repetition would make the sum bigger. But there it stood, unalterable—a hundred here, two hundred or so there, adding up to the great total of eleven hundred pounds. To a man of Sir Hilton's wealth the pittance seemed beggary, and her coming battle with life pictured itself to him in scenes of agony or shame. But no, that could not, should not be. He was rich. She must accept a sufficient income from Lady Trewavas, and on this she might go abroad, and, under a false name, live a life of obscurity, unknown and unmolested.

Thus ran Sir Hilton's thoughts; then he plunged into figures again, or hastily scrawled a line to his solicitors, requesting that a settlement of two hundred pounds a year should be made on Olive Varcoe, and paid to her quarterly. But, to pay her, the lawyers must know her address and her plans. Would she tell these? Yes, surely; she could not mean to separate herself entirely from Trewavas, and cut off all communication between herself and her family. But she was going to leave the village to-morrow; and unless she left some address, unless she told whither letters and remittances could be sent to her, how could he fulfil his plans of aid?

Sir Hilton drew a sheet of paper rapidly towards him, but as he dipped his pen in the ink his hand faltered. He thrust the pen and ink far from him, and went with rapid step to Lady Trewavas's room.

'Grandmother,' said he, 'I am very sorry to give you a painful task; but you must write to Olive'—her name trembled on his tongue, and came from his lips gaspingly—'and desire her to leave us her address, that matters of business may be arranged between us respecting her small fortune.'

'She has done all that already. She sent me this note an hour ago,' said Lady Trewavas, handing it to her grandson as she spoke. It contained only these few lines:—

'Mr. Truscott, of Truro, is my solicitor. He will arrange all necessary business with Sir Hilton Trewavas respecting my affairs. To him I shall entrust my future address; if, therefore, it should become necessary to communicate with me, you can do so through him. I confess it will be painful to me to hear from Trewavas. Spare me, then, if you can. I have money for my immediate wants. I do not say this in the hope that you will have any anxiety for me, but rather in the fear that you will sometimes feel troubled for—

'OLIVE VARCOE.'

Sir Hilton laid the letter down, and walked to the window. For a moment he could not utter a word, and when he had mastered his emotion his voice was husky and low.

'Grandmother, you and I have been hard upon this girl,' said he. 'You in your pride and jealousy, deeming a poor relation guilty of an immense sin in aspiring to a Trewavas, have put slights upon her that a worm would scarcely bear; and I have trampled on her heart as ruthlessly as though no gall and bitterness, no death and murder, followed from such things. Grandmother, we have made Olive Varcoe what she is; I ask you what we can do for her now?'

Lady Trewavas was not a woman to deny her deeds, or to whine over them.

'My opinions are unchanged by these events, Hilton,' she said, proudly. 'Eleanor Maristowe was a fitting wife for a Trewavas—Olive Varcoe was not. She has given us a sorrowful proof of that. Her father's blood is in her: a sinful, wild blood it was. If I bent her spirit to a galling yoke in this house, I did it advisedly. It was presumption to think the unstained line of Trewavas could mingle with a Varcoe. She merited that I should lower her into her proper place.

What we can do for her now, Hilton, is another question, and one that should be answered generously. We must put her above want, of course.'

'It must be done in your name,' said her grandson. 'She would not accept money from me.'

'She would do right to refuse it from you,' returned Lady Trewavas. 'Let it be done in my name, and from my means; there can be no objection then.'

At this moment a servant came to the door.

'A gentleman, sir, who desired me to give you this card, requests to see you.'

On the card was written the name of Mr. Heriot. Sir Hilton went hurriedly to receive him.

'I don't often interfere in my neighbours' affairs,' said Mr. Heriot, rising as the baronet entered; 'but this is an exceptional case, and I will not apologise now for disturbing you, almost as late as you disturbed me a night or two ago.'

The two men had not shaken hands, but in his agitation Sir Hilton took no note of the omission.

'What has happened?' he asked, abruptly thrusting aside all ceremony like a feather.

'Two hours ago a bumpkin brought me this letter,' replied Mr. Heriot. 'I resolved that I would not sleep till you had seen it.'

The letter, written on coarse blue paper, ran thus:—

'HONOURED SIR,—I know Sir Hilton Trewavas has been to you for advice. Will you tell him to get Miss V. safe out of the country this night? To-morrow will be too late. She will be apprehended in the morning on a charge of murder, by Sir Anthony Roskelly; and if Sir H. T. permits this to happen, he will repent of it bitterly all his life long. Sir, I am one who does not like to see the innocent suffer for the guilty; and although I have no proof, I have my thoughts, and I cannot keep these dark, when I see them as should most help Miss V. standing aloof from her. I overheard most of the talk to-day at the station between Sir A. and Mrs. M., therefore you may be sure my information is correct. He must not think Sir A. R. will let Miss V. slip through as the coroner has done. Money and trouble won't stop him when he has a spite in hand.

'From yours respectfully,

'A LOOKER-ON.'

'You perceive,' said Mr. Heriot, 'that others beside me have doubts respecting your cousin's capability for murder.'

The caustic tone of his voice, the increased coldness of his manner, might have struck Sir Hilton at any other time; but now, in his excitement, it passed unnoticed. He even felt towards him a certain warmth and gratitude, because of his belief in Olive's innocence.

'It is easy enough in this country to get a suspected person out of the way,' continued Mr. Heriot. 'Perhaps you have already followed my counsel, and conveyed your cousin to some safe refuge?'

'No,' replied Sir Hilton; 'she still refuses my help. She quitted this house this afternoon, and she is now in the village.'

A yellower shade passed over the dried countenance of Mr. Heriot.

'You take it coolly, Sir Hilton,' said he. 'Is it your pleasure to gratify the hate of this venomous magistrate, by giving him a victim to tear to pieces?'

Mr. Heriot was not often indignant now, since he was no longer paid for it; nevertheless, there was a touch of indignation at this moment in the tones of his clear voice. Sir Hilton heard him with astonishment. He had expected the world's condemnation for screening Olive; but to be rebuked for abandoning her, startled him.

'I do not forsake her,' he cried; 'it is she who forsakes me. She will not let me save her. I have kept a boat off this coast for three days in vain.'

The tone of pique in which he spoke surprised Mr. Heriot in his turn.

'I would advise you to go and try her again,' he remarked, drily. 'Does your boat still wait?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Hilton. 'Can you stay here till I return? I will go at once. I will but speak a moment to my brother first. The agitation of the last few days has laid him on a sick bed.'

'Then why bother him?' asked Mr. Heriot.

'Oh, his head is clear, and he will advise me how to persuade Olive,' replied Sir Hilton. 'He has a very patient, calm nature; a nature for which she has a wonderful respect, being herself passionate; a word from him will influence her more than any entreaty of mine.'

'Then it is a pity he can't go instead of you,' observed Mr. Heriot.

The old dried man's tone was more caustic than ever, but Sir Hilton did not stay to reply to him. He took the key of the low-arched door from the drawer of the table, and in a moment his step might be heard ascending the spiral stairs.

As Sir Hilton approached his brother's bed, and looked down upon his pale, weary face, he read in every haggard line how great the love was which could cause such suffering. It was not without a pang of remorse and shame that he marked the change in features once so calm and placid. The calmness was gone; the eyes were wild and woe-worn; the cheeks flushed, the lips dry; the whole body restless, as though swaying to and fro in some great agony.

'John, I have something to tell you; can you bear to hear it?' asked Sir Hilton, in his kindest voice.

'I can bear anything. There is nothing can happen to me worse than is come already,' said John, closing his eyes wearily.

Then, in a few words, Sir Hilton told of Mr. Heriot's visit, and of Sir Anthony's resolve to arrest Olive; he related also his own plan for her escape; and, lastly, he asked how he should induce her to listen to him.

'Try every argument you have in store,' replied his brother; 'and, lastly, if they fail, tell her that, if she will not let you save her, I must and will.'

'Is that all?' asked Sir Hilton, in a disappointed tone. 'If she does not listen to me, will she heed you, John?'

The sick man sighed heavily, and turned upon his side, hiding his face from his brother.

'Then I will write to her, if you like,' he said. 'Give me my desk.'

He wrote a few words with a nervous hand, his face flushing painfully with the effort; and when he threw down the pen, he fell back on his pillow, with eyes unnaturally fixed and haggard.

'My dear John, I fear you are worse than you think yourself,' said Sir Hilton. 'Let me send Dr. Burton to you.'

'No—the sight of medicine and doctors is hateful to me,' replied John. 'Seal that letter, Hilton, and promise me

you will not give it her save as a last resource. I have written feverishly, so do not frighten Olive with my hot words, unless her obstinacy renders it necessary. Bring the letter back to me, if you spare her the pain of reading it. Give me your word for that, Hilton, before you go.'

His rapid utterance, his fevered aspect, impressed his brother painfully. He gave the required word, and was quitting the room, when John called him back.

'There is brandy in that flask,' said he. 'Give me some, Hilton, before you leave me.'

'My dear fellow, you must not have brandy!' exclaimed Sir Hilton.

'Then I shall take something worse, Hilton,' said John—
'I shall try opium. I must sleep, or I shall go mad!'

'And will brandy make you sleep?' demanded Sir Hilton.

'Lately it has, when nothing else would,' replied John.
'If it give me sleep, I would take it, if it were poison.'

Sir Hilton poured out the brandy, and held it to his lips.

'Did the girl Tamson give you Mrs. Maristowe's message?' he asked.

At the question, John fell back on the pillow, ghastly white.

'You have murdered my sleep now,' he said. 'The name of Maristowe is written on my brain. Hilton, is it true you saw Eleanor on the cliff that day? She should haunt me—not you! I loved her best. Yes, Olive's wreath is in the coffin. Poor Olive! I dared not strew a flower on her bosom. She said she hated me. Why are you lingering here?' he added, passionately. 'There is scarcely time to get Olive safely away. She will comfort you when I am gone, Hilton. I do not think I shall trouble you long.'

He covered his face as if to sleep; and Sir Hilton, on his way out, stopped to speak to Lady Trewavas, and say that John's head was a little touched by fever and grief.

* * * * *

There was a small parlour in the 'Trewavas Arms,' with a sanded floor, whitewashed walls, and honeysuckle-covered casement. One large trunk, containing all Olive's wardrobe, rested in a corner, and she herself sat by the window, with eyes fixed anxiously on the quiet street, upon which the moon-

light shone fitfully. Suddenly she started, and a deep, bright colour flushed up over her face and neck. In another moment the door opened, and Sir Hilton Trewavas entered. She rose to receive him, and pointed to a chair silently. There was no greeting between them, beyond a slight bend of the head.

'Olive,' said Sir Hilton, in a low, passionate voice, 'I am come once more to entreat you to accept my aid.'

'I cannot renew that subject,' replied Olive. 'I have refused once, and for ever.'

'You think, perhaps,' continued Sir Hilton, 'that the verdict of the coroner is final, and you are no longer in any danger? In that case you could afford to flout at my help; but you are mistaken: it is not so. You are liable, at any time, to be charged with the crime committed three days ago——'

'And what if I am?' interrupted Olive, fiercely. 'Do not fear that I shall call upon a Trewavas to own or to defend me.'

'You misunderstand me, Olive,' said Sir Hilton. 'You would be past helping then. If it comes to that, things must take their course, and the consequences to you would be more terrible than I dare to think of.'

Olive smiled in sorrowful scorn at his words.

'Are all the Trewavas cowards?' she said, bitterly.

'If I have shrunk, it has been for your sake, Miss Varcoe,' replied Sir Hilton. 'I cannot forget that you are my cousin, and that you were brought up at Trewavas.'

'Always for yourself and for the Trewavas name,' murmured Olive. 'You can deny that I am a cousin,' she said, aloud; 'and you can comfort yourself by remembering that I have quitted Trewavas for ever.'

'I am not come to you in a bitter spirit like yours,' said he. 'I am come to save you from shame, disgrace, and perhaps death. You will be arrested to-morrow, and taken to prison. Olive, will you let me save you to-night?'

'No,' she replied resolutely. 'I am under too many obligations to the Trewavas already. They have overwhelmed me with benefits; I cannot accept anything more of them.'

'Olive,' said he, 'at such a time these sneers are childish, and cruel both to yourself and me——'

'I am not sneering,' interrupted Olive; 'I speak in bitter earnestness. I have been clothed, and fed, and sheltered beneath the Trewavas roof for ten years; the best return I can make them now for this kindness is to refuse to let them meddle with my miserable fortunes. Let my fate and theirs henceforth be separate; let our names never be spoken by the same lips.'

'But this cannot be!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'You have lived with us too long; our cousinship is too well known. The disgrace of your crime and your punishment must fall on us also. How can we be other than linked together for ever?'

Olive turned very pale, and her large eyes flashed on him a strange look.

'To spare the Trewavas pride a pang, I would do much,' she replied. 'But can it be hurt because a miserable Varcoe suffers?'

'Olive, it is for your own sake I ask,' cried Sir Hilton, passionately, 'and not for the family pride you scorn so much. Will you let me take you away to-night?'

'Once more, no!' cried Olive. 'I would not go a step with you from this door, even to save myself from the scaffold.'

'Then it is from hate to me you refuse!' said Sir Hilton, and his colour rose high in his face.

Standing by the chimney-piece, clinging to the narrow ledge for support, Olive turned her eyes full on him, and said, dreamily, 'No, not for hate, though you merit hate from me. You made me love you when a child; and when I was a woman, you forced me to stand by and see you give your love to another—to one who had all the gifts that you most valued—the gifts that I could never hope to win. For such a prize as Eleanor Maristowe, you were right to fling me by as you would a reed. And because your love for me had been implied, not spoken, I had not even the right to complain.'

'Who is the most wronged?' he said, bitterly. 'You or Eleanor? She lies dead in her mother's house, therefore I have let that woman heap contumely on my head; but I will not bear it from you. I will not let you utter Eleanor's name in my ears. How can you,' he added, as his voice broke down huskily—'how can you dare to do it?'

'Are you my judge?' asked Olive, clasping her hands together. 'Have you pronounced me guilty, and condemned me unheard? A rare judge you make, Sir Hilton Trewavas! And, as to daring, I dare do more than you can dream of.'

'I believe you,' replied Sir Hilton, mournfully. 'You have proved that.'

'You insult me!' cried Olive, turning on him with sudden indignation. 'Leave me! I will bear this no longer!'

'I will not leave you,' he said. 'I must and will save you from a prison and a shameful death. You shall let me do this. You owe it to me. For you I have trampled on my honour; for you I wink at crime, and forfeit the world's respect. Will you let me do this in vain?'

'Not for me have you done this, Sir Hilton,' she replied, in a sad voice. 'But if I let you save me, what will the world say then?'

'It will say either that I connived at you escape, or effected it,' said Sir Hilton; 'and my best friend of yesterday will cut me to-morrow. It will say more: it will perhaps declare that I was secretly your accomplice.'

'And are you willing to suffer this?' said Olive, in a softened voice. 'Can you bear this load of contumely for the sake of my safety?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Hilton, steadily. 'This pain will be a feather's weight compared to what I should suffer if you were brought to trial.'

'I believe you,' she responded. Her voice was very low, and she broke into weeping suddenly. Then she fell upon her knees, and held her clasped hands towards him. 'Hilton, if you can still give me your love you shall save me. I will yield myself to your guidance to hide where you will, till the shadow be overpast. And I will be content, for your love's sake, to let you suffer the world's contumely, the world's cruel scorn. But only for love—nothing else. Hilton, can you give it?'

Her voice rang out in agony; yet Sir Hilton remained dumb before it; and her clasped hands, resting on his knee, were left there untouched. Then he rose, and shook them off.

'No, Olive; you ask too much. The thought of love for you now makes me shudder. I will save you for pity's sake, and for the memory of my boyish affection—nothing more.'

The whiteness of Olive's face grew to the hue of death, and her quivering lips, standing apart, gave her a ghastly look.

'I am answered,' she said, in a whisper, as her arms fell down by her side, and her head drooped nearly to the ground. 'Sir Hilton Trewavas, I will never ask you for your love again.'

For a moment there was a breathless silence between these two; then it was broken by Olive's sobs. She sprang to her feet, brushing her tears away, though they fell faster than her hand could wipe them; and, standing thus with streaming eyes before him, she said in a low voice, a swift flush covering her face—'Hilton, we shall never meet again. Take me in your arms, and kiss me before you go. I shall remember that kiss in prison, in sorrow, in exile, in death. It will comfort me when my burden seems heavier than I can bear, and, perchance, I lie fainting beneath it. Hilton, you will not refuse me so slight a thing as a caress? A touch of the hand, then?—a kind word? What! not even that? Then God's will be done. My heart is breaking!'

The stony look on Sir Hilton's brow relaxed as he saw her break down utterly—as he saw her cover her face with her hands, and turn away hopelessly, like one humbled to the dust.

'Olive,' he said, coldly, 'I should despise myself if I weakly yielded to your prayer. My lips can never touch yours again, either in love or in kindness. I have said, compassion is all I can give you now. But for pity, I would not stand by your side a minute. What! will you ask for love, for caresses, for tenderness from me? Is it not enough that I criminally shield you from justice—I who am bound by every tie of honour to punish the murderer of my affianced wife? Olive, you ask too much when you desire even a touch of my hand.'

Her face flashed upon him as he spoke, not humble, not sorrowful, but flushed, proud, and indignant.

'Do not fear that I shall ask it again,' she said. 'Have you anything more to say to me, Sir Hilton?'

'I have to explain to you my plan for your safety——'

'Your plan!' she cried, breaking in upon his speech passionately, her eyes blazing as in the days when no sorrow had touched them. 'I will not hear it! I will not owe my

safety to your compassion ; I scorn it ! You have refused me even a kind word. Shall I take anything from your hands now ? No ! a thousand times no ! Sir Hilton Trevas, Olive Varcoe will never live to be saved contemptuously by your pity.'

She was in earnest, bitter earnest, and he saw it. Still he importuned, he prayed, beating his words passionately against her fiery pride as against a wall ; but they fell back useless upon his own heart, chilling it into despair.

'Then John must save you,' he cried at last.

'John !' exclaimed Olive. 'No, no ; you are dreaming, Sir Hilton. John cannot save me.'

'He will rise from his sick bed, and die to save you, obstinate, ungrateful as you are,' returned Sir Hilton. 'He said, "Tell Olive if she will not let you save her, I must." Here is his letter ; read it, and accept his help, since you refuse mine.'

Olive took the letter, with a wild terror shining out of her eyes, and a look of firm resolve upon her pale lips.

'I refuse your aid, because you deny it to me upon the only terms on which I could accept it,' she said. 'I would let the man who loves me suffer for my sake, but not the man who loathes me.'

She broke the seal of the letter with trembling fingers, and read it hastily.

'Poor John !' she said ; her eyes filled with tears, and crushing the letter in her hand, she turned a changed face towards Sir Hilton.

'Must I bear this, too ?' she murmured. 'Oh Hilton, Hilton ! why would you not spare me ? It is too late now. Wait, if you will, and see what I can do for John's sake.'

Perplexed, angry, weary, Sir Hilton watched her, as she burnt John's letter by the lighted taper ; then she wrote hurriedly a tiny note, which she folded and tied with white silk. Sir Hilton thought this was for John, and, fancying she had yielded now, he waited every moment to hear her say she was ready to accompany him ; but, to his surprise, she walked to the window, and unhung from its hook a cage within which there rested a small white pigeon ; she tied the note beneath its wing, and, opening the lattice with a silent

hand, she set the bird free. It flew swiftly upwards into the darkness, and disappeared.

'What folly is this, Olive?' cried Sir Hilton. 'To whom have you sent that carrier pigeon?'

'It is gone to Charles Vigo,' she replied.

A thrill like an electric shock ran through Sir Hilton's frame as she uttered these words. So young Vigo's disappearance was her doing, and she knew all along where he was hiding. Could any new proof of her guilt be needed, this seemed to give it; and, added to the pang of this thought, came a sharp, burning pain, which he scarcely recognised as jealousy.

'And why to Charles Vigo?' he asked.

In spite of his horror at Olive's crime, his voice shook, and his hand trembled to seize her as she passed him.

'I have accepted his offer,' replied Olive, mournfully, in a dreamy voice. 'Perhaps it is cruel to let him suffer so much for me; but he loves me, he trusts me, he believes in me, and love is happy when it suffers.'

A smile quivered on her lips—a smile so sad, that it seemed more mournful than the saltiest tears ever shed.

'Does Mr. Vigo, for your sake, sacrifice home, name, and country?' demanded Sir Hilton in a hard tone; 'and do you accept so much from him? His father is an old man; he will never live to see his son again. And with such a wife as you, he will scarcely wish it.'

'You are cruel!' said Olive, calmly.

For the first time her eyes fell upon Sir Hilton reproachfully, and again his restless hand half raised itself, longing only to touch her for a moment. Yet there was a burning anger in him now, quivering through every nerve in his flesh, holding down all kinder words that might have come.

'Cruel!' he echoed. 'No, not I. It is but truth I speak. So you elope with Charles Vigo? You do that boy this bitter wrong, rather than accept my aid—rather than let John save you.'

'Yes,' she returned, in the same dreamy, mournful voice. 'Tell John his letter decided me, and I leave England to-night with Charles Vigo. Tell him there was no other way for me to escape, you scorning me as you do; and let no anxiety for me trouble him. I shall be in safe hands. Give

him this message, and say—yes, say, I prayed God to save him.'

Tears! Were these tears upon Sir Hilton's cheek, as the woman he deemed so guilty fixed her large eyes on him, filled with unutterable sadness?

'Olive!' he cried.

But there was no time for further speech; a hand thrust the honeysuckled lattice aside, and Charles Vigo sprang into the room.

'Thank Heaven you have sent for me at last!' he exclaimed. 'Olive, I have suffered tortures—I have feared——'

He had seen but her at first; but now he perceived Sir Hilton Trewavas, and checked himself suddenly.

'Mr. Vigo, you disappear and reappear at opportune moments in Miss Varcoe's fate,' said Sir Hilton. 'I hope your presence to-night will be as happy a thing for her as your absence was to-day.'

The sarcasm cut Olive to the quick, not for herself, but for Charles Vigo; and she came hastily forward, and laid her hand on the young man's arm.

'Do not heed him,' she said softly. 'There is no time for quarrels. Mr. Vigo, I promised you that if all aid from the Trewavas family failed me I would accept your most generous offer of assistance. It has failed me; do not seek to know why or wherefore. Mr. Vigo, have you counted the cost of helping me? You will be a mark for scorn—you will be exiled from home and country——'

'Let those scorn who do not understand,' interrupted young Vigo, eagerly. 'I know what I do. Olive, I am proud to suffer somewhat for your sake. The shame and pain of which you speak will be to me a glory. You know what I feel—you know what I think; why should we talk further? All things are ready. Will you come?'

'This is infatuation indeed!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, angrily. 'Olive, I conjure you, by all you hold sacred, to pause ere you drag this young man into the shame of your guilt. Remember he is the only son of his father—the sole prop of an ancient house.'

'How dare you speak to your cousin in such words as these?' cried Charles Vigo, drawing Olive towards him, and standing proudly by her side. 'Do you not see——'

'Stop!' exclaimed Olive, springing up, and putting her hand upon his mouth. 'Remember your promise to me, Charles Vigo. Do not waste words now; there will be time hereafter for all these things. Sir Hilton, I have reflected deeply on what I do, and on what I stand pledged to do, in accepting the aid of this true and generous friend. Mr. Vigo, at that future time of which we have talked, when you come to me, and say, "Olive, remember, in the day of your shame and humiliation, when the dearest friends forsook you, and lovers stood aloof, I came, I understood, I saved you;" then, if you will have the poor gift, I will put my hand in yours, and be your wife.'

She said this, not with crimson cheeks, and eyes flashing love-light from their lashes, but with pale face, and head drooping forward, bowed humbly as if in shame. Her hand rested on Charles Vigo's arm—the hand that Sir Hilton had flung from his knee, and refused even to touch—and taking it in his, he bent his lips upon it reverently.

'I shall never remind you, Olive, of this time,' he said, softly. 'I shall make no claim on your gratitude; you do not think so meanly of me as that. No; a free-will offering—all your heart and soul, Olive, or merely a poor remembrance; I will take nothing between these two.'

Sir Hilton heard him, and his very soul seemed on fire. Either these were noble words, or they were the outpouring of the wildest, maddest infatuation that ever possessed an unthinking heart; surely they were these last, and this boy was crazed by his foolish passion for a guilty girl. This was not love—the sound, reasonable, moderate affection upon which the world bases its happiness: it was Midsummer folly, that could not outlast a month; yet his blood burned with fiery heat as he heard it, and it seemed to him that he was being schooled in love by a beardless youth, whose mind had not yet reached the stature of a man's. He tried to stand by indifferently, and listen with a careless mien to Olive's answer; but his hand clutched the back of his chair, and his heart beat like a hammer against his side.

'I am not worthy of you,' said Olive. 'You give me a too generous love; it covers me with shame and pain. How can I ever repay you?'

Her head drooped down till it touched his arm, and the accents of her voice rang out in deep mournfulness.

'You pay me when you trust me,' replied Charles Vigo. 'Olive, we have lingered too long. The men wait for us. Let us depart.'

'I am ready,' she said.

Her voice had the same sad, listless tone. It seemed she scarcely cared to save herself. Sir Hilton watched her as she put on her hat and cloak, and the moments to him now counted like golden sands, unutterably dear, fearful in their value and their pain. Suddenly he constrained himself to speak.

'I know not what arrangements you may have made, Mr. Vigo,' said he. 'I believe mine more safe, but my cousin prefers your aid and your plan to mine; so, of course, I have no right to interfere. Perhaps you are aware that both the Trewavas constables are in the kitchen of this little inn. I believe they would let me pass unmolested; but whether you can——'

'They can have no right to detain me,' interrupted Charles Vigo; 'and there is no warrant out yet against Miss Varcoe; they dare not interfere with our actions. Nevertheless, I am prepared for all things. Olive, I will be with you again in a moment.'

He sprang from the window as he spoke; and Sir Hilton, with a hot throb at his heart, saw himself left alone with the girl, who but a few minutes ago had crouched at his feet with tears, praying for a word, a touch of kindness. Now she stood erect, with her head turned away from him, as though listening intently for the slightest sound.

'I see now, Olive, why you have refused to accept the arrangements I made for your safety,' said Sir Hilton. 'You preferred young Vigo's plans.'

'Considering your feelings,' she replied, 'the obligation to you would have been too great a burden to bear. But why renew this? The subject is closed for ever.'

'You take advantage of the infatuation of a boy, to ruin him,' said Sir Hilton, bitterly.

'Do I?' said Olive; and her listless, weary tone showed that he could scarcely now rouse her into anger.

'Yes, you do a cruel, unwomanly thing,' continued Sir

Hilton; 'and I do not know that I am justified in my own conscience in letting him go.'

'You had better try to stop him,' returned Olive; 'you will find his arm as strong as your own. You can do better, Sir Hilton Trewavas: you can stop me. Go to the men in the kitchen, and tell them I meditate flight; or try to find Mr. Eslick and his watchers—they are in the village—and inform them of my plans.'

'I am not a police spy; I am not an informer,' retorted Sir Hilton.

'Then go your way in peace, and leave me to go mine,' said Olive. 'Of what use is this bitterness between us?'

'Of what, indeed?' said Sir Hilton. 'Olive, are you firmly resolved on departing with this young man, when I, your cousin, offer you an asylum in a convent in France?'

'What a delightful and flattering alternative!' answered Olive. 'Do cease, Sir Hilton; you weary me.'

Sir Hilton looked at her gloomily.

'If she would say again, "Hilton, save me, because you love me," Heaven knows what madness I should be capable of,' he ejaculated to himself.

But no such words broke from her lips. She stood before him proud and patient, as though she had put her love for him away from her for ever.

'You cannot marry young Vigo with an accusation of murder hanging over your head,' remarked Sir Hilton. 'It would be horrible for him.'

'Would it?' said Olive. 'His flesh and blood are not stone and ice, like yours. His heart is not narrow, and hard, and unbelieving.'

'You mean, his love is the love of a headstrong boy, whose passion does not even heed blood-guiltiness,' replied Sir Hilton. 'You are a daring woman indeed! Do you mean to marry him, Miss Varcoe?'

He spoke so fiercely that Olive turned and looked upon him in wonder.

'You have heard my words to him,' she said. 'Must I say them over again? You are a man without mercy, Sir Hilton.'

'So you fancy you will be happy!' he continued; 'you dare to dream of marriage, of love, of a home—you, who must

live in secrecy and remorse—you, whose victim is not yet buried out of sight of the avenger!

'Heaven help me!' murmured Olive, ringing her hands together. 'You are pitiless indeed!'

The anger within Sir Hilton's veins had brought these dreadful words to his lips; but he was sorry now, as he looked upon the dead white face before him.

'Olive, we will not part in anger,' he said, more softly. 'Here is my hand—will you not take it?'

The girl looked at him with the wildness of fever in her eyes, and thrust his hand away.

'No! I have told you I won't have your pity,' she cried passionately.

'You will not take my hand?' said Sir Hilton, amazed.

It was something new indeed for him to ask a kindness of Olive, and be refused. Like a tyrant, whose slave suddenly rebels, he found his power gone, while he thought it still absolute.

'No! I will not take your hand,' she replied. 'You insult me, offering it as you do, in the loathing of compassion and disgust.'

'Olive,' he exclaimed, 'can you not see that it is myself I hate? I permit you to conquer my conscience, and break down even my horror of crime. Oh, my miserable weakness! I loathe myself while I yield to it. Say farewell to me kindly, Olive; I can hold out no longer. A minute ago you asked me for a kiss of peace; now it is I who ask you. Olive, give me your hand; let me touch your lips once more; and may Heaven have mercy on us both!'

He drew near her; the warm hand for whose clasp she had yearned rested on her neck, his breath came down upon her cheek, and then she started back as one awakening from a dream.

'It is too late,' she said, mournfully. 'No kiss of yours shall ever touch my lips again. When I prayed you for a caress, the memory of which would have been so dear to me, I was free; now I have promised to be a good man's wife. I am no traitress, Hilton. I shall be true to him, now he has my pledged word.'

Sir Hilton's face was scarcely less pale than hers, as he stood before her irresolute and trembling. Small, fragile as

she was, she was more powerful to subdue him than a lion, and he dared not put forth his hand and touch her.

'We have played together, boy and girl, Olive,' he resumed; 'and now, in leaving me for ever, you refuse me the poor privilege of a cousin. Do you indeed refuse it?'

His words galled her. It was always cousinship, brotherhood, or compassion this man was forcing on her. She wanted none of it. She paid no heed to the passion of his voice; she did not see the anguish of love in his eyes; she noted only the ill-chosen words.

'You persecute me, as you ever did,' she said, bitterly. 'Charles Vigo's affianced wife needs no cousin's kisses on her lips. The time of which you speak—the happy play-time of our life—is gone by for ever, Hilton. I shall not weep now to leave you without a kiss. I have suffered too much for tears.'

Her accent was unutterably sad; yet, cold as ice, she moved away from him and walked to the window, leaning her small lithesome figure from the lattice, as she looked out into the moonlight for Charles Vigo. Sir Hilton watched her with a bitter smile on his face.

'Perhaps it is better as it is,' he said, subduing his faltering voice into firmness. 'I confess my chivalry does not equal your lover's. It is my pride to keep the name of Trewavas unstained.'

Was it the moonlight falling full on Olive's face, that covered it at this moment with such a wondrous beauty?

'Your pride shall have its way, Sir Hilton,' she said; 'Olive Varcoe will never throw a stain upon the name of Trewavas.'

Her forlorn attitude, her weary aspect changed, as she spoke, into a stronger, nobler look—it was as though the breath of some brave spirit had passed over her, infusing courage and fortitude into every vein.

'No, your chivalry does not equal Charles Vigo's,' she continued, in a less firm tone. 'You offer me a convent in which to hide my misery—and even that poor gift is an offering made to the Trewavas blood within me; he intrusts me with his honour, his happiness, and even with his name.'

Sir Hilton grew exasperated at her words.

'And can guilt, such as yours, rejoice in the blind infatua-

tion of a boy, who, for passion's sake, tramples on every duty, dishonours his father's grey hairs, and loses self-respect, to clasp to his bosom——'

'Hold!' exclaimed Charles Vigo's voice. 'Insults now are cowardly indeed, because you know at this moment I am powerless to resent them. Repeat your words when I return to England, Sir Hilton, and you shall have your answer.'

At the first startling sound of the young man's voice, Sir Hilton looked up, to see him standing by the window; while, grouped silently in the small, quiet, moonlit street, were about half a dozen men, of that rough, strong aspect, that can only be described as seafaring. Two of these jumped through the casement, and grasped Olive's luggage; but almost at the same moment the door of the little parlour was opened, and the landlord and his wife presented themselves in a sheepish and uncomfortable manner.

'I beg your pardon, Sir Hilton,' said the landlord; 'I am a quiet man, and I wouldn't wish to be disrespectful——'

'Oh, hold your tongue, Tom,' interposed his wife, who had cast a scrutinising look on the aspect of affairs around her. 'You are as long-winded as an organ bellows. The long and the short of it, Sir Hilton, is, that these two men—spies of Sir Anthony's, they are nothing better—are getting mighty curious about your stopping so long; and I think the sooner you goes up to the house the better. Are these sailors friends of yours, sir?'

'No,' said Sir Hilton, shortly.

'Then I must make bold to say, I can't have no disturbance of the peace at my house,' broke in the landlord; 'and if they are your men, Mr. Vigo, you had best take 'em off at once.'

'Hold your noise, Tom,' said his wife. 'Young Squire Vigo hasn't nothing to do with this lot, I know; these are folks who have rolled a keg in-shore many a night.'

'You are mistaken, Mrs. Kinsman,' said Charles Vigo; 'these men are part of the crew of my yacht. Shoulder the baggage, my lads!'

'I've nothing to say agin your going a cruise in your own yacht, Mr. Vigo, even 'long with oogly company,' said the landlady; 'but that's Miss Varcoe's box, and she isn't a-going with you, I reckon?'

'Mistaken again,' said the young man, laughing. 'I am sorry to have kept you up so late, Mrs. Kinsman, but we shall be off in a minute, and then you can shut up comfortably.'

The landlord's fat face turned yellow, but his wife bristled forward angrily.

'I shan't stand by and see this,' said she. 'I won't help in no such doings. Old Squire Vigo would never forgive me to the longest day I have to live. Ellis! Vinning! you had best come here.'

She raised her voice, calling to Sir Anthony's men, who, lost in tobacco smoke and beer, had cared very little for the hushed conversation between Olive and Sir Hilton in the parlour.

'This young lady is going right off at once,' observed Mrs. Kinsman; 'that's contrary to orders, I reckon, isn't it?'

'You can't go, miss,' said the constable, in a surly way.

'What right have you to stop either her or me?' demanded Charles Vigo. 'Have you any warrant against this young lady?'

'Mr. Eslick has,' grumbled the man.

'Then let Mr. Eslick come and execute it,' said Charles Vigo. 'I do not intend to stop any man in the execution of his duty, but I will endure no interference from others. Make way for us to pass.'

With Olive clinging to his arm, Charles Vigo walked towards the door, and Sir Anthony's two spies found themselves in a moment hustled, overpowered, and pinned in a corner.

'Now, my dears, we don't want to hurt 'ee,' observed one huge Cornishman, as his fist played on the constable's ribs; 'but if you don't keep quiet, I shall be forced to gev 'ee a Cornish hug. I shall, sure. We be peaceable men, we be, going about our aun bus'ness; and if other folks put their noses ento it, and meets weth a fist, the fault isn't ours, I reckon.'

This was said in the blandest way, between bruisers and crunchers, that came down heavily upon the chest and face of Sir Anthony's unfortunate spy.

The landlord and landlady of the 'Trewavas Arms' had at first seemed inclined to join in the fray; but prudence, and perhaps something in Sir Hilton's looks, deterred them. The whole affair was over in a minute, and Olive, Charles Vigo,

and the men were gone. As their tramp resounded through the dead quiet of the slumbering village, the church clock struck twelve, and Sir Hilton, rousing himself at the sound as from some strange bewilderment, rushed past the discomfited watchers, and followed Olive with a swift foot.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN that loveliest of tiny bays, above which stood the Lovers' Seat, with its roof of honeysuckle and jasmine, and its surrounding bower of perfumed shrubs, a large and well-manned boat rested on its oars. Upon the white sands, glittering ghostly in the moonlight, the spare figure of Mr. Heriot paced up and down impatiently.

'There goes twelve o'clock,' he said, as the chimes from the church across the park faintly reached him; 'and that confounded packet sails at two. They must row hard now to catch it. Upon my word, I believe these Trewavas mean to hang the girl, after all!'

But, as he spoke, Sir Hilton Trewavas came rapidly down the narrow and steep gorge leading from the park above, and ran eagerly to meet him.

'I guessed you would be waiting here,' he said.

'Where is the girl?' inquired Mr. Heriot, shortly.

'With Charles Vigo,' replied Sir Hilton. 'She has refused my aid. She goes with him I know not whither. He has got a crew of smugglers together, and if the police overtake them there will be a fight. I watched them get into a boat on that little lonely creek, which runs up between the wooded cliffs on the other side of the village; then I ran hither. The creek winds and twists for more than a mile before it reaches the bay. Ah, there is the boat now creeping out! It keeps in the dark fringe of shadow made by the cliffs. Do you see it?'

Sir Hilton's own boat was so close in-shore, that nearly every word of this dialogue had been heard by the crew; and now one among them—a man in a large pilot coat and slouched hat—started up from the darkness in which he sat

shrouded, and displayed to their astonished gaze the serenely smiling face of Mr. Eslick.

'I take the command of this boat,' he cried, in an authoritative voice. 'Give way, men! Follow the boat you see yonder!'

'Throw down your oars, every one of you!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'Obey that fellow's orders if you dare!'

'Mr. Heriot, I call upon you to assist me in the execution of my duty,' cried the excited Mr. Eslick. 'I have a warrant here to arrest Olive Varcoe on a charge of murder. Give way, men—give way!'

'You must let them go, Sir Hilton,' whispered Mr. Heriot; 'there is no help for it. We are in for a fight if we overtake the smugglers, that's certain.'

The agile old mummy sprang into the boat as he spoke, and Sir Hilton Trewavas followed him mechanically.

'I take the helm,' said Mr. Eslick, seizing the rudder. 'Row for your lives, men! Yonder boat has not seen us yet; their oars go lazily, and we shall overtake her.'

There is an excitement in a race which human nature cannot resist, and as the men bent to their oars, even the little dried lawyer, whose bones crackled like parchment as he moved, scanned them with a kindling eye, and with a spot of colour rising in his sapless face.

As the boat passed out of the shadow of the cliffs into the full glare of the moonlight, Sir Hilton saw with intense vexation that the crew did not consist of his own men, but of strangers. In all things, then, Mr. Eslick had been before him in stratagem, and his own rowers had, doubtless, been got rid of by some ruse, or by the terrors of the law; and had he brought Olive down here, he would only have led her into a well-concerted trap. It was easy to understand now why she was left almost unwatched and unmolested at the village inn. Mr. Eslick read the young man's thoughts, and a most seraphic smile broke over his fat face.

'I was sorry to take a liberty with your crew and your boat, Sir Hilton,' said he; 'but in the execution of duty, ceremony must stand aside. I was obliged to place men here on whom I could depend. You perceive, I made sure the young lady would accept your help. I am sorry we are all disappointed. Ah! they see at last we are pursuing them. Give way, lads! They are rowing like demons.'

It was true that Charles Vigo's crew had not at first perceived that the other boat was following them. Unwilling, perhaps, to attract attention by unnecessary speed, they had plied their oars leisurely, and therefore allowed Mr. Eslick's men to shorten considerably the distance between them; but now they suddenly awoke to suspicion, and the steady, swift stroke of their oars jerked the large gig forward like a bird; but Sir Hilton's pleasure-boat was much lighter and smaller, and, to his bitter chagrin, he saw it gaining inch by inch on Olive's ark of refuge.

The moonlight poured down on the set, resolute faces of the crew, and on the beaming countenance of Mr. Eslick, whose smiles grew more and more seraphic as the distance shortened between the two boats; and soon, by the rays of the waning moon, and by the phosphoric light dripping from the swiftly plied oars, the faces of the pursuers and the pursued became plainly visible to each other.

Charles Vigo sat in the stern of the gig, guiding the rudder with a skilful hand; his face was flushed, and his lips were set firmly together, and in his frank blue eyes there quivered a light that flashed across the moonlit sea upon Sir Hilton's shrinking figure.

'Is it you, Sir Hilton Trewavas?' he cried, scornfully. 'Give way, lads! The sight of a traitor makes my blood too hot this summer night.'

A stroke of the oars from hands that seemed to hold a giant's strength carried the boat forward like an arrow, out of earshot; and Sir Hilton, with a shiver over his strong frame, held back the words that had sprung to his lips. But again their own boat shot forward, her greater lightness and speed making up for the superior strength of the smugglers, and the distance between the two grew momentarily less and less. And now it was that Mr. Eslick caught sight of a figure, wrapped in a large cloak, crouching at Charles Vigo's feet—a figure so shrouded that nothing of it was visible, except a lady's hat and veil.

'Poor little thing!' said he, a smile of satisfaction and pity playing over his vapid features. 'I am glad to see her safe. We shall be down upon them in a minute now. Really, Sir Hilton, for the sake of humanity, one feels sorry for her; she is so very young, you know.'

'Confound it, man, hold your tongue!' said Mr. Heriot; 'a policeman should always keep that impish member of the human head between his lips.'

Now Mr. Eslick did not like to be called 'policeman.' As head superintendent of that district, he considered himself quite above such language as this; so he resented it in his usual way, by smiling with supernatural amiability, as he said, blandly, 'I believe I know my own business, Mr. Heriot, and I don't wish to be interrupted in my duty by uncalled-for remarks. But for the extra weight of yourself and Sir Hilton Trewavas in this boat, I should have secured my prisoner before this. Now then, men, two strokes more, and we have them, by——.'

An unmistakable oath dropped from the lips of Mr. Eslick, as the two boats got neck and neck with each other. There was no cowardice in the man; his yellow flabby face grew not one whit uglier or yellower as Charles Vigo's crew saluted their pursuers in language of too strong a description to be written.

'Keep off, you ugly varminths. What are you fouling our boat for?' cried one voice.

'Mr. Vigo, I charge you not to break the Queen's peace!' shouted Mr. Eslick, in an authoritative tone. 'Bid your men to stop rowing, and give up my prisoner, Olive Varcoe.'

'Come and take her, you sniggering, mealy-mouthed villain!' retorted a second voice.

'Silence, men!' said Charles Vigo. 'Am I to understand you are pursuing my boat in search of Miss Varcoe?'

'Yes, I have a warrant against her,' replied Mr. Eslick.

'Really,' said Charles Vigo, 'I thought Sir Hilton Trewavas was trying the skill of his boat's crew against mine. Up with your oars, men! This is no friendly race; it is something rarer—it is a Cornish baronet turned policeman.'

The boats grappled as he spoke, and his men, restored suddenly to wondrous good humour, received Mr. Eslick with a great affectation of politeness, and a broad grin of delight, as that gentleman stepped on board and made his way to the stern, smiling more sweetly than he had ever done before. More gentle was his voice, as he stooped down, and laid his hand on the little figure lying still at Charles Vigo's feet.

'Miss Varcoe,' said he, 'I regret to say it is my painful duty to make you my prisoner.'

Then the cloak shook, the hat and veil fell down, and with a growl and unmistakable snap at the superintendent's fingers, the good dog Bolster stood confessed, his teeth dangerously visible.

A roar of laughter shook the boat from end to end—a roar that rang out into the sky, and began and ended, and began again. The laughter was contagious, for Mr. Eslick's own men joined in it, while the little fusty mummy from the Inns of Court shook and rattled all his bones in glee.

For the first time in his life Mr. Eslick tried to smile, and failed. The attempt was mechanical, for the man was ghastly pale with fury.

'What is the meaning of this?' he cried. 'Where is that woman?'

'Keep a civil tongue in your head, policeman,' returned Charles Vigo, quietly. 'There are no women here, you perceive.'

'And there's only one babby, and that's me,' said the same huge giant who had belaboured Sir Anthony's friend. 'I'm the celebrated Cornish babby, six foot six in my stockings, and there isn't a sweeter-tempered infant between this and Lunnun church-town.'

Charles Vigo checked quickly the laughter that followed this speech.

'Mr. Eslick,' said he, 'having satisfied yourself that Miss Varcoe is not here, I presume you have no further business with me? You had better leave my boat, unless you wish to be carried out to sea.'

'I shall go on board your yacht, sir, in search of my prisoner,' replied Mr. Eslick.

'You are welcome,' said Charles Vigo. 'The yacht lies in Bosvigo Pool, six miles from this; your nearest way to it will be across the hills. Have you anything further to say?'

'Yes,' said he. 'You are not aware, perhaps, that you are guilty of a felony in aiding the escape of a criminal; but such is the case, Mr. Vigo, and I trust the magistrates will prosecute you for the offence.'

'I aid no criminal,' replied Charles Vigo; 'but I am

proud to be a friend of Miss Varcoe's. I am proud to defend a most innocent and cruelly-asperged lady.'

'I am sorry for your blindness, Mr. Vigo,' said Mr. Eslick, his smile returning again to him.

'I am sorry for yours, Mr. Eslick,' said Charles. 'Take care that I do not prove a better policeman than you. I have sworn to bring the murderer of Eleanor Maristowe to justice, and I will do it. No matter where the coward hides, my hand shall drag him forth and give him up to justice.'

'Upon my word,' said Mr. Heriot to himself, 'that country lad has a glimmer of intelligence in him.'

'Sir Hilton Trewavas,' continued Charles Vigo, turning to where the young baronet sat, silent and moody, 'henceforth I shall be ashamed to confess that you and I are neighbours. You have played a sadly ignoble part to-night; and if I do not tell you all I think of it, I am silent, not for your sake, but for that of Lady Trewavas.'

'You mistake altogether the part I have played to-night, Mr. Vigo,' returned Sir Hilton; 'but your opinion is of little consequence to me.'

'You two hot-headed young fellows will be quarrelling in a minute,' observed Mr. Heriot, grimly. 'Widen the distance between us, my men; this is not precisely the place for a free fight.'

'But don't leave Sir Hilton's friend, the policeman, in my boat, if you please,' said Charles Vigo.

'Don't 'ee trouble yourselves to row any nearer,' remarked the Cornish giant, with the blandest politeness; 'I'll hand the wisht little hoddymandoddy over to 'ee. Lor' sure, he esn't heavier than a pednpaly.'

This last word is Cornish for a tomtit, and certainly Mr. Eslick felt himself quite as small as that diminutive bird, as the giant took him up in one hand, and dropped him into the other boat with no very soft fall.

'I hope you aren't hurt, my dear,' observed the Cornishman; 'I am cruel 'feard the thwart was hard. Rub 'un down a bit, soas (friends), with th' oars; that 'ull bring 'un too. Well, good night to 'ee, comrades, and a pleasant pull home!'

Mr. Heriot took off his hat as Charles Vigo's boat rowed away, and he kept it off till the young man's frank face grew

dim and misty in the night air ; then he turned his smoke-dried and withered eyes upon a face of quite a different aspect.

‘I hope you are satisfied with your night’s work, Mr. Eslick,’ he said, politely.

That discomfited individual was ill able to recover his smiles and his self-possession ; nevertheless he made a commendable effort to do so.

‘We are all liable to mistakes, Mr. Heriot,’ said he. ‘My mistake was that I watched the wrong gentleman. I made certain Sir Hilton was the favourite. I am sure, sir, I beg your pardon, that I should have thought, even for a minute, that you would befriend that girl. It’s really quite awful to see young Mr. Vigo led away, and blinded as he is. I see how it is ; they landed her in the creek, and then pulled out here for a blind. She’s hid away somewhere close home, and no doubt my men at the inn will know where.’

Sir Hilton Trewavas was too proud to make any reply. He was galled by every incident of the night ; he was fiercely angry with himself for having followed Mr. Heriot into the boat, and he was enraged with Charles Vigo for misinterpreting his presence ; moreover, he was bitterly ashamed of his own weakness with regard to Olive. It was horrible to him to hear his name coupled with the runaway criminal, whom policemen were hunting up and down the country. Her crime at first had seemed to him wildly tragic, a fate brought on her through her love for him ; but the scene through which he had just passed vulgarised it, rendered it a common every-day affair, a mere brutal murder, committed by female spite. And, after all, there was no grand passion, no absorbing maddening love to redeem it. For how could the woman that so coarsely eloped with Charles Vigo ever have loved him, Sir Hilton Trewavas ?

In Bosvigo Pool the little yacht ‘Pixy’ lay at anchor ; but when Mr. Eslick boarded her in hot haste, there were not only no signs of a lady’s presence to be found, but apparently there was no preparation made for a cruise, and no intention on the part of her owner to remove her from her moorings.

Old Mr. Vigo knew nothing of his son. The young man had not returned home since the morning he had departed with Mr. Damerel on that melancholy search. It now

became evident that, simple as he looked, he had known how to baffle the astute Mr. Eslick and the malignant Sir Anthony Roskelly. In vain both put forth all their powers, hunting far and near for Olive Varcoe. After a hue and cry of many weeks, they were fain to confess that their search was hopeless.

She had escaped! and after her vanished figure flew the arrows of scorn, indignation, and hatred. A shadow of horror grew round her name. The few voices that dared to raise themselves in her behalf were silenced, half ashamed of their own pity and their own doubt. Unheard she was pronounced guilty, and condemned by a universal hiss of execration.

A strong tide of sympathy ran towards Mr. Vigo, left lonely in his home; a still deeper flow greeted Mrs. Maristowe at every turn, exalting her to the crown of martyrdom without the suffering, and giving to her feebleness an interest it never possessed before. And if a lesser stream of kindness set in towards Trewavas, there was still sufficient to uphold the family in their place in the county; and even their enemies dared not say that they had connived at Olive's crime, or assisted in her flight.

Thus the suspicions that Sir Anthony Roskelly and Mrs. Maristowe had flung at Trewavas died away, and the old name stood out in men's minds as proud and as unsullied as ever.

At first there was a great burst of popular indignation against the little coroner, and he was called upon to resign by half the county; but he defended himself with great spirit, recapitulating the evidence, and showing that no other verdict could have been returned on it. The police were the chief parties to blame for this. They had dwelt but little on Mr. Vigo's absence, whereas it was evident he was a very important witness, and his subsequent departure with the accused showed he had a motive for his silence, not guessed at before. The police had reckoned on the girl Tamson as their chief witness; but beyond an assertion that she had knocked twice at Miss Varcoe's door, and received no answer, she really seemed to have nothing of importance to say.

This, and a great deal more of the same kind, was the coroner's defence; and it will be seen by it that Sir Hilton Trewavas had bidden higher for the Skews' family than Sir Anthony Roskelly, while Dr. Burton had known how to keep his own counsel.

As a rule, this is an art in which the medical profession might always graduate with honours. If doctors had the tongues of lawyers, or the pride of parsons, what would become of the world? Luckily for suffering humanity, the spirit of the Pharisee and the conceit of the Inns of Court are not often found beneath the poor coat of the soother and healer. Body and mind are of so near a kin, that while he comforts the one he consoles the other; and to him are constantly laid bare sorrows that would never be told to the Law, or confessed to the Church; and these secrets—let us record it gratefully—spoken perhaps in the saddest moments of human weakness, are never betrayed to the blabbing and sneering world. Many a man who has proved friends false, and kin cruel, has found both truth and kindness in that insignificant member of the healing art who soothes his solitary bedside; and if in some rare instance to be silent is to aid in keeping some guilty secret, even this is far better than to be a proclaimer of men's sins on the housetops. The world cannot afford to make the medical profession the avengers of society. Let fools blab and idlers gossip; wise men hold their peace on many things.

And Nature is mighty in her silence. Down in the deep mines, where the great laboratories of the earth seethe in their monster caldrons our wealth of ores; or, in the sap of tree and stalk of herb, whence springs the wonderful profusion of leaf and flower, all is silent. Happy they who can copy Nature in this—to do their work diligently, and be still.

Throughout the daily torture of this talking time, while journals teemed with surmises, advice, rebuke, and slander, and enemies hissed, and friends pitied, both Lady Trewavas and Sir Hilton bore their part bravely. John alone, silent and patient as he was, broke at times into fits of burning indignation when the tongue of gossip or the pen of editor repeated some fiercer or falser slander than usual. It was these fits only that roused him from a state of depression and weakness that began to alarm his family seriously for his health.

* * * * *

‘My dear Mr. Vigo, is it possible you have never had a line from your son since he left you?’ said Mrs. Tobias Gunning, with a face of melancholy interest.

'Since Miss Varcoe went away you mean,' returned the old gentleman, in a sorrowful tone. 'No, I have not had a line from Charlie since then.'

'My goodness, it's awful!' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Isn't it, my dear Tobias?'

This question was addressed to her husband—a member for one of the smallest of boroughs, and a man who never spoke, in or out of Parliament, except on compulsion; and on these rare occasions his tones were so nasal and guttural, that startled listeners came abruptly to the conclusion that in Mr. Gunning's body the nose, and not the tongue, was the organ of speech. In this present instance he answered his wife's appeal by a grunt of assent, which could not be said to reach the dignity of a word.

'I thought so, my dear,' answered Mrs. Gunning. 'I knew you would be of my opinion. Mr. Vigo, my husband says he considers it atrocious.'

'What is atrocious?' asked old Mr. Vigo, with much simplicity.

'We are talking of the conduct of your son, my dear sir,' said she. 'Mr. Gunning and I have been just remarking to each other how much we feel for you.'

'Really! Was Mr. Gunning saying anything?' demanded the old squire. 'I didn't hear him. It is very kind of you to feel for me, though I am pretty well, thank you. But I should be much obliged if you wouldn't abuse Charlie: father's feelings, you know, and all that sort of thing.'

'Dear Toby is quite charmed, like myself, by your charity and goodness to an undutiful son.'

'Not undutiful,' persisted the obstinate Mr. Vigo; 'he is the best of good fellows. I don't see any charity in saying that; it is just the simple truth.'

'Not undutiful! My dear Mr. Vigo, you surprise me!' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Do you really mean to say that you countenance your son in his conduct?'

'On the whole, yes,' replied the old gentleman, with a sigh. 'When I was his age I was romantic too.'

'Romantic!' said Mrs. Gunning; 'but it is worse than romance to run away with a girl who is more than suspected of murder.'

'Mr. Gunning, as a Member of Parliament you are doubt-

less well acquainted with jurisprudence. Does not the English law hold a person innocent till proved guilty?' asked Mr. Vigo.

Thus addressed, Mr. Gunning felt compelled to deliver himself of a remark; but as his nose happened at the time to be enveloped in his pocket-handkerchief, the words were completely lost in the folds. Mrs. Gunning, however, came to the rescue with an undaunted front.

'My dear sir,' said she, 'my husband observes that the law in question does hold a beautiful theory of that sort, but the practice is altogether the contrary; and, moreover, there is the law of society—and that has entirely condemned this girl. If she were to come back to take her trial, and there was not evidence enough to convict her, that would still make her an outcast.'

'Not if she were Charles Vigo's wife, I think,' said the old gentleman, in a quiet voice.

Mrs. Gunning gave a little scream of horror, while her husband lifted his nose in the air in scornful righteousness and disgust.

'My dear Mr. Vigo, you don't mean to say he has actually married her!' exclaimed Mrs. Gunning. 'That is worse than the other—much worse. That is an unpardonable offence against society, you know, and one we shall never forgive. If he had only run away with her, and, after a year or two, returned to his senses, we should all welcome the prodigal with a smile; but to marry such a woman—'

'It would be a much less sin, I suppose, to leave her in a ditch,' said Mr. Vigo.

'A ditch is the only proper place for some women,' remarked the Gunning nose, with unwonted clearness.

'My dear, you always express yourself with force and propriety,' exclaimed his wife, with a burst of admiration. 'I am quite of your opinion. I trust, Mr. Vigo, that no such frightful misfortune as a marriage with this miserable girl, Olive Varcoe, has befallen your son.'

'And yet I don't know anyone I should like better for a daughter,' persisted the sturdy old squire.

The amazement that sat on Mr. Gunning's nose at this remark turned it to a purplish aspect; and Mrs. Gunning, who accurately interpreted every shade of that expressive

feature, immediately broke forth into a torrent of surprise.

'Tobias is dying to know your reason for that, Mr. Vigo,' she exclaimed. 'It sounds so absurd, so eccentric, you know—so unnatural! Tobias is asking if you know something more about the girl than we do.'

'Oh, dear me!—no, nothing,' replied the squire, a little quickly. 'You have all known her as many years as I have; you have all seen her a mere dependent on the Trewavas family, with no one very consistently kind to her, I think, except John.'

'Ah! and how ungrateful she has been to that family!' said Mrs. Gunning, piously; 'such silk dresses and things as I have seen Lady Trewavas buy for her. But, as I say, what's a dark closet, or the catechism, to a heathen? They couldn't expect a Turk or Arab (which is she?) to turn out any better. Not consistently kind! My dear Mr. Vigo, they were too kind—they should never have taken such a girl into their house. I can't imagine why you take her part. Perhaps now you positively think her an innocent, ill-used creature.'

Mr. Gunning here blew his nose loudly, and Mrs. Gunning instantly interpreted the speech.

'Excuse me, Mr. Vigo,' she said; 'my husband thinks I have gone a little too far; he says I am quite insulting you. Pray forgive me. But you really do appear to feel favourably towards her, now don't you?'

'Perhaps I do,' replied the old squire, as he stared hard at Mr. Gunning's nose, which breathed at him contempt and pity.

'And what possible reason can you have for that?' asked Mrs. Gunning.

'None at all,' he replied; 'at least none that would be reasons in your eyes, Mrs. Gunning. I confess that things look fearfully black against this poor girl, and the world seems almost justified in its condemnation of her; yet Charlie thinks well of her; Charlie believes her innocent; and that's reason enough for me to have full faith also.'

Mr. Gunning's nose here snorted contempt and defiance with a loudness that might have startled reporters, and made honourable members turn uneasily in their seats.

'Tobias is amazed,' exclaimed Mrs. Gunning. 'Tobias observes emphatically that your son is infatuated and blinded, and not in a fit state of mind to form an opinion. Tobias asserts that in all countries and climes wicked women find dupes, who believe in them and are ready to swear they are angels. Tobias declares justly that a pretty face is everything with a man.'

Here a note of dissent broke from Mr. Gunning's organ of speech.

'Didn't you say that, my dear?' resumed Mrs. Gunning. 'Well, I beg your pardon; I really thought you did. You observed, at all events, that young Mr. Vigo is certainly a dupe——'

'You are mightily mistaken in Charlie,' broke in the old squire. 'People don't easily take in Charlie. He is as clear-headed a fellow as ever lived, and too good-hearted to be a dupe. In my experience of life, I have seen that thoroughly good, honest folks, like my boy, are rarely deceived. It is the crafty, the hard, the worldly, who get cheated and make mistakes in their estimate of character. There is a sort of instinct about goodness that holds it safe; your evil-speaker and evil-thinker may get duped by appearances, but a pure and honest mind goes deeper, and forms a sounder judgment.'

This was rather more than Mr. Gunning's nose was able to bear; it expressed its disgust and weariness in a loud sniff, which said plainly as nose could speak that the conference had gone beyond the bounds of patience. As usual, Mrs. Gunning instantly interpreted, and obeyed.

'Well, my dear Mr. Vigo,' said she, 'we shall be quite charmed to answer your argument another time, but now really we must go.'

Mrs. Gunning rose, and stretched out her hand; but at this moment Mr. Gunning thought fit to make a long remark.

'I wished,' said he, 'to address a question to the house. There is a dark——'

'My dear Tobias, how wonderfully stupid I am,' interrupted Mrs. Gunning. 'We came on purpose to ask you, Mr. Vigo, if you had heard the news. Sir Hilton Trewas complains that he and his brother are followed in their walks by a tall man, a foreigner, very dark, with black hair,

and spectacles, and a stoop in his gait. Do you know the man? Have you seen him? Sir Hilton declares he is a spy of Sir Anthony Roskelly's. An odd story—isn't it? And you can't tell us anything about it?'

'Not a single word,' replied Mr. Vigo, gravely.

'That's strange,' continued the voluble Mrs. Gunning. 'Tobias considers it his duty to bring the matter before Parliament. He says, very justly, we are in a free country—we can't tolerate spies here—and if Sir Anthony is the deputy-lieutenant, we are not Russians.'

'No, certainly,' said Mr. Vigo; 'but why does this man follow Sir Hilton Trewavas?'

'Ah, there's the mystery!' cried Mrs. Gunning. 'But Tobias has a shrewd guess on the subject.'

'Speak out, Gunning,' said old Mr. Vigo, turning to the parliamentary nose of that individual. 'You and I have known each other too long to be sore at a frank speech.'

'I apprehend, and imagine, and understand,' said Mr. Gunning, 'that Sir Anthony——'

'Being an enemy, you know, of the Trewavas,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'doesn't in the least believe that Olive Varcoe went off willingly with your son. The girl liked Sir Hilton all along, and she will soon let him know where she is, and—and, in fact, manage an interview. Then Sir Anthony will quietly put his hand upon her. Now, you understand why a spy is set to work. Still we are not in Russia. And I must say—— Well, good-bye; when will you come to see us?'

Still talking, the voluble Mrs. Gunning settled herself in her carriage, and bestowed a parting smile on Mr. Vigo.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FOOTFALL echoing through the rooms of Trewavas now sounded ghostly, and the sudden closing of a door struck the ear like thunder. A ghastly quiet had settled down upon the place, weighing on the spirits like a pall; while through

the empty saloons John's pale figure, or Sir Hilton's manlier step, passed slowly, evoking for Lady Trewavas, as she raised her eyes in sorrow, the shadows of Eleanor and of Olive. These two seemed to her fancy ever near at hand. Often at twilight, ere the lamps were lighted, her heart beat quickly, as in the folds of a white curtain, or in a flickering moon-beam, the reproachful face of Eleanor seemed to shine upon her dimly. Olive came to her at happier times. Was there a quicker step upon the stairs, a rare voice of merriment raised in some distant room, then swiftly there danced before her eyes the tiny figure, and the bright, flashing look of the strange girl, who had brought upon their house such sin and sorrow.

On the altar of his pride Sir Hilton had sacrificed his happiness and the life of a sinless victim. For pride's sake he had persuaded himself to love Eleanor Maristowe, relinquishing the boyish dream that had placed Olive Varcoe by his side. And from this had followed all the dire events that had sprinkled his path with blood. In the blindness of his pride he had gone on headlong in his career, never seeing that he was trampling on John's meek heart, and tempting Olive's fiery nature into sin. Ah! he had played a miserable part through life; and, now that it was too late, he was waking up in bitterness to see it.

In this irritable and restless mood, Sir Hilton apparently found even his brother's society irksome; for he wandered away with his gun alone, or he took long solitary rambles on the sea, rowing from point to point of the bay, or sailing up lonely creeks, where nothing met him save the shadow of the great hills. Here, under the pretence of fishing, he sat silent, striving with his own spirit, seeking out of the chaos and the turmoil of passion to find peace.

Returning one evening late from one of these excursions, his brother John met him in the hall with a haggard face, and almost dragged him to the library.

'Hilton,' said he, in a hurried, fevered way, 'I must leave Trewavas. I have troubled this place enough. Promise me you will care for grandmother when I am away, and I will go to-morrow.'

'What has happened, John? What has agitated you?' asked Sir Hilton, kindly. 'We must not either of us quit

Trewavas, and leave an aged woman exposed to the hate and slander of enemies.'

'No, no, of course not,' said John, with that same look of patient suffering on his face which it had worn so long. 'But you can stay, Hilton. You will not be haunted as I am.'

'My dear John,' said he, 'we must both stay. It is clearly our duty to stand by our grandmother while this storm of scandal lasts. Do you think I have not longed to get away, and forget myself among more stirring scenes in some foreign land? But I have seen it cannot be. Lady Trewavas is now too old to travel, and to change her residence would be to make her feel that she had been driven from her home. My dear John, do not let us give an aged lady so great a pain; do not let us give Sir Anthony Roskelly so great a triumph.'

'I have not your courage, Hilton,' said John, looking up meekly at his brother. 'I am a poor miserable fellow at the best, and things lately have quite knocked me down.'

The worn, wan look of patience on his brother's face cut Sir Hilton to the heart, and he replied, cheerily, 'The worst is over, John. You are wrong to let this affair dwell morbidly on your mind.'

'The worst over, Hilton!' repeated John. 'No; I tell you it comes upon us step by step. Wait till the murderer is taken, then say the worst is over.'

His quivering lips, and the glance of agonised terror in his eye, told Sir Hilton how tenacious a hold the horror of this time had taken on his mind.

'Do not fear,' said Sir Hilton, kindly. 'I firmly believe that most unhappy girl is safe. May Heaven have mercy on her!'

'Olive! do you mean Olive?' said John, and his face quivered with anguish. 'I do not believe she was in the wood that day. I never have believed it, Hilton; if I believed it, I should go mad.'

'If it comforts you, John,' replied Sir Hilton, mournfully, 'Heaven forbid that I should shake your disbelief; but I cannot so deceive myself.'

There was a moment's silence between the brothers; and John, throwing himself into a chair, covered his face with his hands. In his weary attitude, in his gaunt thinness, in

the long white hands covering his haggard eyes, Sir Hilton read a tale of woe that shocked him. The sense of his own miserable pride, and selfishness, and hardness, struck him like a knife. No matter what his own sufferings were, here was the chief sufferer: here before him, presenting this gaunt spectacle of sorrow, was the victim whom this sin had most deeply smitten. Olive's grief was not like this grief: she seemed to hold within her some consoling power; but John had that upon his face which told that he was pierced to the heart.

Sir Hilton broke the silence in a low voice.

'John,' said he, 'I fear you loved Eleanor Maristowe very dearly.'

John did not take his hands from his face; he only bowed his head in assent.

'I had no idea,' continued Sir Hilton, softly; 'believe me, John, I had not the least suspicion that you loved her.'

'I know it, Hilton,' said his brother.

As he spoke his hands dropped down, and Sir Hilton saw large drops of sweat standing on his face like beads.

'I wish I could say something comforting,' resumed Sir Hilton, hurriedly; 'but we men are poor hands at that. I can only say, be a man, throw off this morbid grief, and face the truth bravely. The manner of this poor girl's death was awful, I grant, and the guilt of it lying upon our roof makes it terrible; but beyond this, what have you to grieve for? I hope you won't think me cruel for saying it, but on my life and honour, John, Eleanor would never have loved you. Had there been no question of a marriage with me, she would still never have accepted you.'

John looked at his brother with such dry, wild eyes, that Sir Hilton started, and laid his hand kindly on his shoulder.

'Hilton,' he said, 'I repeat I must leave Trewavas. My health is giving way completely. Mine is a weaker, a more excitable nature than yours, and I am not able to bear the sight of places filled with such agonising memories. You will think me crazed, or womanly, if I tell you that I am haunted; yet, nevertheless, it is true. Hilton, I begin to have the most extraordinary delusions. Not only do I see Eleanor and Olive constantly in these rooms, but I see others too. Men I knew at college, who are either dead or in distant

lands, and women whom I had forgotten—old servants, childish sweethearts—they come, and vanish as I look at them. Even when I go out the same thing happens. Lately (will you believe it?) I have constantly seen young Vigo following me like a shadow. I know all these things are a delusion, but no effort of my reason banishes them.'

The low, trembling voice in which John spoke, his haggard look, his wild eyes, all attested the truth of his words; and Sir Hilton perceived with surprise and sorrow that his health was far more shaken than he had supposed. Nevertheless, he answered him cheerfully.

'You always were a nervous fellow, John,' said he. 'All these things will pass away as you get better; but you are right—you must have change. What do you say to going to the Lakes?'

'Water!' said John, with a shudder; 'more water—always water! No, no! the thought of those smooth, treacherous lakes is hateful to me.'

'Well,' said Sir Hilton, 'shall we have the yacht out, and go for a cruise to Norway?'

'We two together!' asked John, dreamily. 'No, Hilton; I should kill you before the voyage was over.'

'Kill me!' echoed Sir Hilton, laughing. 'Not a bit of it, old fellow. I am rather too tough to be killed by a little rough sailing.'

'I did not mean that,' said John, hurriedly; 'I meant my nervous fancies would kill you. Imagine being shut up in a yacht with a haunted creature, a gaunt lunatic, who is always seeing ghosts!'

John laughed as he spoke—an abrupt hollow laugh, a laugh that gave Sir Hilton a strange thrill as he heard it. He could not tell by what singular transition of thought it happened, but at that moment his memory travelled back to a boyish visit he had made to Bedlam; thence it recurred to a story he had heard of a man's going up in a balloon with a madman, whom at length he overpowered, after a fearful struggle for life, up among the clouds. As this story came to his mind, he remembered through what gradual doubt, wonder, and final horror there broke upon the man the fact of the madness of his friend. All this passed through his brain like a flash; but, shaking it off—for it came like a shadow—he

turned to speak to his brother. But John's face struck him for a moment powerless and dumb. With fixed eye, and cheeks of ghastly paleness, he was gazing at the window with a look of horror.

'John!' he exclaimed. 'Speak! What is it? Are you ill?'

'Charles Vigo!' replied John, with white lips, recovering himself by a frightful effort.

Sir Hilton turned, and saw the figure of a man just passing by the window swiftly. In a moment he had opened it, and sprung out after him.

'Stop! Who are you? What are you doing here?' cried Sir Hilton, in a voice that rang through the air.

A shambling figure creeping through the shrubs stopped at his command, and stood still patiently till Sir Hilton reached him. He was a tall, dark man, with black beard and long black hair, and an ungainly stoop in his gait. He wore spectacles, and through these his piercing eyes shone keenly.

'I hope your honour is not angry,' he said, with a foreign accent. 'I do not know the premises here. I am a stranger, a poor pedlar. I sell jewels, and laces, and fans, and China crape shawls. Curious things from Japan and India, gentleman. Presents for brides, gifts for cousins and sisters; love-tokens for sweethearts, daggers for enemies. Shall I show them, my good gentleman?'

The man rebuckled the flat pack he carried on his shoulders, and was departing, apparently for the servants' quarters, when Lady Trewavas came suddenly across the lawn and confronted him. She looked inquiringly at Sir Hilton, who answered the question in her eyes.

'It is only a pedlar,' said he, 'selling false jewellery, I suppose.'

Meanwhile the man, with a lame, shambling gait, was departing as hastily as he could, when Lady Trewavas called him back.

'Have you any thimbles, pedlar?' she said. 'I will buy a dozen if you have. I want them for the girls at the school,' she added, turning to her grandson.

Sir Hilton, whose mind was full of his brother, nodded to her, and strolled away thoughtfully, meaning to return to

the library. With his fluency strangely checked, the pedlar took down his pack, and opened it on the lawn.

‘Are you Lady Trewavas?’ he said, in a hurried voice.

‘Yes,’ she replied.

‘I have wanted to see you these many days,’ he continued, eagerly. ‘Olive Varcoe sends you this packet. I promised to give it into your own hands.’

While speaking, he had unlocked an inner case in his pack, and he now took thence a packet directed in Olive’s well-remembered writing, which he handed to Lady Trewavas.

With the packet in her hands, and very pale, Lady Trewavas stood silent and amazed; she listened eagerly to the man’s rapid and foreign accent and peculiar voice.

‘You are not a pedlar,’ she said, abruptly.

‘Pardon, lady,’ said he. ‘No. You are right. I am not a pedlar, but a travelling merchant—a dealer in silks and jewels, fans, laces, feathers, shawls—anything you please; or I take jewels in exchange, if your ladyship——’

‘Of what use is it to bestow this jargon upon me?’ said Lady Trewavas, sternly. ‘It is evident to me you are not what you seem. You are an emissary of Olive Varcoe’s. Why has she sent you hither?’

‘Lady, you see the truth at once,’ said he. ‘I will not try to deceive you. Yes, I am a messenger from your niece; but she only sent me to deliver that packet. Now I have done her bidding, I go back to my own land.’

Twisting the packet in her hands, Lady Trewavas remained a moment, bewildered and silent. It was so like Olive to send a letter in this wild, outlandish way, that she did not doubt the man’s statement.

‘I suppose you know,’ she resumed, ‘that it would be dangerous and cruel to mention to any one where you saw this unhappy girl; you know it is unsafe even to name her.’

‘I have listened and not spoken since I have been in this land,’ replied the pedlar. ‘Will you give me a line to say the packet is come safe to your hands?’

‘Shall you see her again, then, soon?’ asked Lady Trewavas, eagerly.

‘Not soon,’ replied the wily pedlar; ‘but we may meet again, and then I would like her to know I had obeyed her commands.’

Lady Trewavas glanced uneasily at the man's face, and then said, in a hurried manner, 'I will give you a line to-morrow, when I have read this. Come for it if you will.'

'I dare not promise to come to-morrow, lady,' said he; 'but if you will wrap the letter in this handkerchief, and put it in the old hollow tree that overhangs the turnstile by the church, I can get it by a sure hand.'

The lady took the handkerchief he held towards her.

'I will put the letter in the tree myself,' she said, quietly.

'Thanks, madam,' said the pedlar, bowing low, but without lifting his hat; and in another moment his long, ungainly shadow might be seen gliding swiftly over the park.

Lady Trewavas watched the pedlar till he was out of sight, and it was not till then that she turned towards the house. She opened the packet in Sir Hilton's presence. There were two letters within, one addressed to herself, one to Sir Hilton. As Sir Hilton tore open his letter, a bundle of bank-notes fell to the ground. This was all it contained; there was not a word or a line on the blank sheet of paper. Trembling with excitement, he did not stoop to pick up the money lying at his feet.

'Grandmother,' he said, in a low voice, 'what is the meaning of this?'

Lady Trewavas did not reply, but put the other letter in his hand, and he read the following lines:—

'MY DEAR AUNT,—I cannot begin my letters any other way, parted though we are in anger and pain. I will not say how often I think of Trewavas, or how sad I am at times. I write only to send you the money I owe you and Sir Hilton, for my long residence beneath your roof—a residence of ten years—more than half my life. I find that you have generously deducted nothing from my little fortune for all the expense to which I have put you. I might accept this kindness, this charity from you, aunt, but I will not take it from Sir Hilton Trewavas. I enclose in another packet the sum I owe him. I send it by a sure hand, who will bring a letter to me in return, if you care for me enough to write it. Before I left England I heard, not from Mr. Truscott direct, but through him, that you wished to settle two hundred a year on me. I cannot accept it. Do not be hurt. I assure you it is utterly impossible for me to accept

any favour of this kind at your hands. Trust me, and believe me in this, though you will in nothing else. I should not insist on repaying you all I have cost you, unless my present position imperatively forced me to do you this justice. If you think I do this from pride and ill-will, you will mistake me.

'Farewell, aunt. I must not give you any news of myself, beyond saying that I am well, and that I am still in heart,

'Your niece,

'OLIVE VARCOE.

'P.S.—Take care of John. I fear his health needs watchfulness.'

'Then she is not married!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. She signs herself "Varcoe." Can she have sunk so low? Is young Vigo such a coward?'

'Can you blame him, Hilton?' said Lady Trewavas. 'Would you have married Olive Varcoe?'

'No,' replied Sir Hilton; 'but I would not have taken advantage of her guilt and her defencelessness——'

'Neither has Charles Vigo,' interrupted Lady Trewavas. 'Think better of him, Hilton, and of your cousin also. Passionate as Olive has too often shown herself, she has the honour of a queen. This is not the letter of a woman who has lost self-respect. Her crime was the impulse of a desperate moment; her virtues are her own. Poor girl—poor girl!'

Lady Trewavas felt her eyes fill with tears, and, to hide them, she stooped and picked up the notes lying at Sir Hilton's feet. She laid them on the table before him, but he swept them down again savagely.

'Grandmother,' said he, 'why did you never say a good word of her before? Why have you waited till she was an outcast, wandering we know not whither, before you confess she has some virtue? And what is she doing? If she is not Charles Vigo's wife, how is she living? She has stripped herself of all she possesses to send us this accursed money. Not being of age, and fleeing as she is from justice, she must have got it at an immense sacrifice.'

Sir Hilton looked at his grandmother with a sort of sullen despair in his face.

'Perhaps it is not her money. Perhaps Charles Vigo——' she began.

'Mother, Olive would not dare to insult me!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'A moment ago you took her part; now you say she has that man's purse at her command. No—I tell you she would never send me any of Charles Vigo's money!'

'Then it is her own, Hilton,' she said; 'and, as you say, she has beggared herself to procure it.'

There was a moment's silence, no sound breaking it but Sir Hilton's hurried steps as he paced the room.

'And how is the girl living? Can you answer me that?' he cried, suddenly.

He spoke in a tone of bitter mournfulness—a tone that could not offend Lady Trewavas, though it grieved her.

'The small fortune she possessed being gone,' continued Sir Hilton, in the same dreary voice, 'she faces the world penniless, friendless, alone; and she is but a child—a beautiful child. Guilty, passionate as she is, she is so young that the sternest justice might still feel for her some touch of human pity, when thinking of her forlorn condition, her helplessness, her loneliness.'

'And her remorse,' interposed Lady Trewavas, gently. 'Surely, Hilton, if her punishment is great, if her hardships and sufferings will be terrible, so also is her crime; and let us hope her repentance will equal it.'

'I saw none in her,' said Sir Hilton, thoughtfully. 'I saw grief, certainly, and with it there was a strange kind of courage; but I saw nothing like remorse or shame. But her wayward nature is not easily understood; she may suffer more in her tearlessness than the weepers and wailers can imagine. It is of her life I am thinking, not of her guilt. Hard men have died in the battle she has taken upon herself; how then can she war with the world and live? Without references, without friends, living in secrecy under a false name, she can get her living by no honourable path. In fact, unless we help her, she must perish, or fall a prey to her position and the villainy of the world.'

'How can we help her when she will accept no aid from us, and when we do not know where she is?' asked Lady Trewavas.

'We can help her through her own messenger,' replied

Sir Hilton. 'We can restore this money to him, and we can send her by the same way the deed by which you will settle on her an annuity of two hundred a-year.'

'You can do it, if you will,' said Lady Trewavas; 'but I feel certain it will be all useless. However, the man told me how a letter would reach him. I am to wrap it in this handkerchief, and hide it in the hollow tree that stands near the stile by the church. Will it be safe to put the money there?'

'Safe enough, if I watch the place till the man comes for it,' replied Sir Hilton.

Lady Trewavas did not answer for a moment, but her face wore an expression of great uneasiness.

'The man is no pedlar, Hilton,' she said, 'and I confess I do not like his appearance. I would rather you did not come in contact with him.'

'I hope I can fight, if needs be,' replied Sir Hilton, carelessly.

'It is not that,' said Lady Trewavas. 'The truth is, I would rather you did not see any of Olive Varcoe's messengers. If it should be known, the world would say we had connived at her guilt and her flight, and knew her hiding-place—in fact, the whole affair would come up again.'

'Do you care?' asked Sir Hilton. 'For myself, I am beginning to think——'

He paused, rose hurriedly, and began to pace the room again.

'I consider, also, Hilton, that since she has put herself under the guardianship of young Vigo,' said Lady Trewavas, hurriedly, 'we have scarcely a right to interfere in her affairs.'

'We have a better right than he has!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, fiercely. 'And as to the world, what would it say to the annuity you give her? Would it not say it was the price I paid her for her crime?'

'It would indeed,' said Lady Trewavas; 'and therefore she will refuse it, Hilton. She cannot take a penny from us. She never will—she never can; the thing is impossible.'

'I know it,' said the young man, stopping drearily in his walk. 'And I begin to understand at last her motive. She refuses our help, to spare our family pride. An outcast, a

wanderer, she will bear her guilt, her pain alone, unshielded even in secret by a Trewavas—she will bear beggary, shame, famine, anything rather than let her name be coupled with ours.'

'She is right, Hilton,' said Lady Trewavas; 'and there is a kind of nobleness in that, too. Guilty as she is, she knows us innocent, and she does not wish the shadow of her sin to touch us.'

'But what if I do not care?' asked Sir Hilton, mournfully. 'What if I feel it would be better to endure the shadow, and suffer the suspicions and slander of a gaping world, rather than let Olive Varcoe starve and die, or sink into shame? Oh, tell me, tell me, what shall I do to force this girl to accept something from us?'

His sudden vehemence and his despair startled Lady Trewavas.

'We can send her money back by her messenger,' she said. 'I do not see that we can do more. She is in Charles Vigo's hands; we must leave the rest to him.'

'But I will not leave the rest to him!' thundered Sir Hilton, fiercely. 'Why should she take Charles Vigo's money rather than mine?'

'Because her crime is in no way connected with him, as it is with us,' replied Lady Trewavas. 'Eleanor Maristowe was not his affianced wife.'

Sir Hilton sat down, and rested his head upon his hands; when he looked up again his face was white and haggard.

'How I envy that man his love!' he said.

Lady Trewavas saw that deep down in Sir Hilton's heart lay a passionate and mournful love, against which his pride had struggled for years, and now at last it was beating down all barriers, even those of crime and shame; and he was half lamenting the bars he had held against it: he was envying the reckless, wild generosity of this boy, young Vigo.

'Charles has acted cruelly towards his father and his family,' said Lady Trewavas, with some warmth. 'If you or John thus sacrificed your name and mine, for the sake of a wicked girl, I should die of grief and shame.'

'Do not fear,' said Sir Hilton, with a tinge of his old pride in his voice; 'John and I will never disgrace the name of Trewavas.'

‘What is it that you say of me?’ asked a patient, quiet voice, in broken tones. ‘Disgrace! No, I will die before I disgrace you.’

‘My dear John, how softly you crept into the room!’ said Lady Trewavas. ‘I never heard you.’

‘I have only been here a minute,’ he said. ‘What’s this? A letter from Olive! Let me read it.’

He read it in a quick, excited way, unlike himself, and then laid it on the table with a trembling hand.

‘How did you get it?’ he said, quickly.

An instinctive fear withheld the explanation from Lady Trewavas’s lips.

‘A man—a messenger from Olive—brought it,’ she replied, evasively.

‘He must be careful, very careful,’ said John, looking much alarmed. ‘If Sir Anthony Roskelly knew of it, he would find some pretence at once for arresting the man. I had better see him, and warn him. Where can he be found?’

‘I cannot tell you,’ replied Lady Trewavas. ‘And rely on it, John, it would be most imprudent to hold any communication with a messenger of Olive’s. Leave the man to take care of himself.’

John listened to Lady Trewavas’s words in his old patient way; but it was easy to see that it cost him an effort to do this, for a cold dew stood upon his forehead in large drops, and there grew into his eyes an expression of such dreary pain and sorrow, that the heart quailed at it.

‘Always the same selfish counsels,’ he said. ‘Let us forsake the wretch who was tortured into crime by one mad, miserable impulse, lest the leprosy of guilt cling to us and shame us! Am I never to do anything for Olive? I ask you—never?’

His sudden vehemence burst upon them like a sort of terror, holding both silent.

‘It was I who should have saved her, I tell you—not Charles Vigo,’ he continued. ‘Oh, I was sick, weak, miserable, and mad, else surely somewhere within my soul I should have found the courage of a man. I should have had strength to rise and defend the unhappy girl against the world. Hilton, you should have dragged me from my bed—

you should have flung me from my room like a dog. Why did you heed my cowardly tears, my whinings, my terror ?'

But here John suddenly stopped ; the fury of his words, which had held them silent, ceased ; and his voice broke quavering, like the voice of a woman in tears. Strange to say, Lady Trewavas had not much pity for him—he was never her favourite, and she spoke now with some bitterness.

'I will go and write a few lines to Olive, cautiously of course ; and I will put the letter and the money in the place the man appointed,' she said. 'If you persist in your intention to watch, I hope you will promise me not to speak to him.'

'I have no wish to do so,' replied Sir Hilton.

He would have said more ; but, as Lady Trewavas passed him in quitting the room, he marked how her face had aged, and her stately carriage had bent, and her firm step faltered, and he determined wisely to talk less than he had done of Olive Varcoe.

At ten o'clock that night Lady Trewavas laid the packet in the hollow tree herself, and then departed slowly homewards through the moonlight, leaving Sir Hilton standing in the shadow of the old church, completely hidden by the but-tress against which he leant.

Slowly the hours went by, tolling out their iron sound to the night, like a knell of faded hope and dying love, and still no footstep broke the silence, no human shadow stole upon the quiet graves.

At one o'clock the moon went down ; but the night was fine, and the clear starlight left the old stile and hollow tree faintly visible. And thus nearly another hour went by, and Sir Hilton, leaning wearily against the wall, with patience and hope both worn out, roused himself with sudden expectation, as a sharp rustle among the leaves came distinctly on his ear. Another instant, and there dashed by him something indistinct and dusky, rapid as a shadow. He scarcely saw it, ere the flash of a pistol illumined the darkness, and, looking up bewildered, he perceived John's woful, white face.

'It was Eslick who fired,' said John. 'Did you see him—the dog, I mean—Bolster ? Now, will you believe I saw Charles Vigo ? Hilton, I swear to you I have seen that young man every day since Olive left.'

Confused by the suddenness of the whole affair, Sir Hilton

listened in bewilderment to John's excited words; then, to his perplexed eyes, another face grew out of the mist, and shaped itself into the seraphic visage of Mr. Eslick.

'I never hit the brute,' he cried. 'He's gone clean off with the booty. As well try to chase a ghost as catch Bolster.'

'Charles Vigo's dog!' exclaimed Sir Hilton.

'The very same,' said Mr. Eslick, breaking into his old smile; 'and the best retriever in all England.'

'And is it Bolster,' said Sir Hilton, 'who has fetched away the packet—'

'Directed to Miss Varcoe,' interrupted Mr. Eslick. 'Yes, Sir Hilton, it is that exceedingly sagacious animal that has carried off the letter to its address. There is no doubt now that his master and mistress are in hiding somewhere close by.'

Sir Hilton could not restrain his annoyance and indignation.

'Why were you here, sir?' he asked, savagely.

'I was here in the fulfilment of my duty, Sir Hilton,' he replied. 'Sir Anthony Roskelly and other magistrates are determined to arrest Miss Varcoe; they have placed the whole affair in my hands; I intend to carry it out to a successful issue. To discover Mr. Charles Vigo, will be to put one's hand on Miss Varcoe. And thinking I might hear or see something of that gentleman at this place to-night, I came hither, and took up my watch nearer the old tree than you did, Sir Hilton.'

'Who is the villain—the traitor, the spy—at Trewavas who relates to you all that happens under my roof?' cried Sir Hilton.

The passion that shook in his voice and sparkled in his eyes made the smiling Mr. Eslick draw a step or two backwards.

'I am not at liberty to mention my informant, Sir Hilton,' he replied; 'so pray excuse my inability to oblige you.'

'Come away, Hilton,' said John, anxiously.

Sir Hilton, evidently thinking it useless to parley further, strode away, without giving any parting salutation to the superintendent. John, however, slightly raised his hat in passing, though he kept his face turned away.

'I can understand nothing of this,' resumed Sir Hilton, in a low voice, as they got out of hearing. 'Explain it, John, if you can.'

‘Eslick is a miserable sneak and scoundrel, and a spy of Sir Anthony’s,’ said John. ‘Hilton, that man is resolved to drive us from the country; he will fix this murder on us, if he can.’

‘You are dreaming, John,’ said his brother. ‘What have we to do with that unhappy girl’s crime? And what is this idiot boy Vigo about, if he has not got her safe away?’

John shook like a reed as his brother asked the question, and his wan lips uttered no reply.

‘Who can tell what Vigo is doing?’ he said at last. ‘He has never left England, I am certain.’

‘Well, I hope his dog has taken him back his accursed money,’ said Sir Hilton, between his teeth. ‘Now explain how all this has happened.’

‘I fear it is partly my fault,’ replied John. ‘I complained the other day, at the little police station in the village, of that man who has followed me about. This made them watchful, and it seems they looked out for this pedlar, and saw him speak to Lady Trewavas on the lawn.’

‘And Eslick placed a spy upon her, I suppose, and watched her put the packet in the hollow tree,’ said Sir Hilton. ‘The rascal must have been in ambush, then. I wish I had guessed it! I would have given him something to remember me by.’

‘It would have been useless, Hilton,’ said John, mournfully. ‘Sir Anthony Roskelly would only employ another spy. On all sides we are surrounded, and we shall be hunted down at last. I am weary of it.’

‘Let him go on,’ exclaimed Sir Hilton. ‘He will find out at length that we know nothing of Olive. You were foolish to complain to Eslick of the spy he had put on you.’

John was silent a moment; then he said, in that patient, meek way peculiar to him, ‘You will say again that I am mad; but it is no spy of Eslick’s that follows me—it is Charles Vigo! I tell you I see his face wherever I go.’

‘I will not say you are mad, John,’ replied his brother. ‘Since Bolster is in the country, perhaps his master is also. I only say it is a mad fancy of yours, to suppose he should trouble himself to follow you; and if you have mentioned this notion to Eslick, I am not surprised he watched the tree to-night. Perhaps he hoped to see Vigo, and intended to

follow him, knowing he should then get at the place of Olive's concealment.'

'I am sorry I said anything; I never thought of its leading to mischief,' remarked John, meekly.

'Never trust Eslick again, John,' said Sir Hilton. 'I don't think it matters this time. Charles Vigo knew better than to come himself to the tree; his messenger, the pedlar, was also too clever to risk it, and the dog has got safe away; so our friend with the smiling countenance has not gained much by his move to-night.'

CHAPTER XV.

MR. HERIOT sat alone in his study, when a servant entered, and laid before him a letter. He was not very eager to open it; on the contrary, he looked at it with much of that disgust with which men, who have worked hard, are apt to regard all written documents. But the servant waited, and this seemed to say it required an answer; so with listless hand he broke the seal, and cast a careless glance at the contents; then his face changed to sudden interest, and in a sharp, quick voice he asked where the messenger was that waited.

'In the servants' hall, sir,' was the reply.

'Show him in here at once,' said Mr. Heriot.

The next moment, a young man, dressed in labourer's attire, and possessing a shock head of red hair, and a complexion of a yellow-ochreish cast, entered the room with an awkward and loutish bow. Mr. Heriot scanned him from head to foot with a scrutinising glance, not uttering a word till the door was shut and the footsteps of the retreating servant had died out of hearing. Then he burst into a shout of laughter, which pealed forth again and again as his visitor repeated his clownish bow, and stood with a grave and respectful face awaiting his commands.

'So you want a place in my establishment as undergardener?' said Mr. Heriot, with another burst of merriment.

'Ef your honour will be so good,' said the young man.

'And you can bring me no character from your last place?' said Mr. Heriot.

'No,' returned the stranger. 'I hopes your honour will be satisfied with what Squire Vigo says of me in this letter.'

'Then you evidently don't know what Mr. Vigo says,' continued Mr. Heriot, with a twinkle of fun in his eye. 'He declares you are as obstinate as a pig, and as unmanageable as an Irishman, and you know no more of gardening than king Nebuchadnezzar.'

During this speech, Mr. Heriot had crept round to the door and locked it; and this done, he turned with a hearty laugh, and seized the young man by the hand.

'Now, Charlie,' said he, 'what is the meaning of this comedy?'

'It means, Mr. Heriot, that I have sworn to track the murderer of Eleanor Maristowe to justice,' he replied. 'It means that I will find him, and hunt him to the gallows, and clear an innocent name from the horrible accusation standing against it.'

'By Jove, you are right!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot, his merriment fading before the earnestness of the speaker. 'Your skull is not quite so thick as Sir Anthony Roskelly's, and the other Dogberries, who imagine a child could have done such a deed. But, upon my word, it would go hard with the girl if she were brought to trial. The circumstantial evidence is very strong against her. I am right glad she has escaped.'

'So am I,' said Charles Vigo, sadly; 'because I fear that not even a prison, and the fear of death, would make her speak.'

Mr. Heriot had curious thoughts within his own breast respecting the death of Eleanor Maristowe, and these words only strengthened that thought.

'She must be wonderfully strong in her attachments,' he said. 'But there is Eastern blood in her, and it is only in the East we hear of one person laying down his life for another.'

'In the West we sometimes lay down for another all that makes life worth having,' said Charles, quietly. 'Olive has done this; but she is not, I hope, the only one who can do it.'

'You are both a couple of Quixotic fools,' said Mr. Heriot, snappishly. 'If either of you know anything of this crime, clearly you ought to tell it.'

'To suspect is not to know,' replied Charles. 'You, yourself, Mr. Heriot, may have suspicions, yet you keep silent.'

'And a pretty blundering fool I should be if I told all the world my thoughts,' said Mr. Heriot. 'But with Olive Varcoe it is different; I consider she was bound to speak.'

'I think so, too, Mr. Heriot,' observed Charles Vigo; 'and yet, for aught I know, the truth may be such a veritable shadow in Olive's mind, that she dares not utter it.'

'Then she has told you nothing?' said Mr. Heriot, eagerly.

'Not a word,' was the reply.

'Then, by Jupiter, I honour you!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot. 'For, without a single asseveration of the fact, you have had brains enough to see she is innocent, and you have had courage——'

'I have acted from the heart, not from the head,' interrupted Charles Vigo. 'I have defended Olive, simply because I love and honour her more than any other woman in the world.'

'Don't tell anybody that but me,' said Mr. Heriot, rubbing his dry little hands together, and laughing heartily. 'Love and faith are grand things, but the law ignores them; they don't prove anybody's innocence or anybody's guilt. To the world they would only prove you to be a young man—very young—that's all, lad. Well, I suppose I mustn't ask where this little girl is in hiding?'

It was Charles Vigo's turn to smile, as he replied, 'Ask no questions that I cannot answer, Mr. Heriot.'

'At least,' said he, 'I may ask why you want to be my under-gardener?'

'Because I think no one will look for me here, or recognise me,' replied Charles Vigo. 'I want to lull the suspicions of that smiling owl, Eslick, and quiet the uneasiness of the Trewavas family.'

'But I imagined they, like all the world else, concluded you had gone abroad,' said Mr. Heriot.

'So they did for a time,' replied Charles; 'but John Trewavas has eyes like a lynx: he recognised me, or fancied he recognised me, and he spoke of his suspicion to Eslick.'

'Why did you creep about the Trewavas woods, and get seen?' asked the little legal mummy, with a strange smile on his parchment face.

Charles Vigo was silent.

'Ah! that's another question I must not ask,' said the lawyer. 'Never mind; perhaps I can answer it myself. Let me see, let me perfectly understand why you wish to come here. You deem this a safe concealment, and you think, after a week or two, Eslick will imagine John Trewavas was mistaken, and the hunt for you, and through you for Olive, will slacken?'

'That is my idea, Mr. Heriot,' he replied.

'And you do not wish to go abroad?' continued Mr. Heriot. 'You have cogent reasons for desiring to remain in this neighbourhood—to remain disguised and unknown—while a belief is impressed on the county generally that you are abroad?'

'Yes,' replied Charles; 'and I thought I had succeeded in making the world think me a scapegrace and an exile, only, unfortunately, the dear old governor would defend me so strenuously; and, more unfortunately still, I was bound to fulfil a promise I had made to Olive, to give a letter and packet to Lady Trewavas.'

Here Charles Vigo rapidly related the events of the night before, and expressed his joy that his dog had escaped the shot.

'Who told you all this?' asked Mr. Heriot. 'You were not near the spot, I suppose?'

'Farmer Skews told me,' he replied; 'I have been lodging with him; he heard the news in the village. Poor Bolster has been walking about in a sheep's skin till last night; then we unsewed him, and sent him to the tree for my handkerchief.'

'You ran a great risk for nothing,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Olive Varcoe assuredly will not keep the money.'

'I know she will not,' replied Charles Vigo, sorrowfully; 'and yet I hope she may.'

'Why, it is blood-money,' expostulated Mr. Heriot; 'money paid her to hold her peace.'

'I see you think as I do, Mr. Heriot,' said Charles, turning very pale. 'Our suspicions are the same. I believe, as

you say, Olive will not take this money, but it is for their sakes she refuses; she will not let the world at some future day accuse them of having bribed her——'

'To be their scapegoat,' interposed Mr. Heriot. 'Ah, well, let me send the packet back to Sir Hilton. I'll do it through a London lawyer; that will puzzle him a little. Miss Varcoe does not want money, I suppose?'

Charles Vigo's honest face flushed visibly.

'I fear she does,' he said, gravely; 'at all events, she has not accepted a penny from me, although she has promised to be my wife.'

Mr. Heriot stared blankly in the young speaker's face for a moment, and then, rubbing his dry chips of hands together again, as if he were bent on developing spontaneous combustion in those members forthwith, he asked, drily, what Charles Vigo meant.

'I mean,' he responded, 'she accepts no pecuniary aid from me, or from any one.'

'Do you mean, then,' continued Mr. Heriot, 'that she is in some workhouse, or that she is starving somewhere in some garret?'

'Oh, Mr. Heriot, do not torture me with these questions,' said Charles. 'I have cheated her by every way possible into taking money. I have sold her jewels for her: of course buying them myself at three times their value.'

'But such aids will not last long,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Surely, if this girl is innocent—as I believe—our best plan will be to prove it, and so reinstate her in her proper place in the world. Then you can marry her forthwith, if you will; now you can't.'

'I can never marry her,' replied Charles Vigo, in a tone of sorrow—'never. And as to her innocence, I am as far off as ever from being able to prove that.'

'Tush, tush!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot. 'What romantic boobies you young fellows are! Never is a long word. And as to proofs—come, lay your evidence before me, and I'll tell you what it is worth. In the first place, what would you have said at the inquest, if you had not run away from it?'

'I avoided appearing because my evidence must have ruined Olive,' he replied. 'I must have told that I saw her in the wood on the day of the murder, and during the very

hours when Lady Trewavas alleged she was in her room. I saw her twice; the first time she was quarrelling fiercely with Miss Maristowe on the very scene of that poor girl's death—the Lady's Bower. The second time she was alone, excited, and weeping bitterly. It was then I spoke to her, and walked with her as far as the edge of the wood, and she entreated me not to betray to any one that we had met. Good Heavens! I cannot think of that day without horror.'

As he spoke, Charles Vigo passed his hand over his eyes to shut out the vision that rose before him of that clear, still pool, and the two graceful shadows falling in the water, as with angry and bitter words Olive swept on to her fate, and Eleanor crept back to the bower to die.

'Hem!' said Mr. Heriot, drily; 'if that is what you had to say, I don't wonder you did not attend the inquest. Did Miss Varcoe account for her excitement and her tears when you met her in the wood?'

'She explained nothing,' replied Charles; 'she accounted for nothing.'

'Then what makes you believe in her?' asked the little man, abruptly.

'The faith and love that you tell me are nothing, Mr. Heriot, in the eyes of the law,' replied Charles; 'and besides these, a shadow, a something which I will not name, which makes you believe in her also.'

'And you have nothing to tell me of this shadow?' asked Mr. Heriot, with a searching eye.

'Nothing that will warrant action,' replied Charles, sadly. 'There may be a certain conviction in my own mind, but it would answer no purpose to speak it.'

Mr. Heriot remained a moment silent and thoughtful, his thin face taking a yellow tinge, and his thin hand shaking a little as he raised it to emphasise the words, which he spoke at last in a low, impressive tone.

'I do not deny there has been a shadow in my mind, too,' said he; 'but, my dear boy, let us take care that we are not both mistaken. The evidence which you avoided giving at the inquest shakes me a little; and when it is added to all Sir Hilton suppressed, or managed to get suppressed, it makes a weight of facts that seem conclusive. Charles Vigo, let us beware how we accuse the innocent, and let the guilty escape.'

There are very few men, knowing what I know, who would dare venture to acquit Olive Varcoe. You are acting now as a detective in her behalf——'

'But unknown to her,' exclaimed Charles, excitedly. 'She would hate me if she knew what I am doing.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Heriot. 'And you see, if she is guilty, you are injuring her chances of escape. Now, before you proceed any further in the course you are pursuing, let me make you acquainted with some facts not yet known to you.'

Here Mr. Heriot related rapidly the history which Sir Hilton Trewavas had laid before him on the night before the inquest.

'You see,' he continued, 'she had the phial of chloroform, and she burnt the cord. How did she get that?'

'My dog Bolster took it to her,' replied Charles. 'I guessed he would take it straight to her room. When I saw the dog depart, I was superstitious enough—if it was superstition—to think the matter a Providence.'

'Ah, Providence has aided her wonderfully,' said Mr. Heriot, drily. 'Had she been an ugly old woman, I doubt if she would have found a clever retriever and an enthusiastic young man quite so ready to help in time of need. Providence has been kind to the Skews family also, I believe. They are helped to a good farm, are they not? But it would not have fallen to their lot if Tamson Skews had not held her tongue about that phial.'

'Certainly not,' returned Charles. 'Sir Hilton bribes royally.'

The thin, flexible lips, the whole expressive twitching face of the little legal mummy flashed, as it were, into new life at these words.

'I have not shaken your faith by all I have told you?' he cried. 'You know something?'

'I know that not even *I* believe so firmly in Olive Varcoe's innocence as does old Farmer Skews,' replied Charles. 'But he has been well paid to hold his peace, and he holds it.'

Mr. Heriot's parchment fingers rattled as he shook them to and fro, and his eyes gleamed as he fixed them on Charles Vigo's face.

'Then Tamson has been paid another way,' said Mr. Heriot, 'and old Skews is bribed on his own account?'

'I think so,' replied Charles.

'Old Skews has written me a letter,' said the lawyer.

'I think so,' replied Charles Vigo, in the same quiet tone of firm conviction in which he had begun this dialogue, and continued it throughout.

'You say you think so!' exclaimed Mr. Heriot. 'Then away goes my belief in circumstantial evidence for ever and ever! Young man, I hire you as my under-gardener; and in a little while, when those two owls, Roskelly and Eslick, have ceased to hunt blindly for a certain Mr. Charles Vigo, I would advise you again to seek lodgings at the homestead of the intelligent farmer Skews.'

The way in which these dry fingers were shaking the brown hand of the under-gardener, it would have done one's heart good to see. But the young man accepted the little skeleton's enthusiasm with the same calm, assured, unchanged expression.

'My task is only begun,' he said, sadly. 'Shake hands with me when it is finished, Mr. Heriot. But see what faith can do! You have piled fact upon fact to shake my belief, and I have told you nothing; yet I have won you over to my side, heart and soul, and that by force only of my faith.'

'Am I such a fool?' said the little mummy, half wistfully. 'No, I believe I was on your side all along, only I have been trying you a little. Do you know, Charles Vigo, you make me discontented? I am half sorry I never married. I should have liked just such a son as you.'

CHAPTER XVI.

ON that beautiful line of country between Cork and Killarney, passengers by the express, looking out on either side, can see pictures of loveliness that dwell upon the brain long after, like glimpses of Fairy-land. Among these, as they near the mountains, there is a picture, coming and going like a flash, of an old mansion, with green lawn—worthy of Erin—sloping down to a river; while above the house lie green

woods and peaked and purple hills. The river brawls along over huge stones and mimic falls, approaching at one point so near the line, that you would think in another moment it will touch it; but with a sudden bend it disappoints you, dashing away beneath the shadow of huge beech-trees, the wide-spread branches of which hide the sparkling water from view.

These beeches are on the lawn of that old mansion; and just at the sudden bend of the river a picturesque foot-bridge crosses it, with the shadow of the great royal trees flickering over it, and the water beneath sprinkled with green and gold and crimson, as the sun flashes in and out among the fluttering leaves.

As an express train drew nearer and nearer, slackening speed a little on account of some repairs on the line, two young girls strolled down the lawn, book in hand; and while one seated herself on the grass to read, the other stepped upon the bridge, and looked wearily up the road. She had large, passionate eyes, full now of a wistful dreaminess; but but this was not their normal expression, for the brow was one of power, and the whole face would strike even a casual observer with its character of decision and fire. As she stood now on the bridge facing the railway, she was so lost in thought, that she heeded not the coming rattle of its many wheels, or the cloud of fleecy vapour creeping through the beech-trees, covering her as with a mantle of mist.

In a corner of a first-class carriage in that express a gentleman was reclining in the easiest of languid attitudes, half asleep or wholly so, while his well-gloved hand still held lazily an uncut, unread copy of the *Times*.

'Just look out, old fellow,' cried his companion. 'What glorious scenery!'

'Glorious!—yes,' returned the sleeper.

But the speaker's eyes were still shut, for he had not troubled himself to open them merely to look at mountains and woods.

'By Jove, what a lovely face!' said the other.

The sleeper roused himself now, and the *Times* fell rustling to the ground, while, half dreaming still, he opened his cloudy eyes, and saw flashing by him the vision of a face. Was it a dream or a reality? Had his half-awakened brain shaped

a form, round which so many troubled thoughts had hovered, or did she really stand there in flesh upon that bridge?

'Where are we?' he asked. 'Is this a station?'

'A station!' said the other. 'No. What's the matter, man? The sight of a pretty face seems to have frightened you out of your wits.'

'A face!' said he. 'Am I mad?—am I dreaming? Chadwick, I must get out at the next station. I must put myself in communication with the police.'

'Put yourself in communication with a straight waistcoat, you mean,' observed his companion. 'Are you going to give me in charge for letting you snore through the loveliest scenery on earth?'

'Don't jest,' said the young man; 'this is serious. What is the next station?'

'How can I tell?' returned his friend. 'I only know we don't stop at it. We don't stop anywhere for miles to come; the express never stops at these little places.'

As they talked they dashed by a station, and neither read the name.

'There, my dear fellow,' said Chadwick, bursting into a laugh, 'that was clever of us! Now, if you had not bribed the guard to leave us this carriage to ourselves, we might turn to some obliging traveller for information; as it is, I believe your thirst for knowledge will not be gratified till you get to Killarney.'

'Can we find out there?' asked the other. 'Can you describe the place? I did not see it. I saw nothing but her.'

'Describe the place!' said Chadwick. 'Yes; two lanterns and a shanty, with a mountain behind like a cocked hat.'

'And wasn't there a bridge?' said the other.

'The deuce a bit,' said Chadwick. 'There was a duck-pond, but no bridge.'

'Chadwick, don't bully!' cried his friend. 'There was a bridge!'

'Beg pardon, old fellow,' said Chadwick. 'If you won't stand chaff, I stop. The duck-pond was at the station; the bridge was—I don't know where.'

'And what besides?' was the next enquiry. 'Was there no road, no house, no salient points in the scenery which we can describe?'

'Ah, Damerel, you are caught, are you?' said Chadwick. 'Your mind is running on that bewitching face. But suppose I want to find out who she is for myself? In that case, hadn't I better keep the "salient points" of the scenery for my own benefit? You should have kept your eyes open, and looked at them for yourself.'

'Chadwick, I am in no mood for jesting,' replied Vivian Damerel, gravely. 'Read that, and then tell me if this matter is serious.'

He drew from his pocket a gazette, of a small size, and handed it to his friend. The young man read rapidly the paragraph pointed out to him, and then returned the paper.

'It was her face that I saw,' resumed Damerel, excitedly. 'What do you say—you saw her too? Does the description tally? Give me your advice.'

'Here, my dear fellow, this is a deuce of a thing, you know,' said Chadwick. 'We can't be knocking at strange houses, and accusing people of murder, you know—now, can we? The girl was a splendid girl; upon my word, she was. She didn't look like that sort of thing at all—not a bit. Description tally! The girl seemed to my mind no more like that confoundedly unpleasant little newspaper than I'm like—like paper shirt-collars. You ask my advice. Well, I say, go to sleep again; that's my advice. You looked uncommonly comfortable when you were asleep just now, and I don't see why you shouldn't be comfortable again. Or try a weed: that does it sometimes.'

As Vivian Damerel smoked, he took out his watch, and counted the minutes that intervened between him and the next station at which the train stopped. And when at last the puffing monster drew up, like a fiery serpent out of breath, he opened the door, and sprang out, leaving his friend gazing after him in blank dismay.

'I never saw a fellow so altered as Damerel—never,' said Chadwick to himself. 'Once he never worried about anything; now he bothers about like an adjutant or a drill sergeant—give you my honour he does. Wonder if there's any time here to taste the whiskey?'

There was time; and as the whiskey was very good, Lieutenant Chadwick tasted it twice, and good-naturedly filled his case-bottles beside, with a view to bestowing the golden

fluid upon Damerel when he should re-appear. But the porter shut the door, the guard whistled, and the train started, with Lieutenant Chadwick's puzzled head, and the larger half of the body thereunto appertaining, stretched from the window in a vain, bewildered, and dismal search for his missing friend.

'Opal,' said Florian Langley, 'how that impertinent simpleton in the train stared! Why, you are as white as a ghost! Do you know him?'

'The young man with the light moustache?' she asked. 'No, I never saw him before in my life. I did not remark that he stared.'

'Then it was the other—the dark man,' said Florian. 'Have I caught you, Miss Vansittart?'

'The dark gentleman is no friend of mine,' she replied, quietly. 'What are you reading, Florian? "Hero Worship?"'

Miss Vansittart had crossed the bridge, and, standing by her friend's side, she took the book from her hand.

'Scarcely worthy of worship, any of them,' said Florian. 'A wicked lot these heroes were.'

'The noblest heroes leave no record of their lives behind them,' returned the other. 'Destroy the human race, and they will honour you; save them, and you will find the cross and the nails.'

'Opal, do you say those wise things to me because you are my governess?' asked Florian; 'and do you think it is in the bond to preach on the wickedness of the world, or do you really believe them?'

'I believe them,' was the reply. 'Try to do any good or great thing, Florian, and you will quickly discover you have made yourself, not a hero, but a martyr. You will be stoned or crucified, slandered or hated—this will be your reward, even from those you love best.'

'But you will have the strength of your own heart, the joy of your own soul, to comfort you,' said Florian. 'Surely these are a great reward?'

'The heart is very weak, Florian,' she replied, 'and the soul at times is sorrowful exceedingly.'

'My dear Opal, there are tears in your eyes,' said Florian. 'What are you thinking of?'

'I was thinking of a hero,' replied Opal—'a man so brave, so noble, so true, that he is worthy of all happiness and all love; and yet there will be none given to him.'

'That's nonsense, Opal,' said Florian. 'Every one will love a good man.'

'Except the perverse, the passionate, and the wilful,' said Opal. 'Love is not a slave, Florian; he is a master, and he never obeys reason. He turns often from the wise and the true, to adore the foolish and the fickle.'

'In that case, reason would have her revenge in a bitter repentance,' returned Florian. 'Miss Vansittart, although you are my senior and my governess, I am wiser than you.'

'Because you have never loved,' said Opal. 'Wait till your day comes, and then boast of your wisdom. It will be sad, indeed, if you are not wiser than I, Florian.'

'Then you don't love this hero of yours?' returned Florian. 'Surely to give one's love and one's trust to such a man would be wise!'

Miss Vansittart's face burnt with a sudden glow of crimson, and she turned her head away from her companion's gaze.

'It would be wise, indeed,' she said, in a low voice; 'but perhaps it would be selfish, also: it would give one so much peace, so much joy. It is more generous to love where the return is ingratitude, mistrust, neglect. Florian, the prodigal son needed love more than his dutiful brother, who had never wasted his inheritance, never flung away the best gifts of his father.'

'True,' returned Florian, as a shade of thought deepened her blue eyes; 'but mine is not the nature to give such generous love. I could never worship an idol half clay, half gold. I must respect before I can adore. Evil and folly would soon disgust me, and I should turn away in anger, not in sorrow. I can understand a mother or a father, as in the parable, forgiving again and again; but I cannot comprehend a woman forgiving a fickle or a prodigal lover.'

Deeper and deeper grew the crimson on Miss Vansittart's face as she listened, and when she spoke her voice was agitated and broken.

'All you say, Florian, only proves that you have yet to learn what love is,' she said. 'You do not know how much of the mother there is in every woman's heart. Greater,

intellectually and physically, as man is to herself, yet in many respects he seems to her as a child, because her clearer instincts cause her to understand much, to which his reason, his learning, or perhaps his passion blinds him.'

'That sounds presumptuous,' observed Florian, 'and, if true, it would never suit my nature to forgive a lover out of motherly pity for his sins.'

'Not sins—I said, blindness,' returned Opal, mournfully ; 'and circumstances alter cases so much, Florian. It might be so cruel, so wickedly cruel, to take the scales from his eyes ; it might be so unjust to be angry, because he returned love with loathing ; it might be more unjust still to trample out one's love, and despise it, because it was unfed by vanity, unrewarded by hope ; and it might be most unjust, most cruel of all, to wish that it should ever be triumphant and happy.'

She finished with flushing cheeks, and eyes bright with tears, but in a tone of such touching sadness and hopelessness, that Florian regarded her a moment in curious, earnest silence.

'The more I listen to you the more certain I feel that I have not your nature or your sad experience,' she said. 'There shall be no blindness, no presumptuous self-sufficiency in my hero ; he shall be one entire and perfect chrysolite.'

Miss Vansittart smiled, and drew her arm through Florian's.

'That can never be,' she answered ; 'but you are right to say it, because your lover will come to you as a stranger, and you will rightly be jealous and quick to see faults ; but there are cases where people love each other from children, and know all the little defects and flaws that mar the soul, just as brother and sister know each other. Then, Florian, if pain, or separation, or even crime, came between these two, it is possible to love still, even though the sin that parted them be open to the ken of each.'

'That would be a terrible fate,' said Florian. 'It would be loving a man, not for himself, but in spite of himself.'

There was a little impatience, a little fire in the other's voice, as she replied, 'Yes, yes ; perhaps so, perhaps not ; but a proud woman must keep her love entire, unchangeable, let the man be what he will. Florian, I must show you my hero one day,' she added, abruptly.

‘Don’t, Opal,’ said the young girl. ‘I shall be so angry with you for not being in love with him. It is my belief you love that languid, indifferent, dark, cold man, who glared at you from the railway carriage. You have done nothing but talk of love ever since the express passed.’

‘I don’t talk much like a governess, Florian, I confess,’ said Miss Vansittart, laughingly. ‘I’m afraid I never shall have the proper governess look, nor their starch manners and way of speech.’

‘If you ever do get them, I shall hate you,’ exclaimed Florian.

‘Never fear,’ said Miss Vansittart.

‘I don’t fear,’ returned Florian. ‘I never yet saw an orange grow into a potato.’

‘Here is another train,’ cried the governess, suddenly. ‘Come away!’

‘It is the down express,’ observed Florian.

But Miss Vansittart did not hear her; she had got within a great clump of laurels, and, crouching down among the thick branches, she remained completely hidden till the train had passed. Yet her keen, passionate eyes, gleaming among the leaves, scanned every carriage earnestly, and, flashing by her like a vision of evil, she saw the same languid, dark face that had met hers when she stood on the bridge.

‘Opal, Opal!’ cried Florian, ‘come here directly, and explain this, if you can. Here’s Doctor Faustus come back—the very same, I declare, who went by in the up express an hour ago. Now I am sure the man is some lover of yours. Confess it, Opal—do!’

‘You are mistaken, Florian,’ said Miss Vansittart, as she emerged from the clump of laurels. ‘The man is neither lover nor friend of mine. How cold it is! Let us go in.’

‘Cold!’ cried the young girl. ‘Opal, you are ill—you are shivering; your face is quite ashen grey.’

‘Is it, really?’ said Opal. ‘Well, the truth is, I fear I am ill. I have felt strange all day.’

‘Come in directly, and have something, Opal,’ continued Florian. ‘You make me feel miserable from head to foot. You look as if you were turned to sudden stone. You are very ill—I am sure you are. I’ll ask mamma to prescribe for you.’

'I hope you won't, my dear,' said Opal. 'Do something better for me: let me go to bed at once, and don't let me be disturbed till the morning. Rest is all I want.'

'Then you shall go to bed, and I'll bring you some tea myself,' said Florian.

For answer, the young governess bent suddenly, and kissed Florian on the cheek. Tears swam in her great dark eyes, and rested on the lashes.

'Florian,' said she, 'I wish you knew how much I care for you. I never had a sister, I never remember a mother; young as you are, in you I find something of both. I have only been with you three months. If we were to part, would you believe that I thought of you and loved you always?'

'We are not going to part,' remarked Florian. 'Mamma is too glad to keep a governess that I like; but of course I believe you. Don't I believe in the warmth of the sun, even when I don't see it? You need never give any assurances to me, Opal. I know you thoroughly.'

Miss Vansittart's hand trembled, and her fingers clutched Florian's tightly.

'Yes, in spite of your flashes and changes,' continued Florian, 'for you are just like your name—there's a dash of fire in you; I can always see the true gem. And do you know, my dear, tiny, little bird of a governess, small as you are, nothing would surprise me that I might hear of you? If somebody came to-morrow, and said you were a princess in disguise, I should believe it. Or if they told me you were hiding away from some rich uncle, who wanted to make you his heiress, I should say that was just like you, not to have sense enough to care for money. Or if——' But here Florian hesitated, and fixed her eyes, half timidly, half earnestly, on Opal's face. 'Yes, I'll say it: if I were told you loved some one dearly, passionately, hopelessly, and had run away because you could not bear to see him marry a girl fairer, richer, happier than yourself, I would believe that most of all.'

The face that Florian watched was very pale, and the eyelid quivered, the lip shook, but the voice that answered her was scarcely more unsteady in its tone than illness might account for.

'You have a wonderful clear-sightedness, Florian,' said Opal; 'a curious instinctive power that reads character almost at a glance. You know two things of me that I have not told you. You guess there is some mystery concerning me, and you feel that—that I have a nature madly, wickedly jealous.'

'Not wickedly, Opal,' said Florian; 'I do not think that. As to mystery, I saw the first week you were here there was something secret and strange about you; but I saw, too, it was nothing wrong.'

'Nothing wrong!' echoed Opal, sorrowfully. 'Ah, Florian, promise me to believe that always. And if among the strange things it would not surprise you to hear of me there should come one that makes your heart stand still, listen to no proof, no reason, no evidence, but hear only the voice of your own pure heart.'

The voice in which she spoke, so grave, so sad, so heavy with tears, admitted of no reply; and in a moment she herself turned to lighter subjects.

'How is it we stumble on all the trains to-day, Florian?' said she. 'When we came here at this hour on other days we never saw them.'

'It is the first of the month, my most wise governess,' replied Florian, 'and all the trains are altered.'

'Ah, why did I not remember it?' said Opal, wistfully. 'Florian,' she then added, feebly, 'I feel one of those fits of sadness coming over me which you hate so much. Apologise to Mrs. Langley for me, and let me go to my room. And Florian, dear, if you love me, let me be as solitary as I will till to-morrow.'

As the train passed into the shadow of the tall, majestic beeches, and flashed by the glittering river, the picturesque bridge, and the old grey mansion, set like a crown above the sloping lawn, a gentleman, who for many minutes had never ceased to gaze from the window, turned with intense eagerness to his travelling companions, and, pointing out the house, asked who lived there.

'The house belongs to a Mrs. Langley, sir,' interposed a traveller. 'She is a widow with an only daughter, who is, as this gentleman observes, remarkably pretty.'

'Can it be a chance likeness?' said Damerel to himself.

'Is Miss Langley dark, with flashing eyes, and remarkably black hair?' he asked.

'There is Miss Langley on the lawn,' said an old lady, bending forward. 'I don't call her dark, though she has very dark hair and eyes—that is to say, dark blue, for her eyes are quite Irish.'

As the train whirled by the bend of the river, and past the beech-trees, shutting out the view of the mansion, Damerel had just time to catch sight of a tall, graceful figure standing on the lawn; but this glimpse was sufficient to show him that this was not the vision, whose passionate eyes had met his on the bridge.

'I perceive Miss Langley is tall,' he said. 'I fancied I saw a young lady there very diminutive in size, and yet very beautiful.'

'You are thinking of the new governess, or companion, for she is more the latter,' said the first traveller. 'She comes from the Highlands of Scotland; she is very small and, as you say, very lovely.'

'The Highlands!' exclaimed Vivian Damerel.

'So they say,' said the old lady again; 'but I don't think Vansittart is a Highland name.'

There was a shade, a something in her voice, which Damerel caught at.

'You don't altogether approve of this beautiful governess?' he observed.

'Well, I think Miss Vansittart is too young to have the care of a girl like Florian Langley,' was the reply; 'and I believe if Mrs. Langley had her health and her eyesight, she would not keep so remarkable a looking person by her daughter's side.'

'Is Mrs. Langley blind?' asked Damerel, eagerly. 'And may I ask what there is so remarkable about this young lady?'

'Her beauty is remarkable,' replied the lady, 'and it is of a kind too singular to be desirable in a governess or companion. Then she verges even on the eccentric, in her attempts to hide this lovely face of hers. She is doubtless aware that it is a disadvantage to her in her position. Still, she need not wear a double crape veil at church, nor go a mile out of her way rather than meet a stranger.'

'May I ask how Mrs. Langley got to know this young lady?' continued Damerel. 'Pray answer without fear. I do not ask from idle curiosity. I have a reason for my questions.'

'Nothing would surprise me that I heard about Miss Vansittart,' observed the old lady, shrugging her shoulders expressively. 'I can scarcely tell you how she was induced to take her into her family; but I believe it was through some solicitor in London.'

Damerel felt his brain strangely bewildered. Could this Miss Vansittart from the Highlands, who was recommended to Mrs. Langley by a London lawyer, be the same girl who had fled with Charles Vigo a few months ago? In answer to this question, there recurred to his memory the look of sudden fear in those wistful eyes, as, startled by the coming train, she had raised them as she stood upon the bridge and met his gaze. Then her face turned ghastly pale; and still as he gazed, half dreaming, he saw the small hands clinging to the railing, and the parted lips trembling in terror. This remembrance was enough: it was Olive; and he must denounce her, cost him what it might.

'Madam,' said he, 'I fear that young lady's companionship is worse than compromising for Miss Langley—it is a contamination which must not be permitted a day longer. Will you tell me the name of the nearest magistrate, supposing I alight, as I intend to do, at the next station?'

'Dear me!' exclaimed the old lady, in a great fuss; 'this is shocking—this will half kill poor Mrs. Langley! An adventuress, sir, I suppose—a female swindler, or something of that kind? How dreadful to have a creature of that sort in one's house for three months!'

'You asked for a magistrate,' observed the other traveller. 'Allow me to inform you that I am one myself. I am also a friend of Mrs. Langley's, and when we leave the train I shall be happy to hear in private all you have to say. I imagine you are labouring under a great mistake. I have never observed in Miss Vansittart any but the manners of a perfect gentlewoman.'

In another moment the train stopped at a small station, and here Damerel and the magistrate alighted.

'Come with me to my house,' said the latter, 'and I will

hear all you have to say. I am very unwilling to make Mrs. Langley and her daughter the subject of annoyance and scandal, if I can help it.'

Vivian Damerel acquiesced in this arrangement somewhat reluctantly; it seemed to him a waste of time. He longed to put his hand on Olive Varcoe, and prove to the whole world her guilt. Apart from his indignation and horror, he felt he owed to her the bitterness of having lost his friend Charles Vigo, and his eagerness for justice had something in it that tasted a little of the salt of revenge.

* * * * *

Florian Langley was a spoilt child. An only daughter among a family of many sons, she had been petted by father, mother, and brothers, without apparently any detriment to her temper, beyond a certain pretty wilfulness and sauciness, often seen in those who know they have only to speak in order to please. To her mother she was the dearest of friends, the bird who solaced her blindness, the flower whose beauty she felt, though it might never be seen. In return, Florian had a curious, wistful, pitiful affection for her mother, not often found in so young a heart. She had early recognised the truth, that she could never leave her for the sake of any other love. This silent resolve so coloured Florian's manners, when she came in contact with men, that not one of her acquaintances had presumed to declare himself her admirer. Neither was there any jealousy among them, for she showed herself alike indifferent to all.

On the morning after Vivian Damerel's interrupted journey to Killarney, Florian was in her mother's room, when a servant brought a card to the door.

'Mr. Lynher, ma'am, has called, and wishes to see you very particularly,' said the servant.

'What can he want?' said Mrs. Langley, a little flurried. 'Go, Florian, dear, and see.'

Florian obeyed, and in a pretty morning room she found two gentlemen awaiting her.

'My dear child,' said Mr. Lynher, coming forward to take her hand, 'it is your mother whom I wish to see. Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Damerel, an English gentleman come to see the lakes.'

Florian bowed ; and now, for the first time, gazing at the stranger, she saw the dark, cold face that had looked so strangely yesterday at Opal Vansittart. A beautiful bright colour rushed to Florian's cheeks.

'I think I saw you in the train last evening,' she said. 'It passes so near our garden that we can distinguish faces quite well.'

For the first time under a woman's eye Vivian Damerel felt abashed.

'I believe I saw you on the lawn with—with Miss Vansittart,' said he. 'I think I know that lady.'

'Indeed !' exclaimed Florian, surprised.

'Wait awhile, my dear sir, until you see the lady again,' said Mr. Lynher, somewhat suddenly. 'There is nothing so deceiving, sir, as a chance likeness. Miss Florian, I am sure you will kindly ask your mother to let me see her for a moment.'

But here Vivian Damerel interrupted him. He was impatient to divulge the truth ; every moment spent by Olive beneath this roof seemed to him a contamination for Florian—a contamination that irritated him most keenly.

'Miss Langley,' he said, in a tone of deep respect, 'I consider I owe it to you to speak without circumlocution, and to act promptly. Mr. Lynher, with mistaken kindness, delays too long in telling you that in Miss Vansittart I have recognised a woman who is in fact a criminal escaped from justice.'

Florian's large blue eyes looked at him in wonder, and then turned from him slowly in indignation and disgust.

'Miss Vansittart has been my daily companion for three months, sir,' said she ; 'in that time I ought to know something of her ; and I affirm, that you insult me, not her, when you dare bring against her so cruel an accusation.'

Never had Vivian Damerel felt so miserably insignificant in his own eyes as he felt now. He lost his calm, gentlemanly ease at the first sound of Florian's disdainful voice, and, rising, he exclaimed passionately, 'Miss Langley, let me see your governess, I entreat you ; and, if I am mistaken, if I have done that young lady a wrong, no one will rejoice as I shall, even though I remain myself under your displeasure for ever.'

‘Ah! that is best, my dear,’ said Mr. Lynher. ‘Let us see Miss Vansittart; that will settle the matter at once. And, after all, you must not be so very angry with this young gentleman. You know he might have put the affair in the hands of the police, and not have troubled himself to come either to me or to you.’

On hearing this, Florian looked at Vivian Damerel coldly, and bowed to him with quiet courtesy.

Florian now folded a tiny note which she had written to Miss Vansittart, imploring her to dress, in spite of her indisposition, and descend to the morning room.

While the servant who took this note was absent, the embarrassed trio remained silent. Mr. Lynher was perplexed and anxious, Florian disdainful, Vivian Damerel utterly wretched. He began to hate Olive as he had never hated her before. There was a gleam of savage satisfaction in his heart, as he thought that in a few moments more she would be handed over to the charge of the constable, who sat in the lodge by the park gate; and the beautiful girl, who now looked on him with contempt, must certainly then turn and thank him for ridding her of a murderess.

‘If you please, Miss Florian, Miss Vansittart is not in her room at all,’ said the servant, entering with alarm on her face. ‘I knocked iver so many times, and niver a word did she spake. Then I spied the kay on the door-mat, and I made bould to inter, and the room is impty, miss, and the thrunk, too—a big bundle she must have carried with her sure, and the window wide, miss, and this lettther on the table.’

With a face pale as death, Florian snatched the letter eagerly, tore it open, and read:—

‘DEAR FLORIAN,—I have fled, and I leave behind me no protestations of innocence. I ask you only to judge me yourself, and not to take your opinion from the judgment of another. Yesterday you said you would believe in me still, even if you were told some strange and dreadful history, which might shake the belief of older friends than you. I do not ask you to-day to keep your word; it might be too hard a task in one so young, overwhelmed as your mind will be with assertion, hatred, and proofs; but I ask a harder thing of you, Florian—I ask you not to say that my lips

seemed to you truthful, my heart innocent. I ask you not to take my part nobly, as your soul will prompt you to do, but rather hear all that is related to you, and keep silent. Let him who thinks me guilty think so still. If you shake that belief, Florian, you will do me an irreparable wrong; and all that I have suffered I shall have suffered in vain. Let accusation be heaped on accusation, and proof on proof, till my name falls crushed beneath them. I can bear it, and live still in hope. What I could not bear would be the misery of having endured so much in vain. Therefore, Florian, with all my strength I implore you to be silent. A thousand words could not say more.

‘Farewell. Your friend, O. V.

‘P.S.—We may never meet again; but if some time in this wide world you meet Charles Vigo, my hero, be his friend for my sake.’

Florian’s eyes filled with passionate tears as she read this letter. Then she folded it, and, holding it tightly grasped in her hand, she looked up and caught the earnest gaze of Vivian Damerel. His face was sad, but stern and resolute.

‘Have you anything to tell us, Miss Langley?’ he asked, gravely.

‘Nothing; except that Miss Vansittart has fled,’ replied Florian.

‘I understood that at once,’ said Damerel. ‘Might it not further the ends of justice if you permitted your friend, Mr. Lynher, to see this letter?’

An indignant flush rushed to Florian’s brow at his words.

‘I do not betray the confidence of the unhappy,’ she said, ‘even if they are guilty.’

‘Good Heavens!’ exclaimed Damerel; ‘what perverted sympathy is this? How is it that this wretched girl is able thus to win noble natures to a belief in her? She has ruined and lost me my dearest friend, Charles Vigo, and now——’

Vivian Damerel did not finish his sentence; he checked himself suddenly, as though in the heat of the moment his speech had carried him too far.

‘Is Mr. Vigo a friend of yours?’ asked Florian, eagerly.

‘He was,’ replied Damerel. ‘But why do you ask me? Do you know him? Has he been here?’

'I do not know him,' returned Florian. 'I only ask because it seems strange that a man whom Miss Vansittart praises so highly should be a friend of yours.'

'We are friends no longer,' said Damerel, bitterly. 'She has parted us. She has infatuated him even to madness; but for him she could never have escaped the consequences of her crime; but for him she could never have desecrated your home with her presence. It is his hand that has placed her here. Miss Langley, I cannot find it in my heart even to name her guilt to you, because she has taken advantage of your innocence to gain your friendship; she has dared, through falsehood and cunning, to make herself your daily companion; and it would be an outrage on your feelings to relate to you the story of her crime.'

'You are mistaken,' said Florian, coldly. 'I should simply not believe a word of it.'

'You would not believe me!' exclaimed Damerel, a dark flush rising on his face.

'Pardon me,' said Florian, hurriedly. 'I know you would yourself imagine you were telling the truth; you would believe all you were relating; but I should know you were only deceiving yourself, and allowing your judgment to be blinded by circumstances.'

She checked herself with sudden eagerness, as the thought of Olive's letter recurred to her mind.

'You speak generously, but you speak in ignorance, do you not?' said Damerel, anxiously.

'In perfect ignorance,' replied Florian; 'except that Opal Vansittart was my daily companion for three months.'

'And that gives you confidence in her?' said Damerel.

'That, and Charles Vigo's love for her,' replied Florian, mischievously. 'Noble heart finds noble heart, you know.'

'Love!' exclaimed Damerel; 'it is infatuation, a boyish madness, not love. He will wake up from it to bear the shame and pain of it all his life long. Oh, Miss Langley, if you only knew what I would give to save him! But I waste time here with you. Mr. Lynher——'

'Mr. Lynher is gone up to my mother's sitting-room, to speak to her on this matter,' said Florian. 'He told me so five minutes ago, as he left the room.'

Vivian Damerel felt the blood tingle his cheeks at this;

he was ashamed that in his eagerness to talk to Miss Langley he had failed to see Mr. Lynher's departure, and he had omitted to urge him to take prompt measures to overtake Olive Varcoe.

'Miss Langley,' he cried, vehemently, 'I trust Mr. Lynher will not forget his duty as a magistrate, in his anxiety to save your mother pain.'

'My mother will ask nothing of Mr. Lynher, sir,' she replied; 'neither will I ask anything of you. I believe Miss Vansittart perfectly capable of escaping you both.'

'It is possible,' said Damerel, 'for she is full of artifice and cunning. Good Heavens! how grieved I am she should ever have poured her poison into your pure mind!'

'She is a noble and good woman!' exclaimed Florian, warmly. 'You malign her. You know little of her indeed, and you know nothing of me. Yet I hear you constantly giving me credit for numberless virtues. You do this because you see me in a good position, surrounded by love, affluence, and care. If you saw me poor, wretched, and defenceless, you would give me credit for every vice, as you do her.'

'Do you really suppose I reason on such poor logic?' said Damerel.

'Yes,' replied Florian. 'In the last few minutes you have flattered me often, though you know nothing of me, beyond the visible circumstances surrounding me. From your own words, therefore, I judge that you are a superficial observer.'

Florian's words struck Damerel sharply, and for a moment he was too abashed to reply. Now, with sudden self-consciousness, he checked his admiration, and wondered at his own eagerness to please.

'Believe me,' he cried, eagerly, 'I do not form my opinions from externals only. If you were the poorest among the poor, your face would tell me——'

Florian turned from him with a smile, and greeted Mr. Lynher, who at that moment entered.

'Pray go to your mother,' said that gentleman; 'she is much agitated; she asks for you.'

Florian left the room instantly, bowing as she passed to Mr. Damerel, and holding out her hand to her old friend the magistrate.

'It will be a sad thing to ruin the prospects of so beautiful a girl,' said Mr. Lynher, as the door closed.

'Why should her prospects be ruined?' asked Damerel.

'Have you told her the history of Olive Varcoe?' inquired Mr. Lynher.

'No,' replied Damerel.

'That is right,' said the magistrate. 'She must never know it; she must never be told who was her daily companion for three months. Mrs. Langley never allowed a newspaper to enter her house; so she has seen nothing of this story. Now she has resolved to take her daughter abroad, that she may not be exposed to the scandal this affair will create.'

'Abroad!' exclaimed Vivian.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Lynher.

'Why need the neighbourhood know of this?' expostulated Damerel.

'If you go to the police,' said Mr. Lynher, 'and send a hue and cry after this girl, how can the neighbourhood help knowing it? The result will be a dreadful humiliation to Mrs. Langley. Florian is her only daughter. Imagine the anger of her sons, the rebukes of relations, the pity of friends, and the distrust and shadow that will be thrown over Florian's young life! It is frightful!—frightful!'

The worthy Mr. Lynher paced the room with agitated steps as he spoke. Damerel was silent for a moment. Never had any girl made his heart flutter as this girl had done; and now it seemed he was the instrument chosen to do her an injury. This, too, was Olive's doing; and the hatred long growing in his veins against her gathered strength at the thought.

'It was a cruel, cruel thing!' he exclaimed, fiercely, 'to plant that wicked woman in a house like this. I wish my hand was on the throat of the man who did it.'

Good Heavens! it was his friend who did it!—that Charles Vigo who had been his schoolfellow, his college chum, his more than brother.

Vivian Damerel ground his teeth together at the remembrance, and turned gloomily towards Mr. Lynher.

'I have been thinking,' said he, 'whether, for the sake of these injured ladies, we could let this woman escape; but I

do not see how such a dereliction of duty will become either you or me, Mr. Lynher.'

'As for me,' returned that gentleman, quickly, 'I know nothing of Miss Vansittart; I shall not take upon myself the responsibility of arresting her on the mere assertion of a stranger—of whom I know nothing—that, in passing in a railway train, he fancied he saw a likeness between her and the Cornish girl, who has fled a charge of murder. The thing is absurd. There is no proof whatever, beyond your word, that Opal Vansittart is Olive Varcoe.'

'The fact is, sir, you are determined to screen your friends from annoyance at the cost of justice,' retorted Damerel. 'You know this governess is the woman we seek, else why has she fled?'

'I know nothing of the kind,' replied Mr. Lynher, avoiding an answer to the last question. 'There is not a tittle of evidence to show it, except your fanciful idea of a likeness, which I have not the slightest reason to believe exists. Moreover, the references and letters received with her leave no doubt on my mind that Miss Vansittart is the person she represents herself to be. Therefore, sir, I decline to have anything to do with this Quixotic pursuit of yours—a pursuit of an inoffensive young lady.'

'Very well, sir,' said Damerel, as his face grew pale with suppressed passion. 'I perceive you are resolved to avoid an unpleasant duty; you throw the whole responsibility on me. I take it. I only regret that, by listening to you, I have given this woman a clear four hours' start. I am sorry I cannot spare Miss Langley pain; but I can at least convince her of the true character of the woman, whom false friends persuade her to protect.'

He took up his hat, bowed, and left the room.

'Faith, and I've done it neatly,' said Mr. Lynher to himself in a vexed tone. 'I thought I could manage an Englishman better than that. Well, the young Langleys will twist that London lawyer's neck; that's the only bit of comfort I see in the whole matter.'

Vivian Damerel left the house, and walked down the park with many bitter feelings swelling at his heart. Why was he chosen to hunt down Olive Varcoe, at the cost of friendship, and perhaps—a voice whispered—of love also? What

was Eleanor Maristowe to him, that he should avenge her death? Why had Sir Hilton Trewavas, and Charles Vigo, and the rest, including this idiot magistrate, shuffled off their burden on him, and forced him to take up a duty which they either denied or ignored?

Exasperated by his own thoughts, Damerel walked mechanically and swiftly to the police-station, where he lodged his information; and then saying resolutely that he had done his duty, and it was a matter of no consequence what Miss Langley thought of it, he lighted a cigar, and smoked it out gloomily.

The long, long day grew at last to night, and there was no news of the fugitive. When the hours of the next day had worn wearily on to evening, Damerel, grown impatient, walked towards the police-station for tidings. In the village street, on its way to the railway, a travelling carriage, closely packed, dashed by, and the bright beaming face of Florian flashed on him, bringing a sudden quiver to his heart. He lifted his hat with awkward hand, she returned his salutation calmly, the swift horses bearing her out of his sight before he could tell whether her look was scornful or courteous.

'Faith and sure, sir, sorra' a bit of news have I to tell,' said the chief constable. 'But they're after searching Dublin, sir, and——'

'Very well, I'm going to Dublin,' interrupted Damerel. 'There's a card with my address; if I am wanted to identify this wretched girl, I shall be found there.'

He hurried on to the railway station, then at the doors asked himself what he wanted.

'Oh! I'll telegraph to Chadwick,' said he. 'Doubtless he is cooling his enthusiasm alone at Killarney, and wondering in what lunatic asylum I am safely lodged.'

But Damerel did not go straight to the telegraph office; he lingered on the platform, and from a distance saw blind Mrs. Langley led to a carriage by her daughter. He noted Florian's care of her, the bend of her graceful head over the stooping figure of her mother, the solicitude in her anxious eyes, the tender hands, helpful and loving, aiding her blind steps; and as he looked, a flush rose to his cheek. He was impatient with himself for this folly, and turned hurriedly away. He had no right to speak to them—he, a stranger,

who had forced himself into their house with painful tidings—he whose deed it was that drove them away from home. Why had he interfered? It was a cruel thing to force a blind woman and a helpless girl into this lone travelling.

Deep in thought, Damerel stumbled on some luggage standing in his way, and, as he recovered himself, his eyes fell on the address, 'Mrs. Langley, Paris, *via* London, Dover, Calais.'

Another moment, and brawny arms had seized the trunks, and locked them in the van. Then a hurry, a shouting, a sudden slamming of doors, and the train was off, and he had not caught another glimpse of Florian's face.

Feeling strangely chill and weary, Damerel went into the telegraph office, and wrote this despatch for Chadwick:—

'I cannot come on to Killarney. You will find me at Dublin—same hotel. Give up the mountains, and join me there. Answer.'

'Is that all, sir?' asked the clerk.

'Yes—no, stay!' said Damerel, dipping his pen in the ink, and writing further—

'I am going in for Paris. Sudden business there. Will you accompany me? Reply quickly.'

* * * * *

There was not a greater coward in the parish than Farmer Skews. People were beginning to say so now openly. A few months ago they might have whispered it; but since he had said aloud, in the parlour of the 'Trewavas Arms,' that he wouldn't go through the wood alone for a hundred pounds in gold, farmers and miners and working men had considered themselves free to declare their opinions, without pretence of secrecy. He was a coward, and something more; but that 'more' they still whispered or hinted at in dubious sentences and cautious voice. The truth was, Farmer Skews was not liked. He was too prosperous. Menheniot farm was the best in the parish. And why did Sir Hilton Trewavas let it to him, when his oldest and best tenant, who was almost a gentleman, and as rich as any squire round about, would have taken it, and given him a hundred pounds a year more for it than Skews gave?

Ah! why, indeed? And these men looked in each other's

eyes furtively as they smoked, and puffed on in silence. If Skews came among them at such a time they made way for him, but no one edged a chair up to his; no one chatted to him cheerily of corn and cattle, fish or tin; no one, in raising his glass to his lips, said, 'Here's a health to you, neighbour.'

Afraid to go through the wood alone, was he? And he had owned it. Well, conscience was a queer thing. A man might, being paid for it, keep his tongue quiet; but would the money quiet his conscience too? Apparently not. To an unquiet conscience, the birds as they flew twittered of murder, and the peaceful autumn woods, whose yellow leaves lay golden on the grass, rustled with the tread of ghosts. But a man who took blood-money could not hope for peace. Was he so blind, that when he pocketed the bribe, he had hoped to get rest with it? When will the wicked learn that sin is only suffering? No matter what shape the sin wears, it changes to this at last—suffering—anguish of heart and mind, disease, and death—these are sin's wages, and will be till the world end.

So let Farmer Skews look to it, nor hope to prosper, although the stock upon his farm (where did he get money to buy such cattle?) might be finer than any for miles round. Balaam's ass spoke, seeing an angel in his path; and dumb animals, 'twas said, sometimes saw sights at which human eyes could never look. Why did the dogs howl all night long at Menheniot farm? And everybody knew that Farmer Skews' horse would never pass the Lady's Bower. He shied at the glistening pool, and reared upright, and nearly threw his rider. The woodsmen said, that when they were cutting down the bower (for Sir Hilton hated the place, and had it torn down, and all the trees round about it felled) they saw the horse pant and glare, like a creature terrified, when Skews and his new man—that queer shambling fellow with the red hair—came up together and looked on, and asked so curiously what they were cutting down the bower for.

Thus the country-side talked of Farmer Skews. And it is certain there was a great alteration in the man since he had grown well-to-do. As his bullocks fattened he thinned, and not all the corn in Egypt would have given him the bread of cheerfulness. How much of this change was due to

the red-haired young man from Dorset, who had come to him to learn farming, the neighbours did not guess. Being anxious to learn his business thoroughly, this promising pupil rarely left his master. He became the farmer's shadow, and this surveillance to a man with something on his mind was hard to bear. Breath by breath, whisper by whisper, he felt a spell upon him, compelling him to speak the truth. Often in the dismal wood, with that silent red-haired man behind him creeping softly like a ghost, he longed to turn and scream, 'I know you! I know why you follow and torment me! You want to wring the truth from my shrinking soul. You shall not have it. I'll die first. Let us fight here and finish it.' He longed to say this, but he never dared. He tried to cheat himself about this Dorset man—this ever-ready sentinel with the watchful eye—a trick of feature, a turn of the head, made the likeness, that was all. Was it likely, now, that the gentleman whom he thought of would give him a hundred pounds to be taught farming, and would dress up like this, and rough it in the field night and morning, and follow him to fair and market, and dog his steps like an ugly shadow? Come, now, was it likely? Thus he argued with himself, and only shrunk and shivered all the more.

'A frightened conscience is a fool,' said the farmer to himself. 'It sees a snake in every furze-bush, and a shaft in every path. Why should I be afraid? There's no harm done. If they had let her be took up, I wouldn't ha' held my tongue; but now she's gone——'

But here the sweat broke out upon his face, for his friendly pupil touched him on the arm, and said, in Dorset dialect, 'What be thinking of, varmer? Your feace be working like a mill. Here's Zur Anthony coming. He be often down 'pon you and me, I vancy.'

Yes, here was Sir Anthony. That was another torture the farmer had to bear—Sir Anthony always peering about his farm, asking sharp questions, then smiling, as though he knew too much; and, lastly, with a sneer, and a shaking of his whip above Trewavas, riding away 'oogly as a sarpint.'

Oh, if to speak was not ruin, and poverty, and contempt, how soon would he turn upon his tormentors, and shriek his secret out to earth, and sky, and the wild sea, and all the

demons who tore now at his heart, and said his soul was theirs!

But Sir Anthony drew rein, and barred the way with that big bony beast of his, whose looks are vicious as his master's.

'Good morning, farmer,' said he. 'The wheat looks well. But when we sow well, we reap well, eh? Ah, I'm a better parson than the curate. That's a text, isn't it?'

'I think not, Sir Anthony,' said the farmer, meekly.

Then Sir Anthony, rising in his stirrups, looked round on the flourishing fields.

'At all events, it is a text that suits your case, farmer,' said he. 'You must have sown gold dust, I fancy, and have reaped nuggets. Why, last year, my horse here, Skeleton—a good name for such a bony beast—hopped over all your farm in two paces and a spring; now it takes us a good half-hour to go our round. I often ride this way, you know, to see how things are looking. One sees all the country from this hill. There's Trewavas Wood, where that poor girl was murdered; and there's Trewavas House, looking very sunshiny and smiling—isn't it, Mr. Skews?'

'A fine old place, Sir Anthony,' replied Skews, with uneasy face.

'Old!' said Sir Anthony, sneering. 'Nice deeds have been done in those old places.'

Here his eye fixed on the pupil-farmer, and a cunning expression twisted his hard face.

'Well, Mr. Marcombe,' said he, 'have you found out the secret yet—the great farming secret, you know? or does Old Skews hold it tight?'

'I'm getting on, Sir Anthony,' was the reply. 'I'm learning something every day.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Sir Anthony; an unpleasant laugh—a laugh that chilled the farmer's blood, and made his cheek grow white. 'Ha, ha! you Dorset fellows are mighty sharp. Skews here must take care, or you'll turn him inside out, and make a scarecrow of him to all the parish. By-the-by, have you heard the news, Mr. Marcombe?'

'No, Sir Anthony. News don't reach me,' he replied. 'I'm here to learn what I'm come to learn, that's all.'

'Right enough,' returned Sir Anthony; 'but Skews should know it. It concerns his landlord.'

Skews looked ghastly white as he tried to smile, saying, 'Such a gentleman as Sir Hilton wasn't going to tell his affairs to his farmers.'

'Only those he can't help a tenant knowing,' said Sir Anthony, 'eh, Skews? Well, they are gone down yonder, both.'

Sir Anthony's whip, at which the horse winced, pointed downwards over the sloping wood to the shining turrets of Trewavas.

'Gone!' exclaimed the Dorset man. He looked more flushed than a strange man from a strange country should do, hearing Cornish news.

'Ay, gone,' said the baronet. 'Why not? Gentlemen, now-a-days, think nothing of a Continental trip.'

'And are they gone together to the Continent?' said the young man. 'Where?—which country?'

'Not so fast, Mr. Marcombe,' said Sir Anthony; 'you ask too many questions at once. Sir Hilton is gone to France. Where his brother is no one knows.'

Farmer Skews stooped, and picked up a pebble—an action without meaning, for the stone dropped in a moment from his nerveless fingers.

'Can you tell me when they went?' said the Dorset man, laying his hand on Sir Anthony's bridle.

'Sir Hilton left last night late,' replied Sir Anthony; 'but I can't tell you when his brother went. John Trewavas, you know, has been very queer since that affair'—the whip went pointing to the wood again. 'The poor fellow felt it more deeply than his brother; and lately he has shut himself up very much in his painting room alone. You haven't seen him out this month past, have you, farmer?'

'Tis three weeks,' said the Dorset man, 'since he came outside the park.'

'You seem to know all about it,' remarked the baronet. 'By the way, what is become of that clever dog belonging to Charles Vigo?'

'He is at Bosvigo,' was the reply.

'Ah, there still!' said the baronet. 'Then he hasn't broken loose, and joined his master yet? If Eslick weren't a fool, he'd watch that dog. He'll show us the right scent one of these days, I know.'

The Dorset man answered Sir Anthony with a stony look. 'Perhaps he will,' said he. 'He's a good dog. Why shouldn't he do a good deed?'

'If he's good, it's a pity he has been in such bad company,' laughed Sir Anthony. 'Come, now, which of you knows what he carried off that night from the old tree? Was it a love-letter, or was it a bag of gold? You, Skews, you are most in your landlord's secrets—which was it?'

'I wish I may die, Sir Anthony, if I know,' said the shaking Skews. 'I heard 'twas only an old handkerchief of young Mr. Vigo's.'

Oh, the look that shot from out his ghastly, quivering eyes, at the stalwart Dorset man, as he said this! and then he shrunk backwards against the hedge, afraid of both his listeners, afraid of the stones, the trees, the shadows, the very birds that flew above him.

'I only asked, for a jest,' said keen Sir Anthony. 'I was aware you did not know, Skews. You know nothing—you never did. Ha, ha!'

Farmer Skews grew more and more uneasy at this talk; and he now plucked young Marcombe by the sleeve.

'Let's go on to field,' said he.

'Bide a bit,' returned the other. 'I be curous 'bout the young chap that have runn'd away. Don't ee think he was pretty near these parts when the dog come whome?'

'Of course he was,' replied Sir Anthony, staring hard at the speaker. 'And we hunted for him far and near without avail.'

'Well, what do ee zay now to hunting the dog instead of hunting he?' said the Dorset man. 'Suppose you zend somebody down to Bozvigo one dark night to loose that dog, and you ride arter 'un, Sir Anthony, upon that hoss? He's got long legs, that beast; he'll carry ee, I warr'nt, vive-and-twenty mile; and I warr'nt, too, that dog—Bolster is 'a called?—will go straight to his measter, wherever that measter be.'

'That isn't a bad notion,' returned the baronet. 'I'll speak to Eslick about it. We shall be making a sort of bloodhound of old Bolster to track his master down. Upon my word, the idea is good.'

Farmer Skews glared in wonder, but uttered not a sound.

'And as it's your notion, Mr. Marcombe,' continued the baronet, 'I'll let you know if we carry it out, and when.'

'Hark ee,' returned the Dorset man. 'Let me know the day avore, if you can, Sir Anthony. I like a hunt; mine is a good hunting county. Zo Sir Hilton and his brother be both gwone?'

Sir Anthony was wonderfully affable—he took this sudden turning of the subject in good part.

'Ah, yes,' said he—'I forgot to tell you, John Trewavas has been quite morbid lately; and it seems he disappeared yesterday morning, leaving a note to say that he was going to Mrs. Maristowe's. But they could scarcely have believed him, for I happen to know Lady Trewavas telegraphed to her to ask for him, and received a reply, saying he was not even expected. So I believe Sir Hilton is gone in search of him; and the story of a Continental tour is a—well, a stretcher. The truth is, family pride won't let them own that John, good as he is, is rather weak in the head. Good morning, Mr. Marcombe. Your notion is capital, it really is. Don't let Skews split on it. Mind, he's a desperate traitor.'

Sir Anthony rode off, and Mr. Marcombe looked in the frightened farmer's face, and burst into a fit of laughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

'UPON my word, Sir Hilton, this is remarkable—most remarkable,' said Mrs. Gunning, in her most emphatic manner. 'Who would have supposed it possible that we should see you here? And as Mr. Gunning observes, one may come to the London Bridge Station a hundred times, and nothing so singular will happen again as our meeting you here to-day, and your brother yesterday.'

'My brother!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, and his pale face fired a sudden red, then paled again. 'It was for him I came to enquire. We—we have missed each other somehow here in London.'

Mr. Gunning's nose here gave an audible mark of curiosity and astonishment.

'Well,' said the lady, 'as Mr. Gunning remarks, that's rather singular, Sir Hilton. Mr. Gunning is asking how it happened?'

Sir Hilton responded to the question by another.

'When—where did you see my brother, Mrs. Gunning? Tell me at once, I beg of you.'

'Bless me!' she exclaimed. 'Is anything wrong? I saw him yesterday, when I came here to see some friends off for France. Very nice people they are—Irish friends of ours—the Langleys. And of course you know your brother is gone?'

'Gone!' cried Sir Hilton. 'Whither?'

'And don't you know he is gone to France?' said Mrs. Gunning—'went in the same train with the Langleys? It is precisely that, which Mr. Gunning was remarking on as singular, that you should be looking for him here when he is gone to the Continent.'

Again Sir Hilton's handsome, worn face flushed, and he seemed for a moment unable to answer the eloquent lady, who spoke both for her husband and herself.

'Ah, yes,' said Sir Hilton, 'there has been some mistake between John and me about our departure. We have missed each other in the most stupid manner. You see, he left Trewavas the day before I did, and I could not remember by which train he said he would leave for Dover. He caught the Calais boat last night, I suppose?'

Sir Hilton looked anxiously at Mrs. Gunning; but the Gunning nose broke in here, and said, 'Folkestone.'

'You are quite correct, my dear—Folkestone, Boulogne, Paris—in fact, a "through" ticket,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'The truth is, Sir Hilton, I helped Mr. Trewavas to get his ticket, for I never saw a man so ill in my life—not at all fit to travel, as Mr. Gunning justly remarked. I wonder Lady Trewavas allowed him to come up from Cornwall alone.'

There was such a look of pain in Sir Hilton's eyes—bitter, ghastly pain—that Mrs. Gunning paused, and wondered in her own mind what there was in her words to call up such a look.

'I beg your pardon,' said Sir Hilton; 'I must bid you good-bye. I go on by the next Continental train. I wish to join my brother as quickly as possible.'

‘How delightful to be going to Paris!’ said Mrs. Gunning.

Sir Hilton smiled wistfully at her as she spoke, and put out his hand to say farewell; Mr. Gunning, however, seized it, while his nose twisted itself affably on one side, and grunted something about ‘introductions.’

‘My dear, how thoughtful you always are!’ exclaimed Mrs. Gunning, in great admiration. ‘Mr. Gunning is observing, Sir Hilton, that he thinks it will be a very pleasant thing for you to know our friends the Langleys. They are most charming people; and Florian Langley is really the prettiest girl I know. Now, do give us the name of your hotel in Paris, and we’ll send you on letters of introduction to-morrow.’

Sir Hilton Trewavas pondered a moment, gloomily. Letters of introduction!—what was he to do with these, going on such a quest as he was? Then he thought that perhaps in a little while secrecy could be kept no longer, and he must ask help from anyone, everyone, and in that case the more friends he had the better.

‘The Hôtel du Louvre,’ he replied, hurriedly. ‘Many thanks for your kind offer. I shall be delighted to know your friends. Good-bye.’

‘One moment more, Sir Hilton,’ said Mrs. Gunning. ‘Is there any news yet of that poor guilty creature, Olive Varcoe?’

‘None,’ replied Sir Hilton, and his voice was husky and low.

Mr. Gunning’s nose here said ‘Dreadful!’ in such a fierce way, that passers-by turned and stared.

‘You are quite right, my dear,’ remarked Mrs. Gunning. ‘My husband is asking if that poor, deluded young fellow, Charles Vigo, has returned home?’

‘I—I believe not,’ said Sir Hilton; and with this he broke away from them, waving his hand as he disappeared among the crowd.

‘I am quite of your opinion, my love,’ said Mrs. Gunning, answering her husband’s eloquent organ of speech; ‘there is something decidedly queer about Sir Hilton to-day; and as to John yesterday—well, “odd” is scarcely the word for it.’

Mr. Gunning made a further remark, of which the words 'dinner' and 'nephew' were alone audible to the uninitiated. The ready Mrs. Gunning, however, seized his meaning immediately.

'Certainly, my love. I sent a note of invitation this morning to my nephew Chadwick and his friend Vivian Damerel. They dine with us to-morrow. Ah! there's Sir Hilton coming out of the telegraph-office! I wonder who he has been sending a telegram to. "Don't be so curious," do you say? Why, my dear Tobias, there isn't a woman in the world with less curiosity than I possess; but I should like—— Ah, Sir Hilton! telegraphing, are you? I hope there is nothing wrong. How is Lady Trewavas?'

'Thanks, she is quite well,' he replied. 'I am simply telegraphing to my hotel for my servant to bring on my luggage to Paris. I start directly.'

Sir Hilton darted down the platform and into a ticket-office, while Mr. Gunning's nose expressed surprise at him, with a mysterious air.

'I knew you'd say so, Tobias—I was certain of it,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Going, you see, even without his luggage! Exactly, as I observed before, "odd" isn't the word for it—no, nor yet "queer." My dear, you usually express yourself so well, you are so seldom at a loss for a word, that I wonder you can't give me the right one now. "Eccentric"—that's more like it; but even that does not put it strong enough. The poor fellow had such a wild, haunted look upon his face. Ah, they had better look after John Trewavas, or else—— Well, it is evident Sir Hilton is following him with all speed, and quite right too. Of course he has telegraphed to Lady Trewavas. I am not to be put off about the luggage, you know—stuff! Dear me! what unfortunate people those Trewavas are! My nephew and young Damerel will be quite interested when you tell them all this to-morrow, my dear.'

Mrs. Gunning was perfectly correct in her idea. Her guests grew decidedly animated as she related her adventure at the railway station, which she did with so many deferential appeals to the marital nose, and so many interpretations of its eloquence, that, at the finish, Mr. Gunning sat smiling and complacent in the idea that he had himself told the whole story.

‘Horrid unpleasant, going without one’s luggage,’ said Lieutenant Chadwick; ‘but my friend Damerel here does worse than that—starts without his head, I assure you—leaves it behind him on the seat—telegraphs to me for it afterwards, and I send it on to him in a hat-box. Only a little chaff, you know. Any amount of chaff always going round among our fellows. No harm in it; not a bit, you know.’

And Mr. Chadwick turned round, half-frightened, to gaze at Mr. Gunning, who, being an M. P., was making some notes with an air of immense business and superiority, at a little table all by himself. This was after dinner, when the small party had gathered round the fire in the drawing-room, and Mr. Chadwick again said, deprecatingly, ‘No harm in chaff, you know; not a bit.’

‘Mr. Gunning is immensely busy just now,’ whispered Mrs. Gunning, ‘drawing up a bill he means to bring before the House.’

‘Oh, it’s only a bill!’ observed Mr. Chadwick, much relieved. ‘Well, I’m sure I hope he’ll get paid.’

Frantic demonstrations on the part of Damerel so aggravated poor Chadwick, that he immediately conceived the idea of taking a ‘rise’ out of him. Accordingly, with a slight motion of the hand, he directed Mrs. Gunning’s attention to his friend, just at the moment when his countenance had taken a most expressive twist in his endeavour to check Chadwick’s flow of conversation.

‘Now, do look at him, aunt,’ said he. ‘Do you consider he is a safe fellow to go about with? And he was worse than that in Ireland—give you my honour, he was. He saw a pretty girl by the roadside, and immediately the train came to a station he bolted, in order to run after her. By-the-by, who was she, Damerel? You never told me.’

‘She was a Miss Langley,’ replied Damerel, who, in his confusion, quite forgot that it was Olive’s face which had drawn him from the train.

‘Miss Langley!’ said Mrs. Gunning. ‘Do you hear that, my dear? I wonder whether it could be Florian Langley.’

‘That was her name,’ said Vivian Damerel, in his most measured tones, though his heart beat with unaccountable quickness, as his lips drawled the words out slowly.

'Really!' remarked Mr. Gunning, holding up a letter against his expressive nose.

'Tobias is observing,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'how singular it is, that just at this moment he should have written a letter of introduction for Sir Hilton Trewavas, making him known to Mrs. and Miss Langley. I think they will be very pleasant acquaintances for him; and, to tell the truth, I am building a little romance upon the matter. You know what a state of mind poor Sir Hilton has been in ever since that dreadfully mysterious affair. Well, now, wouldn't it be lucky if he were to take a fancy to Florian? It would be a desirable match on both sides, and I should be so pleased; wouldn't you, Mr. Damerel?'

Mr. Damerel at that moment certainly considered Mrs. Gunning the most disagreeable woman in England, yet he managed to answer civilly that he should be perfectly delighted to hear of Sir Hilton Trewavas's marriage—'to the pig-faced lady,' he added mentally.

'But I, too, am going to Paris, Mrs. Gunning,' said he; 'so, pray do give me an introduction to your friends also, and then I'll watch the affair, and drop you a line weekly, to let you know how your little romance is going on.'

'Say a good word for your adorable nephew in your letter,' interposed Chadwick, 'and I'll cut the baronet out, and run off with the lady myself.'

'You have no chance, Dick,' retorted Mrs. Gunning. 'But Mrs. Langley is so good-natured, that I may venture to introduce you both. Only take care—Florian will break your hearts if she can.'

'I shall be delighted to let her try,' observed Mr. Chadwick. 'I can only say, on my part, she shall have all the honourable assistance possible. I wish, for her sake, my heart wasn't so desperately tough as it is.'

'No nonsense, you know,' cried Mr. Gunning, with his nose very much in the air.

'Now, Dick, you hear what your uncle very judiciously observes,' said his aunt: 'you are not to forget that Mrs. Langley is blind; therefore you are bound to be a perfect Bayard in your intercourse with her and her daughter. No garrison tricks, you know.'

'My dear aunt, I am the most harmless fellow in the

world,' replied the young lieutenant. 'I am a babe in the wood, I assure you. And as to Damerel here, I'll look after him carefully. I promise you I'll put his head in his hat every time he calls on Mrs. Langley; and he shan't take it off with his hat either. And if I see any appearance of flirting about him, or other symptoms of insanity, I'll get his head shaved immediately, and put him in a strait waistcoat, and telegraph to you to let his friends know his condition. But being with me, he will be safe; I have always brains enough for two.'

'My dear fellow,' returned Vivian, 'you mean you have no brains at all. If I don't hold you as we cross the Channel, you'll be blown away. You'll never stand a gust of wind. You know the proverb: "Gone like chaff before the wind." Now, you are all chaff, and if that goes, I want to know what I shall have to take on to Paris with me, except your portmanteau and your tailor's bills. Put a few of 'em in your pocket, Chadwick, before you start; they are heavy enough to hold you down.'

'Did you ever hear a fellow have a more ruffianly style of conversation?' exclaimed Mr. Chadwick, delighted at this interchange of chaff. 'I didn't mean to tell on him, but he deserves no mercy now; so I'll just relate a little anecdote, aunt, which will show you how he conducts himself when he gives way, you know, to his natural bent. As we were coming up from Liverpool, he allowed himself such play of feature—if I may so express myself—in the railway carriage, that when the guard came to collect the tickets, a passenger leant forward, and said, "Guard, you had better ask that gentleman to show his ticket of leave!" There! that was what the personal appearance and style of Vivian Damerel, Esq., brought him to! Upon my word if such a thing had happened to me, I should have collapsed. I should have shut myself up like a telescope, and retired into a case for the rest of my life.'

Mr. Chadwick enjoyed this exquisite piece of chaff so much, that after laughing at it with intense glee he sat silent, conning it over to himself, while Mrs. Gunning conversed with his friend.

'Do you know, Mr. Damerel,' she said, 'I was much impressed yesterday by Mr. Trewavas's singular behaviour.'

He was quite rude to me, and Mr. Gunning very justly remarked that such conduct is perfectly unaccountable, unless a man is insane. I had proposed to him to travel in the same carriage with the Langleys, thinking, you know, it would be agreeable to him; and poor Mrs. Langley being blind, I thought, too, it would be nice for her and Florian to have a gentleman with them on the journey. Well, he positively refused. "A fair face is the devil's mask, Mrs. Gunning," he said. "No more fair fiends for me. I grant they look like angels while they live; but did you ever see them after they die? When they come again, they show a man what they are. Strange sights are to be seen down yonder at Trewavas, Mrs. Gunning. I can't stand it any longer—that gloomy place, I mean; they fret too much there, and a sort of fever gets into the blood, you see. I'll try pleasure, gaiety, noise; loneliness is terrible. The devil tempts in the wilderness, and isn't the desert full of fiery serpents and dead men's bones? Paris is the best physic for such an ailment as mine." He said all this, Mr. Damerel, in such a wild way, and with his face so close to mine, that I assure you I was frightened. I wouldn't name this to you if you were not an old friend of the family.'

'We are not quite on such friendly terms as we were,' replied Damerel, gloomily.

'I am sorry for that,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'because I was going to ask you to speak confidentially to Sir Hilton.'

'Impossible, Mrs. Gunning, I assure you!' exclaimed Damerel. 'Anything I can do for John Trewavas I will, with pleasure; but I shall not put myself in contact with Sir Hilton if I can avoid it. Our ideas of duty, as regards one painful subject, clash. I am not surprised to hear that John has found Trewavas insupportable; and if, as you seem to think, he is still quite unhinged and excited, I am not astonished at that either. I firmly believe that, of the two brothers, he was the one most truly and firmly attached to poor Eleanor Maristowe.'

'I have never heard this before,' said Mrs. Gunning, in a low voice. She looked surprised and excited, and her face grew gradually very pale. She was a clever woman, possessed of wonderful intuition, greatly sharpened by her daily interpretations of the marital nose, and there were thoughts now

stirring in her head which she would have been sorry to tell to Vivian Damerel. 'Well, of course,' she resumed, recovering herself, 'after what you have told me, Mr. Damerel, I cannot ask you to repeat to Sir Hilton the curious sort of talk which his brother held with me at the station. I would have told him myself when I met him to-day, but he was in a hurry, and evidently anxious to avoid us.'

Meanwhile Vivian Damerel was debating in his own mind whether he should relate to Mrs. Gunning his strange *rencontre* with Olive in Ireland at the Langleys'. The sight of her wondrous Eastern beauty, as it flashed upon him for a moment, seemed almost a dream now, and if the character of her face, and the passion of those deep dark eyes had been less singular, he might have felt tempted to deem himself deceived by a chance likeness and the colour of his own thoughts. As it was, he was sure he had seen Olive; and reflecting that the Langleys had certainly left home instantly to avoid being questioned, he decided on not naming her in connection with them to their friend, Mrs. Gunning.

Mr. Chadwick, being rather afraid to try his chaff on an M. P., had sat silent and bored; and now, catching his friend's eye, he made a frantic telegraph of himself, indicative of a strong desire to retreat at once. Vivian waited only while Mrs. Gunning wrote a hasty but kindly introduction to the Langleys; and, armed with this, he was glad to shake hands and depart.

As Mrs. Gunning justly divined, Sir Hilton Trewavas had telegraphed to the aged and lonely lady at Trewavas that he had traced John to the London Bridge Station, and ascertained that he had taken a ticket for Paris, whither he intended to follow him instantly. John's hasty departure from home in secret had greatly alarmed his brother.

Sir Hilton's thoughts were dark and troubled, as he went on from train to boat, and from boat to train again. The sum of money sent to him by Olive, through the pedlar, and restored to her by the agency of Bolster, had again reached his hands. It had been paid to his London bankers by a stranger; and there remained no chance, no clue now, by which he could hope to force it upon Olive's acceptance. In the pride and bitterness of her heart, she had stripped herself of her small fortune in order to gall him with the

gift—he would not call it a payment—and now he had to endure the sharp pang of knowing her to be in the fangs of poverty, or perhaps a dependent on Charles Vigo's love-gifts. His imagination tortured him as it pictured Olive in every possible misery that want, concealment, and her own guilt could heap on her. If she would only have accepted his offer of a convent, he could, comparatively speaking, have been happy. But she had studiously avoided every kindness from him, apparently beating down, with hasty and passionate hands, all the heaped-up remembrances of old affection, all the tender links that long habit and years of association had bound about them. Well, there remained nothing to him now of these—all were severed, and flung to the winds; there were left him only the dregs of his youth, and the bitterness and jealousy of a passion he once denied, and now contemned. Yes, there was one thing still intact, though malice and slander had done their worst to stain it: the old name of Trewavas was still unsullied, still high, pure, and honourable in the face of the world.

Once in Paris, Sir Hilton did not anticipate any difficulty in finding his brother, or in ultimately inducing him to accept his companionship in whatever course he might choose to bend his steps. It was, therefore, with feelings of mingled alarm and annoyance that, after a week's sojourn at his hotel, he found himself baffled at every point, and still in complete ignorance of John's abode. The knowledge that he had drawn four hundred pounds in London from his bankers' hands greatly increased his anxiety; yet he was unwilling to have recourse to the assistance of the police, knowing that if John was safe and well it would greatly annoy him to find himself traced by their agency. Hence Sir Hilton resolved to try all other means first, and the best among these was to frequent places of amusement, and to go into society as much as possible. There were lots of English in Paris; some of these would surely have met John. In this thought, he armed himself with Mrs. Gunning's letter, and called upon the Langleys.

Mrs. Langley heard his name announced with mingled feelings of curiosity and alarm—alarm, lest Florian should have heard that strange story of the murder of his bride, and should connect it with the Opal Vansittart, over whom, she

knew, some vague and terrible accusation hung. But Florian heard his name, and received his greeting with steady calmness. Not so Sir Hilton; he was fated to be agitated and surprised, even at this their first interview.

Can we live, even for a short time, with a person we like and admire, without being influenced in some subtle way to copy their tone and expression? Perhaps the copying may be unconscious, yet none the less do we catch a trick of the voice, a turn of speech, a gesture of the hand, which imitates some one with whom habit or affection links us. This was the case with Florian.

She turned and greeted Sir Hilton Trewavas, in words that Olive had been wont to use. She held out her hand to him in a pretty little way—Olive's own; and even in the turn of her head there was some shadow or thought of Olive. Inexpressibly startled, Sir Hilton fixed on her a long, wistful gaze, and satisfied himself that this intangible likeness was not one of face and feature. Florian's beauty was as unlike Olive's as the beauty of the lily varies from the beauty of the rose. Still, that shadowy, dreamy likeness was here, wrapped about her like a veil—a veil through which Sir Hilton saw Olive's face—a veil which invested her, for him, with an irresistible attraction. He drew near to her, he spoke, and listened for her answer, with a new interest and a beat of life in his heart that had not visited it for many a weary month. Among the parties to which Florian had gone, had she met Mr. Trewavas? he asked.

'I have heard no such name,' replied Florian, 'but I will ask my brother; he goes out so much more than I do. I will go and fetch him, mother. I think I heard him come in just now.'

She left the room for that purpose, and Sir Hilton felt glad that so beautiful a girl had a brother with her to be a more efficient protector than this poor feeble, blind lady, who sat helplessly on her sofa. As he thought thus, Mrs. Langley's voice roused him.

'Sir Hilton,' she said, 'I have a little kindness to ask of you. Strange as it may seem to you, my daughter has never heard the details of your mournful story.'

But here Mrs. Langley stopped, for that subtle sense, which helps the blind, showed her that her words caused Sir Hilton pain.

'I am sorry to allude to circumstances which must be so grievous to you,' she continued, after a moment's pause; 'I merely wished to say that Florian never reads newspapers. Hence, beyond a shadowy idea of the terrible event that has so tried you, Florian knows little; and I am very anxious, for urgent reasons of my own, to save her the pain of these details. Will you, then, oblige me by never mentioning to her the name of that—that unhappy girl, against whom circumstances——'

'Say no more, I entreat you,' interrupted Sir Hilton. 'I am the last person likely to name the unfortunate Olive Varcoe.'

'Forgive me, Sir Hilton, for having mentioned this terrible subject to you,' she said. 'If you knew my motive, you would pity me for the pain I feel in having broached it. I heartily sympathise with you, and with all your family. Truly, you cherished a viper on your hearth.'

Sir Hilton was spared the pang of replying by the entrance of a young man, whom Mrs. Langley introduced as her son; but while the usual interchange of civilities took place, Sir Hilton was listening to a voice without the door.

'Thanks. How kind of you to ask me! I shall be delighted to come this evening.'

'I ought to know that voice,' said Sir Hilton, smiling. 'And yet it cannot be Damerel.'

'Mr. Vivian Damerel!' said Herbert Langley, a little confused. 'Yes, it is he.'

Sir Hilton guessed in a moment that Damerel was avoiding him, and he turned proudly to another subject.

'My brother,' he said, 'is come to Paris, but has failed to give me his address. I dare say he thought it a matter of no consequence; but, as it happens, I wish much to see him. Have you met him anywhere?'

'Not that I am aware of,' replied Herbert Langley. 'Have you searched the registers of the hotels?'

'Long ago, and without result,' replied Sir Hilton. 'I can only suppose he is gone into apartments.'

During this short dialogue the leave-taking between Florian and Damerel had been distinctly audible, and Sir Hilton felt a curious satisfaction that Florian's tone was cold and her words short. As she re-entered, there was a slight flush on her cheek, and she turned eagerly towards her brother.

'I hope you have been able to give news of Mr. Trewavas,' she said.

'No, none,' he replied. 'And I think Sir Hilton had better insert an advertisement in Galignani's paper; his brother will be sure to see that, and respond to it.'

'I will think of it,' said Sir Hilton; 'but I suppose the quickest way of all would be to go to the police.'

'Yes, it might be,' said Herbert; 'but I would not try it, if I were you, until other modes fail. It will cost you a great deal; and you have no reason, I presume, to think there is anything wrong?'

Sir Hilton hesitated a moment before he answered.

'Silence is always rather alarming,' he said. 'My brother may be ill, or he may be in bad hands. He had a large sum of money with him.'

'Oh, do not take so gloomy a view of Mr. Trewavas's silence,' cried Florian, cheerfully. 'He is enjoying himself in Paris, depend on it; and perhaps by this time he has written to Lady Trewavas.'

Sir Hilton thanked her for the kind suggestion, and rose to leave.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE old mansion of Bosvigo slept—slept in deep tranquillity, with its belt of giant firs keeping watch and ward around it, and all the shadows of its quaint gables and latticed windows lying stilly on the moonlit lawn. Down in the courtyard at the back lay other shadows, unquiet with the quivering of leaf and flower, and changing fitfully as the great branches of evergreen oak and bay, standing at the gate, swayed in the uncertain breeze. Now, as the shadow of the huge oak trembled on the pavement, there glimmered distinctly among the leaves the grey and ghostly likeness of a man. Then a tawny dog sprang from his kennel his chain's whole length, and, with one short, angry bark, waited with watchful eye upon the trees till the branch shook violently, and the man himself swinging at arm's length dropped noiselessly on the pavement. Then the dog snapped his chain, and rushed upon him with one wild spring.

'Bolster! good Bolster, down!' said the man, in a low voice.

The dog crouched at the man's feet; but his short barks of joy and his eagerness and suppressed excitement showed that Bolster knew his master.

'Have you got the dog?' whispered another voice, and a face peered anxiously over the wall.

'Yes,' said Charles Vigo, shortly. 'Recollect your master has pledged his word to me that the dog is to be well treated, and to be brought back to Bosvigo as soon as this strange hunt is over.'

'All right, Mr. Marcombe; it shall be done. And I shall be glad when the dog is back,' said Sir Anthony's man, sulkily; 'for this here work do look more like dog-stealing than anything else I ever seed.'

Charles Vigo smiled at the man's words, and, seizing the bough of the oak, he once more swung himself on to the wall, and dropped down on the other side, whistling lightly to the dog as he went. Bolster flew frantically to the wall, then to the locked gate, which he finally succeeded in surmounting. Sir Anthony's man looked on with great admiration.

'I declare he do come arter you just as if you was his master,' said he.

Again Charles Vigo stooped to pat Bolster, in order to hide the smile that passed over his face.

'I have begged a pair of old shooting gloves from Mr. Vigo's servant, that once belonged to his master,' said Charles; 'and it's wonderful how these retrievers will recognise the scent.'

'Ah, it's very queer altogether,' returned the man. 'I can't say this is a hunt as I shall like to follow.'

They walked on silently through the grounds into the road, where a light cart awaited them, into which they sprang, and drove away.

It was about an hour after this, when Charles Vigo returned to Menheniot Farm, and laid his hand on the shoulder of its gloomy master, who sat cowering over a turf fire, which smouldered on the hearth, in an old-fashioned wide chimney.

'Skews,' said he, 'you must go to this man-hunt.'

'You—you can't mean that you are going to let this be?'

stammered the farmer, bending his white face still lower over the embers.

'Yes—why not?' said young Vigo. 'Let them hunt, and find, if they will.'

'Here!' asked Skews, hurriedly.

'Here!' repeated Charles. 'No. Are they likely to find Mr. Vigo at your house, or any other helper in a murder?—eh, Skews?'

The miserable man glanced upwards into his questioner's face with a look of helpless cowardice and fear; but he uttered not a word.

'Bolster will not come hither to look for his master,' continued the other. 'Never fear that, man.'

'Where is the dog?' said Skews, looking round in terror.

'In Sir Anthony's stable,' was the reply. 'He will be let out at three o'clock; and Sir Anthony and a man of his, who is in the secret, will follow him on horseback.'

'Will the scent lie well, Mr.—Mr. Marcombe?' asked Skews, with his eyes still on the fire.

'Trust Bolster for making no mistake,' replied Charles. 'If it was only an old glove, he'd find it.'

Skews was silent for a moment; then curiosity evidently got the better of his fears.

'Where do you mean to go, sir, if you don't stay here?' he asked, in his old hesitating way.

'Oh, we'll go together, Skews,' said he. 'We shall have some rare sport.'

Skews seemed by no means to relish this prospect. He moved uneasily on his seat, and said, gloomily, 'What's the good? I don't see the good. I can't make out what you are going to do.'

'Come with me, and then you'll see what I am going to do,' said the other. 'I have chosen a splendid hiding-place.'

The commanding voice was in his ear, the firm hand was on his shoulder, and the coward Skews dared not disobey his guest. Yet he rose sulkily; and as he stirred the embers together with his foot, he said, in his moodiest tone, 'I'm a doomed man. I don't care where I go. But I suppose you'll let me have a sup of something warm before you pull me out in the cold?'

'What are you afraid of?' returned the other, contemptu-

ously. 'Arm yourself with Dutch courage, if you will; it matters little to me.'

The young man walked up and down, whistling softly, as Skews mixed himself a glass of strong toddy, which he drank in a fierce way, as though in drink, as in all else, he could not help showing the desperation that was growing in him.

'Are you ready?' asked his guest, as he set the glass down. 'Then come at once.'

As he spoke, Charles Vigo took a pistol from his pocket, and looked at the priming. The action was not lost on Skews.

'I hope, sir, whatever happens, that you'll keep your temper,' he said, submissively. 'I'm sure I'm willing to go with you, although I can't see what you are going to make a fool of Sir Anthony Roskelly for.'

Both stood beneath the night sky as the last words were said, and, without answering, Charles Vigo strode on towards Trewavas woods.

The moonlight was clear and piercing, but beneath the trees the arched branches, leafless though they were, intercepted its rays, and the path was dark and gloomy. A thousand fantastic shadows lay upon the rank grass; and here and there, where a huge ilex or a silver fir reared a giant crown, the shadows grew funereal in blackness, and the darkness was intense. From such black spots in their path the coward Skews emerged with a colder and colder fear trembling at his heart. Yet he dared utter no word of remonstrance, his fear of the stalwart young man by his side being greater than the imaginary terrors that tormented his shrinking conscience. Nevertheless, when Charles Vigo struck into the heart of the wood, and turned towards the Lady's Bower, fright unchained his speech.

'I hope you won't ax me to go to thic lonesome pool, sir,' said he, 'especially on sich a wisht night as this.'

'What better place for the hunters to find the aider and abettor of a murderer than the spot where the murder occurred?' asked his companion, sternly.

'But there's no friend of murderers here,' stammered the farmer, as his face grew white and ghastly in the moonlight.

'Nevertheless,' said the young man, 'the friend of Olive Varcoe is here, and I intend that Sir Anthony Roskelly shall

find him at that very spot where—where you and I, Nathaniel Skews, saw her on the day that Eleanor Maristowe lost her life.'

'You! Did you see her too?' exclaimed Skews, with a tremulous quiver in his voice.

As he spoke, Charles Vigo turned, and seized him by the collar.

'You saw her, you miserable scoundrel,' he exclaimed, 'and yet you have held your peace. You have heard her traduced on all sides, you have seen her hunted as a criminal, driven from her home, execrated and hated, and you have not spoken, because you have taken blood-money, and sold your soul for a few dirty acres of Trewavas land.'

Held in his powerful grasp, Charles Vigo dragged the wretched man along at a rapid pace, till he reached the margin of the lonely pool, where the moonlight lay, white and silvery. Here, on the long, rank grass, where he had seen Olive's robe, trailing as it touched the water, he flung him down, and stood over him, pistol in hand.

'Understand, Skews,' he exclaimed, 'that you have to speak now, else I fling you into this pool, where you saw Eleanor Maristowe flung, and never raised a hand to help her, coward and assassin that you are!'

'I cannot speak,' gasped Skews. 'I'm a ruined man if I do.'

'There is no escape for you,' said Charles Vigo, sternly. 'Unburden your guilty load, ruin or no ruin. I mean to hear the truth, even if you die in telling it.'

'Now, look here, sir,' moaned the miserable Skews; 'is this fair what you're doing? You come into my house in disguise on purpose to ruin me. You hadn't been with me a week afore I knowed you, Mr. Vigo; yet I never said a word to no one.'

'You dared not,' returned Charles Vigo.

'I don't know about that, sir,' said Skews. 'I only know you're a rich man, and I'm a poor one. And if I don't keep my word with Sir Hilton Trewavas, I'm ruined. What do you want to ruin me for? I haven't hurt anybody. Miss Varcoe is safe enough. And I don't see why I should tell tales about her—or—or anyone else,' he roared, as Charles Vigo, exasperated by the insolent tone of his last words, again

seized him by the throat, and pressed his face close to the cold shining water.

The horror, the shrinking horror, which the miserable man felt at the chill touch of the doleful pool stopped for a moment the very beating of his dull heart. For months he had avoided the place in painful cowardice. For worlds he would not have dipped his hands in that accursed water; and now his eyes glared into it, its touch wetted his white lips, and he knelt face to face with the cold death he had let Eleanor Maristowe die. When Charles Vigo lifted his livid face from the pool, and flung him on the grass again, he was utterly abject and spiritless.

‘Give me five minutes—only five minutes, Mr. Vigo, and I’ll tell you all,’ he gasped hurriedly, as breath and life came back to him.

‘Very well,’ said Charles Vigo; ‘I grant you five minutes in which to recover yourself, and get some courage into your dastardly veins if you can. I shall stand by this tree; but you see this pistol, and you know that it is loaded, and if you attempt to stir I shall fire.’

Charles Vigo moved away to a short distance, and leant against a tall bay tree, the fragrant leaves of which shook with a mournful rustling in the night air.

‘Not so far, Mr. Vigo!’ cried the coward, in abject fear. ‘Don’t go so far away, for mercy’s sake! I can’t see you, sir, and I can’t abide to be alone in this ghastly place.’

‘I can see you,’ said Charles Vigo, ‘and that’s enough. You have asked for five minutes. I grant them; but I will not place myself in your sight.’

Compelled to look around him in the weird and waning light, and see only the waving trees, the still shadows, and the gleaming pool, which, like a ghostly mirror, doubled all the shapes of horror that haunted his coward spirit, Skews trembled in every limb, and tried vainly in his baffled mind to find some loophole or corner of escape. It was for this he had asked for five minutes’ grace, to invent a lie, or to shuffle Charles Vigo off with a coil of wily excuses, which should tell the truth, and yet hide it. But the tale, that by his fireside it would have been easy to make, would not come to him here, by the margin of the dismal lake, where Eleanor Maristowe died. And so he wavered from one coward fear

to the other till the minutes of grace were gone. At the last, he took to counting them, crouched as he was on the wet grass, with all thoughts of excuse or invention vanished, and nothing in his mind but the floating corpse of Eleanor and the pointed pistol of Charles Vigo. When the time was up, and his tongue had ceased to count, the blank silence that fell upon him was more horrible than the threatening voice or pistol of his foe, or even than the touch of that death-cold water.

‘Mr. Vigo ! Mr. Vigo !’ he said, softly.

Silence still. Then he began to count again. He had made a mistake surely, and he knew Mr. Vigo would not speak till the minutes of grace were gone. He counted with a dry tongue and a gasping throat, for every moment was a torture now. Suppose the young man had gone away, and left him here by this hideous pool alone ! The thought lifted his hair as though an unseen hand had passed through it, and brought cold beads of sweat upon his brow. And the moon was going down, the face of the pool was darkening slowly, with here and there a gleam and flash, a ripple of ghastly light always showing him the corpse of Eleanor floating towards him in horrible distinctness. The dark shadow on the water creeping ever nearer, nearer, appalled him more than the glistening light had done ; and the waving of the tall rushes on the pool’s brink, the creak and sway of unseen boughs moaning around him, all shook his abject soul with supernatural terrors. And now a branch on the opposite side of the pool swayed wildly to and fro. It swayed without any sudden gust or moan of wind. He saw it by a long line of light, which glanced between the trees from the setting moon, and struck the water like a ghostly lance, showing the branch swaying to and fro without wind, and without human hand. Then the light quivered and went out ; but, as it vanished, a face rose up among the leaves of the swaying branch, and looked at him. The sight was too horrible, and he fell down to the earth, biting the wet grass with quivering lips, and grasping at gnarled roots and weeds with clutching fingers.

‘Mr. Vigo !’ he shrieked, ‘for Heaven’s sake speak to me, sir !’

He held his breath to listen for an answer, but none came.

He heard only the swaying of the bough, and the moan of the wind among the tree-tops. Then, gathering courage, he thought to rise and escape; but as he gained his feet, a wiry, firm hand pressed him down upon his knees, and a voice—not Charles Vigo's—said, in cutting accents, 'This is the best attitude for a confession, Farmer Skews. I am Mr. Vigo's friend. You might deny what you said to him, but "in the mouth of two witnesses shall a testimony be approved." Now, let us hear why you stood by, and saw a helpless girl murdered, and never stirred a finger to help her.'

The thought had flashed through the coward's dull brain that he might deny his confession to Charles Vigo; but now, as he felt Mr. Heriot's strong hand upon him, he knew that he was baffled at every turn, and all hope was gone.

'Don't be hard upon me, gentlemen,' he whined, as he held out his hands towards the dim figure of Charles Vigo, standing between him and the pool. 'I'm a ruined man from this night. You won't make public what I say? You won't turn me out of house and home?'

'We shall do what is right and honest,' replied Mr. Heriot. 'If the consequences to you are disastrous, you must bear the just punishment of your sin.'

'I was a poor man; I owed rent,' groaned Skews, rocking himself dismally to and fro. 'I feared Sir Hilton would ruin me if I said anything. And I thought it grand to get such a big man in my power. But I'm sure I've never had no peace since. I've been haunted day and night. Aunty a minute ago I seed a face by the pool watching me.'

'You saw me, you simpleton,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Go on; we waste time here.'

'Any other man would ha' done what I did,' continued the shuffling Skews, 'if he was as poor as I be. I went to Sir Hilton, and axed him to let me have Menheniot farm; and he said no, very short, as he'd promised it to some one else. Well, then, when I had my chance afterwards, you can't wonder I took it.'

'Afterwards! You mean after the murder?' said Mr. Heriot, in a sharp tone.

'What a shuffling, lying throat the man has!' exclaimed Charles Vigo, indignantly. 'My hand tingles to kill him, as I would a reptile.'

Skews shrunk, and crouched his abject head nearer to the grass at these strong words, glancing like a whipped dog at the pistol shining in Charles Vigo's hand.

'Softly, my dear young friend,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Leave this creature to me. Now, go on, man—and faster, if possible.'

'Yes, sir,' said he; 'I went to Sir Hilton—the day afore the inquest it was—and told him I'd been in the wood the day Miss Eleanor died. I looked him in the face as I said it, and I never seed a man go so white as he did. He didn't speak for full a minute; and then he says, "What part of the wood?" "Near the Lady's Bower," I answers. "And I saw a red cord there." Then Sir Hilton dropped his face upon his hands, and when he lifted it again 'twas white as snow, and ghastly as a dead man's. "I don't want to do the family no harm," I says. "I've always been a tenant of yours and your father's, Sir Hilton. I mean to hould my tongue about the matter." He seemed relieved when I said that, but he kept his eyes down upon the floor, and never looked up once again while I was there. "Of course you shall have the farm, Skews," he says, "and three hundred pounds to stock it with. You understand that?" "I understand, sir," I answered; "and you may make sure you'll never hear no word of this so long as you live." He bit his lip hard at this, and said, in a hesitating way, "You did not see anyone at the pond, Skews, I suppose?" "I'm sorry to say, sir, I did," says I. "I mention no names. I saw some one." "Never mind," he said, holding up his hand suddenly. "I don't want to hear anything. You shall have the farm in a few weeks' time, you know, when things are quiet; meanwhile, you had better be careful." I saw he meant that he was afraid I should talk, though he was too proud to say it; so I made haste to let 'un know that narra word had passed my lips, or should pass; and it never would, Mr. Heriot, to this day, if young Mr. Vigo hadn't come into my house, disguised like, and hunted me down like a ferret.'

Skews whimpered here, and then burst into a howl of despair, as, looking up, he saw no sign of pity on Mr. Heriot's stern face.

'You see,' said Charles Vigo, savagely, 'what a miserable

craven is Sir Hilton Trewavas! Heavens!' he added, inwardly, 'to think that Olive should love such a man!'

'Softly, again, my dear boy,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Did Sir Hilton know whom you saw in the wood, Farmer Skews?'

'In course he did, sir,' replied Skews. 'Why did he go so gashly white else? Why did he give me the farm, and loan me three hunder pounds besides? And now I've gone agin him, and ruined myself and him too.'

'The miserable coward!' said Charles Vigo, as he stamped his foot on the ground; 'anything to save his own name.'

'You say you mentioned no names to Sir Hilton,' observed Mr. Heriot, standing over his abject witness with intense delight. 'Now, will you have the goodness to mention to me the name of the person you saw in the wood, and add also your own share in this transaction?'

Skews shivered and trembled, and bowed his miserable head upon his hands, but made no reply.

'You are dumb,' said Mr. Heriot. 'Well, I can tell you your share in the murder myself. You had shot a hare in the wood the night before, and lost it—for you try the poacher's trick now and then; and coming hither the next day—knowing you would find the hare hereabouts dead—you had just picked up the stolen game and pocketed it, when you heard voices—the voices of two young ladies in anger—and fearing to be seen, you hid down yonder among the tall fern and watched them. Then one young lady swept away in a tempest of passion, brushing the edge of the pool with her long dress, just here where we stand; and being in a fierce mood, she dragged the trailing silk hastily from the water, and gathered it up around her. In doing this her girdle fell upon the grass, and remained there unregarded. And you, after lingering among the fern a few minutes more, were creeping away on your hands and knees, when once more you heard voices, and you turned back to your old hiding-place, and watched again.'

Here Skews broke in with an injured air.

'See now!' he cried. 'Only think of a gentleman coming disguised into a man's house and worming all this out of him!—gathering it from words spoken in sleep, or idle things said over a glass at night! Oh, it's mean—I say it's mean in a gentleman to do such things!'

Mr. Heriot seemed for a moment to hesitate whether or no he should kick the reptile that crouched at his feet ; but he refrained, shrugging his shoulders at his own impatience.

‘You miserable scoundrel!’ said Charles Vigo, coming forward from the shadow where he stood. ‘It is true I have eaten of your bread, and slept under your roof ; and because of this—counting all the money I have given you for nothing—I do not mean to harm one hair of your wretched head. Before I brought you hither, I had taken measures for your escape from the execrations that await you. My motive has been, not to punish you, but to clear an innocent girl from the horrible shadow of guilt cast over her by you and your confederates. But why do I talk to you? Heriot, I am sick of this. Take this wretch away, as we agreed on ; and write out his confession, and make him sign it ; then let him go out of our sight for ever. I care not to hear his words. He can tell me nothing that my own conviction did not tell me long ago. And I swear solemnly, that the murderer of Eleanor Maristowe shall be in my hands before the world is a month older !’

He went back, as he spoke, to the deep darkness amid the trees, and remained silent, like a man firmly sure of himself, and heeding little what others thought.

‘You looked upon it as a lucky thing to get the Trewavas family into your power,’ said Mr. Heriot ; ‘so, although you might have hindered murder, you would not——’

At this instant the short, quick bark of a dog was heard at a distance, and once more Charles Vigo came forward hurriedly.

‘Take him away, Heriot, I entreat you,’ he said. ‘I want Sir Anthony to find me here alone.’

The wiry Mr. Heriot seized the coward Skews by the arm, and jerked him from the ground to his limp feet.

‘Now, man, come with me,’ said Mr. Heriot, ‘unless you want to be knocked down, and kicked along the road before me.’

Skews needed not this warning. Meek, ill-used, as he considered himself, he went a martyr, protesting he only wanted to be heard fairly, and to tell all the truth, since he must tell it, in his own way.

‘I shall sit up for you, Charles,’ said Mr. Heriot, as he disappeared, leading the coward with him.

Charles Vigo listened, first for the rustle of their steps among the leaves, and then for the distant sound of wheels, which echoed from the road beyond the wood; and during this time the short, anxious bark that had sounded far away approached nearer, but he did not turn his ear to this till the sound of rapid wheels had died in the distance.

'They are safe away,' said Charles Vigo to himself. 'Now, let Sir Anthony Roskelly find out the truth, if he can. I want none of his meddling, and I will not pander to his hate of Lady Trewavas.'

The young man walked slowly up the green knoll, and sat down on one of the felled trees that lay desolate about the ruins of the Lady's Bower.

'Is it thus Sir Hilton Trewavas thinks to forget?' he said, wearily, as he looked upon the ruin around. 'If he had not Olive's love, I could almost pity him.'

Turning from the thought that pained him, Charles Vigo divested himself of the thick red wig that came low upon his forehead, the uncouth collar, the glaring necktie, and other devices by which he had so effectually disguised himself; after which he lighted a match, to see the time by his watch; then he lighted a cigar, and, coolly smoking, awaited his foes.

CHAPTER XIX.

CREEPING between the underwood, crawling among the shadows, came Sir Anthony Roskelly and that beaming cherub, Mr. Eslick. The horses and the groom had long ago been left behind, for, with a grim sense of fun, Charles Vigo had traversed the wood to the Lady's Bower by a path well-known to himself and Bolster, but impossible for an equestrian, and by no means a paradise for elderly feet to tread.

'Where is this frisky dog taking us, Sir Anthony?' whispered Mr. Eslick, with anxious face.

'He is going to his master, Beelzebub,' replied the baronet, in fearful ill-humour. 'But I care not. I mean to follow to the end. Go back, Eslick, if you are a coward.'

'I am no coward, Sir Anthony. I follow you, sir,' said Mr. Eslick, beaming affably on his patron, and turning his head, as was his wont, to give him the full benefit of the smile that gleamed from ear to ear.

'It's dark as a bag,' said Sir Anthony, gruffly, 'and the path is as full of brambles as a blackberry pit. I don't think this hunt is turning out as amusing as I expected. Mind now, Eslick, if we are made fools of by a dog, no splitting on each other.'

'You may rely on me, Sir Anthony,' said Mr. Eslick. 'This little episode is, as you say, but a piece of fun, though of course it may lead to results.'

'Well, if it does,' resumed Sir Anthony, 'brag of it then, Eslick; but still leave me out in the matter; for, except as a jest, it wouldn't tell well to the world.'

Mr. Eslick's reply came in stifled accents, for he had just bumped his nose against a tree, and found the contact painful.

'It's my opinion, Eslick,' continued Sir Anthony, 'that you are an unlucky fellow in this Trewavas affair. I am afraid you'll never get that snug little place I promised you. Ah,' he added, with a bitter oath, 'I should count a thousand to back it as nothing, so I could bring that old woman's pride down. Well, she's lonely and miserable enough at Trewavas now.'

Sir Anthony forgot his own grim solitude, and all the quarrels and hatreds of his sour old age, as he thus rejoiced over the woes of Lady Trewavas.

'I have done my best, sir,' observed Mr. Eslick, in an injured voice. 'I have been indefatigable in my efforts to get at the root of this affair; but really, since young Mr. Vigo mixed himself up with it, I have been completely baffled.'

'All the more reason why you should find him, man,' replied Sir Anthony. 'Why else should I take such an absurd jest as this in hand? On my life, I half repent of it. Where is that devil of a dog now? I don't see him,' he said, turning round, and stopping suddenly. 'The dog is going straight for the Lady's Bower.'

'Not a pleasant place, Sir Anthony, at this time of night, certainly,' said Mr. Eslick; 'but having carried the jest so

far, I suppose we may as well go on. I scarcely believe in ghosts—do you?’

‘Not I,’ replied Sir Anthony.

At this moment Bolster broke into a joyous bark, and the two pursuers, hastening into the open space around the dismal pool, beheld a calm figure seated on a felled tree, round which the dog bounded with frantic demonstrations of delight. This was so unexpected a *dénoûment*, that both men stood still in amazement, not unmingled with a slight chill of fear.

‘Who is it?’ said Sir Anthony, peering into the starlight at the dim, motionless figure.

‘Charles Vigo, Sir Anthony. Very much at your service,’ said the young man, taking off his hat.

‘The deuce!’ muttered Mr. Eslick, in an undertone. ‘This young fellow baffles us at every turn.’

For a moment Sir Anthony was speechless; then he broke into a gruff laugh.

‘Well, Mr. Vigo,’ said he, ‘I own we have not gained much by our jest. We can’t take you up, you see; so I suppose we must wish each other good night.’

‘If you thought by finding me to discover the lady, whom I, and I only, have the courage to defend,’ remarked Charles Vigo, ‘you have certainly greatly deceived yourselves. But you can search the wood and the pond if you like.’

He rose, and lighted another cigar as he spoke, and by the glow of the match, Sir Anthony saw the ill-made dress and the red wig of the Dorset farmer.

‘Why, hang it!’ he exclaimed, starting back; ‘what is the meaning of this?’

‘It means, Sir Anthony,’ said Charles, ‘that I have rather turned the tables on you, and enjoyed this jest even more than you have. It means also that I know what I’m about, and you don’t. I did not think a red wig and a Dorset twist of the tongue would have taken you in so easily.’

Sir Anthony was speechless from rage and defeat; Mr Eslick from admiration. Meanwhile Charles Vigo stooped and untied the cord that had shackled Bolster’s speed. As he rose he confronted the two men face to face, and there was something in his honest and frank countenance that startled them both.

'I am sorry, for your father's sake, to see you hiding like a disguised vagabond,' murmured Sir Anthony; 'and I fear it is Mr. Eslick's duty now to arrest you as an aider and abettor——'

'Stop!' said Charles Vigo, holding up his hand; 'I have never aided or comforted any criminal. When I handed Miss Varcoe into a carriage, on the night she quitted this neighbourhood, there was no warrant out against her, to my knowledge. I cannot, therefore, be justly accused of the misdemeanour you name. But when you grant a warrant for my apprehension, Sir Anthony, and I am brought up before you as a culprit, I shall answer your accusation satisfactorily. Until then, farewell.'

He lifted his hat, whistled to Bolster, and walked slowly away.

'Eslick! Eslick!' sputtered Sir Anthony; 'had not you better seize him?'

Charles Vigo heard the words, turned, and once more confronted the two men.

'You will find me at Bosvigo to-morrow, until noon,' he said, calmly. 'If you have any charge to bring against me, make it, and I will answer it before the nearest magistrate. You are so fond of playing amateur policeman, Sir Anthony, that I trust you will do me the honour of arresting me yourself.'

This last cut stung the wily baronet into fury.

'Take care what you say, Mr. Vigo,' he retorted. 'I can fling worse in your teeth than that. A policeman stands on the side of law and order; but on whose side have you stood while you haunted this country, a disguised vagabond? A black wig and a pedlar's pack deceive me no more than a red wig now. What is the meaning of such a rotten farce?'

Charles Vigo's laugh was irritating as he answered him.

'It means,' said he, 'that you are not the only one who can play amateur policeman, Sir Anthony. And perhaps I can perform the part more effectively than you, since hatred and revenge do not enter into my motives.'

'What do you mean by that, sir?' roared the baronet, striding towards the young man with uplifted hand.

'Pray, Sir Anthony, do not quarrel. Be calm, I entreat you,' said the beaming Mr. Eslick, rushing between the

belligerents, and turning his seraphic smile first on one, then on the other. 'What Mr. Vigo has just said requires our earnest attention. It seems to intimate that he has made himself acquainted with facts unknown to us. Mr. Vigo—sir, if we have made a mistake in supposing you a friend of that unhappy person who committed a murder on this very spot——'

'I am neither friend nor foe to that person,' interrupted Charles Vigo.

'And if,' continued Mr. Eslick, 'through the advantage of a disguise, you have ascertained new facts, and gathered fresh evidence against that person, allow me to say, Mr. Vigo, that however singular and unprecedented your conduct may have been, you are certainly bound to give information of those facts at the nearest police station.'

'Thank you, Mr. Eslick, for your uncalled-for advice,' said Charles Vigo. 'The course you recommend is precisely the one I intend to pursue. I believe it is scarcely necessary that we should continue this conversation. Do not, however, forget I shall be at Bosvigo till to-morrow noon, to answer all charges. But, if I may be permitted to give advice in my turn, I should say your own reputations, and perhaps the ends of justice also, will be better kept by your allowing this singular jest to remain a secret. Permit me now to bid you both good morning.'

He walked calmly away, and disappeared among the trees, leaving Sir Anthony galled, and Mr. Eslick smiling in amazement.

'Curse his impudence!' said Sir Anthony, fiercely, as he turned to retrace his steps.

Had the wood been less dark, or the place less dismal with ghastly recollections, he would not have endured the irritating companionship of the smiling and puzzled Eslick. As it was, he suffered him as he traversed the tangled paths, and rode away from him discourteously as soon as he reached and mounted his horse. But the cherub overtook him in anxious haste.

'What can young Mr. Vigo mean?' he said, in a low voice.

'Nothing,' replied Sir Anthony. 'Lies—all lies! He meant to humbug us—nothing more. He is in league with

her, confound him ! Is it likely he has found out anything more than you and I know, or is going to tell it if he has ?'

There is no salve like self-conceit, and it has the double power of both blinding and soothing. Under its application, Mr. Eslick's smile beamed out brightly, and he felt an increased respect for his patron.

'You are quite right, Sir Anthony,' said he. 'But of course this young fellow will find he can't humbug you, nor me either, I hope. Shall I go down to Bosvigo in the morning ?'

'No,' said the baronet, snappishly. 'Let the simpleton go his own way for a while ; we shall catch him tripping one day ; there is nothing against him now that we can substantiate.'

Mr. Eslick justly interpreted this to mean, that Sir Anthony would rather hear nothing more of Charles Vigo and his dog. Accordingly, he departed without another word.

Meanwhile, Charles Vigo went on to Trewavas Church-town, and had an interview with that quiet and observant inspector, who had once made an unnoticed remark to his chief, Mr. Eslick, respecting jealousy. These two between them wrote a letter to the Home Secretary, and Charles Vigo took it up with him the next day to London.

Sir Anthony Roskelly was glad to hear that he was gone. But riding to Menheniot farm in a day or two to worry Farmer Skews, he was not so well pleased to ascertain that that individual had also departed, 'On a visit to a friend,' so said Dame Skews, in a shaky voice, as the baronet rode away with a sour visage.

* * * * *

'It is the oddest thing,' said Vivian Damerel to himself, 'and this is not the first time either that it has happened. Shall I tell Sir Hilton of it, or not ?'

The scene of this soliloquy was a place of public amusement in Paris, where the company was the reverse of silent, the fun fast and furious, the noise hideous, and the whole scene half mad, half grotesque, and terrible. To this place Lieutenant Chadwick, in his laudable wish to see life, had come, and brought with him, nothing loath, his friend, Vivian.

'What is the matter, old fellow?' said Chadwick; 'you don't enjoy yourself. Has anybody wrapped a wet blanket round your brains?'

'No,' replied Damerel; 'and yet I have been taking a mental shower bath for the last ten minutes. You saw those mad dancers rush down that alley just now? Well, among them, maddest of all, was John Trewavas.'

'Is there anything very surprising in that?' asked Chadwick. 'Why shouldn't he see life, and enjoy himself as well as another?'

'John Trewavas see such life as this!' said Damerel. 'You don't know the man. I should be less surprised to see an archbishop here taking his pleasure than to see him.'

'Ah! these quiet ones always take people in,' answered Chadwick. 'When they do break out, they go it, and no mistake. Now for a waltz.'

'Here, Chadwick, stop!' said his friend. 'You forget that Sir Hilton Trewavas is searching for his brother everywhere; and although I am not on very good terms with him, I think I ought to tell him this.'

'Of course you ought,' cried Chadwick. 'And yet I don't know; if John Trewavas wants to escape from apron-strings and have his swing, why should we set his elder brother on him to lead him home again like a snubbed boy?'

'There is something deeper behind Sir Hilton's anxiety than the mere wish to save his brother from a little dissipation,' replied Vivian. 'I had better be frank with him at once. I need not speak to him myself; I can ask young Langley to tell him.'

'Oh, I'll tell him that we saw Saint John here, if you like,' laughed Chadwick. 'I see nothing so alarming in it myself.'

'You don't know the quiet character of the man,' returned Damerel. 'And to confess the truth, Chadwick, this is not the first time I have seen him at some of the mad orgies of Paris. Each time, too, he was the maddest of the mad; and each time he either avoided me, or passed me by—as he did just now—as if I were an utter stranger.'

'He did that!' exclaimed Chadwick. 'Then, my dear fellow, you have left your brains in your hat-box again. It is not John Trewavas at all: it is a mere chance likeness.'

Now, I remember, you are always seeing people, whom you take for somebody else. It was some such thing as this that happened when you were going to Killarney, and you left your head in the railway train. Oh, it is a clear case! I shall have to hire a keeper for you soon.'

Unmoved by his friend's chaff, Damerel continued to watch the noisy group, who were having a vociferous and mad dance to themselves among the trees.

'Let us go down and look at them,' said he; 'and I'll show you John Trewavas.'

"Very like a whale," returned Chadwick, in high glee, 'only their figure-heads are not the same. I wonder if they sell strait waistcoats at the bar?'

Truly his chaff seemed quite justifiable, for, on reaching the party Damerel had designated, there was no person to be seen among them at all resembling John Trewavas.

'Are there "two kings in the field?"' cried Chadwick, thumping him on the back. 'Behold the stately Sir Hilton, walking by himself, melancholy and grim as a court-martial!'

Vivian Damerel's face flushed slightly as he remembered their last meeting; nevertheless, he did not hesitate. He hastened after Sir Hilton's retreating figure, and accosted him hurriedly.

'Pardon me, Sir Hilton,' he began, 'you are looking for your brother? I saw him here a few minutes ago.'

It was a pale and changed face that Sir Hilton showed to Vivian Damerel, as he turned and thanked him; and in his manner there was a suppressed excitement and deep sorrow that moved the young man visibly.

'Can I be of any assistance to you, Sir Hilton?' he continued, in a less formal voice.

'Thanks; every friend can help me if he will,' replied Sir Hilton, sadly. 'It seems my brother eludes all acquaintances; if only the next time you see him, you would but seize him.'

'Seize him!' echoed Damerel, in amazement.

'Yes,' said Sir Hilton; 'for I have reason to fear that my poor brother is scarcely in a fit state to be at large.'

'Then I do not wonder at your anxiety,' said Damerel, in a tone both of surprise and sorrow.

'Do not mistake me,' resumed Sir Hilton. 'I only mean

that poor John is in a sadly nervous state. His mind was not strong enough to bear the shock of that horrible event, that has so sorely tried us all. His mental health has gradually sunk since then, till he has become morbid and melancholy.'

'Melancholy!' broke in Chadwick. 'Why, he was dancing like a mad dervish just now, so Damerel says.'

This led to an account of where, and with whom, John Trewavas had been seen; and the three young men, first together, then singly, traversed the garden again and again in search of him, but vainly. John Trewavas was not seen again.

'He is gone,' said Sir Hilton, flinging himself wearily into a seat. 'I heard yesterday of his having been seen here a few nights ago; hence I came hither myself to-night. I heard, too, that he was at one of the masked balls at the opera.'

'Well,' said Chadwick, in a patronising and pitying way, 'you had better make yourself easy about him. I'll look out for you. I am very earnestly endeavouring to fulfil my duty in seeing Paris to the utmost, making a laudable use of my leave, you see; and so I shall be sure to come across him either at the Mabilles, or some of those late supper places, and then I'll just tuck him neatly under my arm, and bring him safe home. Have done it often, I assure you, for other fellows—saved 'em many a time from no end of rows.'

Nevertheless, in all his future and laudable endeavours to fulfil his duty, though they led him to every quarter of Paris where noise, and revelry, and misery mingled in wildest motley, Lieutenant Chadwick never again met John Trewavas. His brother and Vivian Damerel were equally unsuccessful in their search. It would seem that John had glided away from these scenes of Parisian life with the same silence and secrecy with which he had entered them; and Sir Hilton, vaguely conscious of some great sorrow, pursued his shadow as one would a phantom, pondering, the while, on all the instances in history or in memory, of men of John's quiet, undemonstrative, subdued nature, who had, after a great grief, or a sudden shock, broken out into wildest dissipation or gloomy insanity.

Vivian Damerel was in love, and to a man of his tempera-

ment to be in love was to be jealous. He was jealous even of his friend, Lieutenant Chadwick ; but, above all, he was jealous of Sir Hilton Trewavas. And before this feeling, the slight return of kindness, which had touched him on the night when John's haggard face, flushed and wild, flashed by him, faded away, and gave place to a feeling of disgust and resentment.

One day he entered Mrs. Langley's drawing-room, to find it empty ; and while he waited, hoping Florian would return shortly, he turned over a portfolio of drawings lying on the table. Listlessly, he glanced at sketches of Irish scenery, sketches taken in the park and grounds at Langley, hasty profiles of her brothers, her mother, and herself ; and among these there passed through his hand a small packet folded in silver paper. For a moment he hesitated whether he should open this ; but it was not sealed, and there appeared, therefore, no reason for reticence. He unfolded it, and his heart bounded with a quiver of pain and anger as his eyes fell on a portrait of Sir Hilton Trewavas.

With his head leaning on his hand, he was still gazing at it moodily, when Florian entered. She saw it instantly, and her face flushed crimson to the brow ; then her eyes fell on the folded packet, and she laid her hand on it hurriedly.

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Damerel,' said she, 'but I do not generally allow my portfolio to be inspected ; my poor drawings are not worth looking at.'

'This one, at all events, is wonderfully well done,' replied Damerel, in a husky voice ; 'the likeness, too, is perfect.'

Again Florian blushed vividly, and taking the drawing from his hand, she put it hastily with the others, and closed the portfolio.

'I do not agree with you,' she said, with returning self-possession. 'I think the face is far too gloomy for Sir Hilton's.'

'Rather say it is not gloomy enough, Miss Langley,' he replied. 'His history has a greater shadow on it than the one you have placed in the picture.'

As Vivian said this, Florian smiled, and her expression cleared, as though she were relieved of some fear that had beset her.

'I knew that some strange tragedy occurred in his family

last year,' she replied, 'and perhaps it was right to place the whole mansion and the figure in gloom; but I think this has greatly detracted from the likeness.'

Her manner bewildered Vivian; he had expected some denial that the drawing was her property, instead of which, she not only acknowledged it, but coolly discussed with him its merits as a portrait.

'Miss Langley,' he said, abruptly, 'my first interview with you was a painful one; I fear you have disliked me ever since.'

'I assure you I have not,' returned Florian, frankly. 'Pray dismiss that idea from your mind, Mr. Damerel.'

For one moment his heart beat with a faint hope, then it chilled again, as he looked on her calm face, so unconscious and untroubled in its placid beauty.

'And if,' said he, 'I were to tell you that I am still certain of the identity of Opal Vansittart with a person, whose guilt——'

'Stop!' cried Florian, hurriedly. 'I have promised my mother not to converse with anyone on this subject.'

Her face was not untroubled now; it was very pale, and her lip trembled.

'I was only about to ask,' continued Vivian, gloomily, 'whether my conviction respecting that unhappy person would prejudice you against me?'

'I can be sorry for your convictions without hating you for them,' replied Florian, smiling.

'But,' resumed Vivian, who seemed bent on tormenting himself, 'suppose I were still seeking Miss Vansittart—still resolved to find her?'

'Are you?' exclaimed Florian, eagerly. 'How I wish you may succeed! If you find her, come and tell me instantly, will you?'

Damerel gazed at her in amazement, at a loss for a moment how to reply.

'It will be melancholy news, I fear, when I tell you,' he said.

'On the contrary,' said Florian, 'it will be joyful news—delightful news! Oh, Mr. Damerel, do you know I have been searching for poor Opal these many weeks past in great anxiety? I fear she is in distress and sorrow, and no one knows where she is, not even her dearest friends.'

'I am not surprised at that,' observed Vivian, gravely. 'I am only surprised that she has friends who look for her, except, indeed, one infatuated madman.'

Florian's eyes filled suddenly with tears as she looked at him reproachfully; and Vivian, stung to jealousy too quickly, felt an instant conviction that her sorrow was more for Sir Hilton than for Olive.

'I am not sorry that Miss Vansittart cannot be found,' he continued; 'but I am really grieved that Mr. Trewavas still continues to render his family so anxious concerning him.'

A colour, vivid as a flame, passed over Florian's cheek as he uttered the word Trewavas. There seemed, indeed, cause for jealousy now, for she was visibly embarrassed and silent.

'I am sorry, indeed, for Sir Hilton Trewavas,' she said at last, timidly.

'Sorry for him!' exclaimed Damerel. 'I am far more sorry for his brother; he has been the true sufferer in the family tragedy.'

Florian's blush had died away, and she was now so pale that Vivian's heart beat with jealous indignation as he glanced at her. He resolved to speak to her, to warn and save her if he could from the fatal upas of Sir Hilton's love. He strove to steady his voice as he spoke, but it shook in spite of his efforts to be calm.

'Miss Langley,' said he, 'forgive me, if I dare speak to you frankly on a matter which I have never yet ventured to mention. I cannot but perceive your agitation. I cannot but perceive, also, that it arises at the mention of one name. Be warned in time. Do not permit yourself to be cheated out of one thought by a man almost a stranger to you, whose entire heart is given to another—a man, too, whose name is so fatally injured by its connection with a dire tragedy, that he is now totally unworthy of you.'

'Unworthy!' exclaimed Florian, who had heard him in great agitation. 'He is worthy of the best and highest. You know not what you say, Mr. Damerel. Wait till you know the truth. The woman whom he loves is happy indeed.'

She stopped, and over her neck and brow there flashed a crimson blush, almost painful in its intensity. Vivian

Damerel, as he saw it, felt all hope die within him.—‘I see, I have done wrong to speak,’ he said, angrily.

‘Worse than wrong,’ said Florian, with indignation. ‘You insult me. What right have you to suppose that I have ever given a thought to a man who has never uttered one word of love to me, and whose affection, as you say, is pledged to another?’

Tears started to Florian’s eyes again, and her head drooped upon her hands as she spoke.

Her words lifted a cloud of suspicion from Vivian’s mind. Sir Hilton, then, had not dared aspire to win this fresh, happy heart; but had he won it unwittingly? Why else these tears and blushes? Still self-tormenting, he tried one other probe.

‘Oh, Miss Langley, forgive me if I seem to take an unjustifiable liberty in thus speaking to you,’ he cried. ‘If my friendship for you and yours were not pure and disinterested—if I had not your welfare and happiness at heart—I would not take on myself so painful a task, I would not burden myself with this cry of warning. Now I speak it again, in the most earnest accents tongue can find. Silence can sometimes tell a love better than speech; but do not be deceived by looks or manner. I *know* this man’s heart is given to a woman whom he has loved for years—an outcast, certainly—a woman with a brand on her; but still he loves her passionately, ruefully, even despairingly. And if he seeks you, it is only for your wealth and position. These are cruel words to say, but they are true. And who but a staunch friend would have courage to utter them?’

With a pale face and parted lips, but without the slightest interruption, even by a gesture of her hand, Florian listened to him. Her own agitation was so great, that it overmastered his, and calmed him so far as to make his speech coherent, and unbroken by the stops and gaps of passion.

‘What do you know of me, Mr. Damerel, or of my acquaintance with this person, to make you speak like this?’ asked Florian, in a faint voice.

‘Only what I have seen,’ he replied;—‘the goodness, kindness, tenderness in you, which I would not have abused by a heartless man.’

‘You wrong this gentleman,’ said Florian, proudly. ‘I

‘have seen nothing in him but nobleness and honour; and if I choose to give him, even unasked, my esteem, my friendship,’ she added, raising her head, and looking Damerel in the face, ‘I honour myself by doing so; and there is no man on earth who has a right to cavil at my actions or my feelings.’

‘She loves him,’ thought Damerel to himself, and his heart swelled with bitterness and anguish.

‘Right, Miss Langley!’ said he. ‘Alas! I have no right, beyond the natural wish of a man, to protect the weak against the strong.’

‘I need no protection, sir,’ replied Florian; ‘my mother and my brother are with me. And now, may I ask a question in my turn? Why have you made yourself a spy on my actions, and watched my acquaintance with this gentleman?’

‘Because I know his history,’ said Damerel; ‘because I know the admiration of a Trewavas is fatal to a woman.’

‘Trewavas! Are you talking of Sir Hilton Trewavas?’ exclaimed Florian, looking at him with such unfeigned amazement, that Damerel could only answer her back with the same expression. And now his heart sunk indeed—there was some unknown rival, then, in the field, and his cause was lost hopelessly.

It was not Sir Hilton now he hated, and would make her hate: it was this unseen shadow that had glided between him and her. Embarrassed by jealousy, uncertainty, and grief, Vivian Damerel knew not what to answer.

‘I am sorry,’ he began, then hesitated, and stopped; ‘yes, sorry that I have spoken ill of him. I think him proud and worldly; but since, since——’

‘Since he is not making love to me?’ interposed Florian, archly.

‘Yes, just that,’ said Damerel. ‘Since that is not the case, I should be grieved to deprive him of your friendship.’

‘Do not grieve yourself, Mr. Damerel,’ resumed Florian; ‘you will not deprive him of it. I take a greater interest in him than you can imagine.’

Florian spoke seriously—sorrowfully, with a tremor in her voice, and a return of embarrassment in her manner that puzzled Damerel again.

‘He is happy in gaining a thought of yours,’ he said,

gloomily. 'But what friend of mine is it, of whom you supposed me to be warning you when——'

Again the fitful colour rose to Florian's brow as she interrupted him, hurriedly.

'Here comes Sir Hilton with my brother!' she exclaimed. 'Now, Mr. Damerel, shall I tell him all the hard things you have been saying?'

'No, indeed,' replied Damerel. 'Promise me you will forget them, Miss Langley. Give me your hand on it.'

Florian extended her hand, which Damerel seized eagerly—the fire of jealousy mingling with the coldness of quenched hope in his clasp—but scarcely had he touched the warm, white fingers ere he dropped them; for the door opened, and Sir Hilton Trewavas—his face pale and weary—entered, followed by Herbert Langley and Lieutenant Chadwick, eager for chaff.

'Who would have thought to find you here?' exclaimed Chadwick, after the first salutations were over. 'I should not have given you credit for so much sense. I have news for you. My aunt Gunning is coming to Paris.'

'Then she'll interpret your uncle's nose into French, now,' said Damerel; 'and, doubtless, in a week, she'll persuade him he speaks the language beautifully.'

'What an invaluable wife Mrs. Tobias must be,' observed Herbert Langley. 'I wish I could find such a one. *Apropos* to that, Flo, I consider you have treated me shabbily. You must know, Trewavas, my sister had picked up a sort of paragon in the shape of a companion or governess, and she filled folios which she sent to me, descriptive of her perfections and loveliness; and when I came home from Gib—Gibraltar, you know—expressly to see her, lo! she was flown! And not one word will Flo say about her, except that she still considers her a kind of angel.'

Florian and Vivian Damerel exchanged glances during this speech, and then both involuntarily looked at Sir Hilton.

'Well, this is really too bad!' exclaimed Herbert Langley. 'This piece of perfection is not only a mystery in herself, but it seems she makes mysteries in others. Here are Florian and Damerel exchanging in looks a romance in three volumes between them, and then they positively pass it on to you, Trewavas!'

'To me!' said Sir Hilton. 'I think not, Langley. What can I have to do with this paragon of beauty? Will you tell me, Miss Langley?'

To his great surprise, Florian changed colour visibly at this question, and seemed quite unable to answer it.

'Ask Damerel,' said Lieutenant Chadwick. 'I see, by his looks, he knows all about it.'

'I! How should I know?' stammered Damerel.

'Because you know everything, my dear fellow,' replied Chadwick. 'You are a perfect pointer for sticking your nose into other people's affairs.'

'But there can be no mystery here,' said Sir Hilton, who observed Florian much disturbed. 'Mysterious people are usually disagreeable, and a friend of Miss Langley's could scarcely be that.'

'Oh, but there is a mystery, though,' persisted Herbert Langley; 'and whether my sister keeps it up for the sake of provoking my curiosity, or whether she hides her paragon, lest I should fall in love with her, I can't say. Now, Flo, I warn you, I'll find Miss Vansittart, if she is on the surface of the earth.'

'Vansittart!' cried Chadwick. 'I am sure I have heard that name somewhere. Oh! ah!—yes; I remember. I heard Damerel ask at the police office at Dublin if they had found Miss Vansittart.'

'Is that one of your jokes, Chadwick?' asked Herbert Langley, in a voice by no means pleasant. 'Because, you see, it is scarcely possible that any friend of my sister's could be inquired for at a police office.'

Florian was pale as death, but she hid her face with a book, and looked steadily at her brother.

'I asked at the police office for Miss Fan, a setter I had lost,' replied Vivian, 'and hearing "Fan" and "setter," Chadwick, with a stretch of genius I should scarcely give him credit for, has cleverly changed the words to Vansittart.'

'Surely Florian will owe me some little gratitude for this invention,' thought Damerel, as he told his adroit fib with an unmoved countenance. But he was mistaken there. Florian thought only of his persecution of Opal; and the fact, which now oozed out, of his inquiries at Dublin, filled her with resentment. She took advantage of the laugh which followed Damerel's speech to rise and leave the room.

'Ah! you always put your sins on my back,' retorted Chadwick. 'Of course it was not Miss Vansittart you inquired for, but neither was it the setter. Was it the fair lady after whom you rushed, when you left your wits and your luggage in my charge? She was the Miss Fan in question, I suspect.'

'Tell us that story, Chadwick,' said Herbert Langley, eagerly.

Utterly unable to stop him, Damerel sat silent, and listened in vexation to a ludicrous account of his excitement at the sight of a pretty face, and his hurried departure from the train.

'And the best of it is,' continued Chadwick, 'he thrusts a police gazette, or something of the sort, into my hand, and pretends the beautiful little creature he runs after is some dreadful woman, who had been massacring her grandmother—no, her rival—down at some outlandish place in Cornwall—'

Here Chadwick came to a sudden and blank stop, as he caught sight of the faces around him. Vivian Damerel and Sir Hilton were both deadly pale, while Herbert Langley had flushed to a sullen red. Then, and not till then, did it occur to the unfortunate lieutenant's memory that the tragical event to which the paper referred had occurred in the Trewavas family.

'I beg your pardon, Sir Hilton,' he stammered. 'I had really forgotten. 'Pon my honour, I'm sorry—'

'Make your apologies to Sir Hilton another time,' broke in Herbert Langley, impetuously; 'but explain to me at once the meaning of all this. The place you have described, with the bridge, the river, the beech trees, is my mother's place. Was it on *her* lawn Mr. Damerel saw a woman standing for whose antecedents he referred you to a police gazette? Was it in the companionship of my sister he found her?'

''Pon my word, you know—on my life! I declare I really don't know anything about it,' said poor Chadwick, helplessly. 'I only meant a little chaff, you know; really now, nothing more.'

'Then, Mr. Damerel, I appeal to you,' said Herbert. 'This matter cannot rest here; the honour of my sister and my mother is concerned in it now, and I fully intend to know the truth. Sir Hilton, I am grieved to refer to an

event painful to you in your presence, but you perceive the necessity of the case obliges me. Now, Mr. Damerel, whom did you *believe* you saw standing by my sister's side on the lawn at Langley?

Damerel perceived that no falsehood, no subterfuge would avail now, and the truth would be the best policy.

'I am glad you have put the question in the way you have, Langley,' said he, 'because I can answer it without paining you or myself. Mine was, indeed, but a belief. I imagined I saw Olive Varcoe on the lawn at Langley—the girl who, justly or unjustly, is suspected of having caused the death of Eleanor Maristowe. As to whom I really *did* see there, allow me to refer you to Mrs. Langley.'

There was a moment's dead silence. In pity to Sir Hilton, whose emotion, by some subtle magnetism, conveyed itself to each heart there, no eye was lifted to his face, and it was evidently with agitation that Herbert Langley spoke again.

'The person you saw must have been Miss Vansittart,' he said, uneasily. 'Will you tell me why and wherefore you mistook her for Olive Varcoe?'

Vivian Damerel was silent, but he glanced involuntarily at Sir Hilton, and their eyes met. In that glance Sir Hilton knew that Opal Vansittart and Olive Varcoe were one.

'Mr. Damerel, I demand an answer!' exclaimed young Langley. 'I demand it as a right. Do you suppose I am going to sit tamely here, and hear my mother and sister accused of harbouring an assassin?'

'No one dreams of such an accusation,' said Damerel. 'I give you my reason candidly. It was a chance likeness—a wonderful likeness if you will—but nothing more.'

'And when you saw that Miss Vansittart was not Olive Varcoe, I trust, Mr. Damerel, you felt some compunction for the very great pain you must have caused her and my mother by your vague and, I must say, impertinent suspicion?'

This was Florian's brother speaking, and Damerel, though he winced, was gentle still.

'I grieve to say, I never had the opportunity of seeing Miss Vansittart again, and ascertaining that she was not Olive Varcoe,' he replied.

Herbert Langley stared hard at the speaker ; and then, in that quiet voice, which so often hides intense passion, he said, 'You will oblige me with a fuller explanation, Mr. Damerel. I do not understand you. Sir Hilton, had you not better leave us? Perhaps regard for your feelings is chaining Mr. Damerel's tongue.'

'Speak, Damerel,' said Sir Hilton ; 'I can bear it.'

'Why do you ask me for an explanation, Langley?' exclaimed Vivian, angry at last. 'Surely it would be better first to hear what Mrs. Langley has to say. I can only tell you that I saw Miss Vansittart on the lawn, and recognised—I mean, imagined her to be Olive Varcoe. I called in the morning on Mrs. Langley, with her friend, Mr. Lynher, but unfortunately the young lady had already departed.'

'Do you mean to say she had fled?' demanded Herbert.

'You force it from me, Langley,' said Damerel. 'Yes, I fear she had.'

'Great Heavens!' exclaimed Herbert Langley. 'Am I to bear this? Did you call at Langley to arrest this girl?'

'Not exactly,' was the reply. 'I called to warn your mother, believing her to be deceived by this person, and being anxious to save her pain and annoyance——'

'Say no more,' resumed the young man. 'I have no right to quarrel with you for doing what you thought your duty. But you must perceive to what course this wild supposition of yours, regarding the identity of Opal Vansittart with Olive Varco, forces me. It obliges me to leave no effort untried to find this guilty woman, and prove to you and the whole world that she was *not* the companion of my sister for four months. And, so help me, Heaven! I will find Olive Varcoe before this day month, and give her up to justice.'

Pale, bowed down with shame and anguish, Sir Hilton heard this passionate oath in shrinking silence. He was powerless to shield Olive now; she had gone her own way, and no word, no effort, no suffering of his would save her a single pang.

In the lull that followed upon young Langley's hot and hasty words, the unfortunate Mr. Chadwick approached with a propitiatory idea.

'I am sure I am doosed sorry I ever broached such a doosed uncomfortable subject,' said he—'in fact, doosed thing

altogether ; but if you'd allow me to suggest an idea. Look here. Miss Vansittart—of course highly respectable, and all that sort of thing. Well, write to her, and make her show up—I mean, come over to Paris on a visit to Mrs. Langley ; then everybody sees her, and knows she's herself, and not that other unpleasant person. That finishes the thing at once, don't you see? And Miss Vansittart, I take it, will be a much more easy lady to find, than one who don't *want* to be found. In fact, I have no doubt Miss Langley has got her governess's address somewhere. So I should recommend you to follow that scent first, old fellow, if you'll allow me to give advice.'

The despairing catch even at straws, and this was a straw which gave a little more hope, a little more breathing-time to the unhappy girl, whose fleeing footsteps Sir Hilton so often followed in spirit. Hence, he said, with an effort, 'Allow me to give you the same counsel, Mr. Langley. The production of Miss Vansittart would at once silence all slander, if any arose.'

'Yes, certainly,' returned Herbert, slightly embarrassed, 'and if I can find her without distressing my mother and sister, I decidedly will. Not that I doubt in the least,' he added, haughtily, 'that they can give me every particular respecting Miss Vansittart.'

'Permit me to advise that you consult your mother before speaking to your sister,' said Sir Hilton, who remembered Mrs. Langley's first interview with him, and her request not to mention Olive. He understood her reason now, and he understood also that strange shadowy likeness in Florian, which had so often startled him.

'Of course, of course,' returned Herbert Langley, impatiently. 'And I shall hope, Mr. Damerel, to have the pleasure of introducing Miss Vansittart to you, and convincing you of your blunder.'

'No one will be better pleased than I, to be so convinced,' murmured Damerel.

'As to Miss Vansittart's sudden departure from Langley,' continued Herbert, 'I have not the least doubt my mother can explain it satisfactorily, although she may not have chosen to do so at the time to you, Mr. Damerel.'

The young man's increasing coldness and haughtiness

tried Vivian sorely. He foresaw the shadow of a coming quarrel, and fearing, dreading to lose the privilege of seeing Florian, he strove to avert it.

'Langley,' said he, 'I think you take too hard a tone with me. Surely you must perceive that what I did in this affair was done kindly. I see, or I believe I see, a guilty woman imposing on two helpless ladies, and I act—as any other man of honour would have done—I call on a friend of theirs, and inform him of the deceit. Meanwhile the girl—who had twice seen me pass in the train—escapes. If the pretence on which she had entered your mother's house was not false, her name not false, herself not false, why did she take flight? Langley, your sister's honour is as dear to me as to you, and for her sake I shall grieve to see you stir in this affair. I have not yet presumed to offer you my counsel; but now I say—do nothing, that is your best course.'

'It might be, sir, if Opal Vansittart were Olive Varcoe,' replied Herbert, 'but I repeat that she is *not*; and I will prove it to you before I am a week older. And we had better not meet again, Mr. Damerel, until I can convince you that my sister's friend is a lady worthy of all respect. Have I not heard my sister say a hundred times that Opal Vansittart was a noble and beautiful girl? I will take no one's counsel in this matter but my own. By the living Truth above us, I will find both these girls! I will bring one here as our honoured guest, and I will lodge the other in a Cornish jail. Until then, Mr. Damerel, I bid you good-day.'

'As you will,' said Vivian Damerel, sorrowfully.

And there they parted; poor Chadwick, as he quitted the apartment, murmuring confusedly a fervent apology, which seemed to consist only of the words 'dooose' and 'chaff.'

Sir Hilton lingered a moment more with Florian's angry brother, to whom he seemed about to say something; but, checking himself, shook hands abruptly, and hurried away.

CHAPTER XX.

'DEAR ME!' exclaimed Mrs. Gunning; 'this is rather curious.'

Mrs. Tobias Gunning was scanning the advertisement sheet in the *Times*, while the marital nose was poring greedily over the other portion of that paper, which never fell into her hands until it was at least a day old, by which time the masculine Gunning mind was supposed to have mastered it, and done with it. The nose now lifted itself above the broad sheet, and looked at Mrs. Gunning for an explanation.

'Very curious, my dear,' continued Mrs. Gunning. 'Only listen.'

"If O. V., who left L—— in Ireland so abruptly on the tenth of last month, will communicate with the L—— family, she will greatly oblige them."

'Stuff!' remarked Mr. Gunning, as his nose dropped again over the newspaper. 'Advertisements every day—people who don't——'

The rest was lost in the depths of the Gunning organ of speech.

'My dear, that's perfectly true,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Of course there are advertisements of this sort every day, imploring people, who never turn up, to return to some distracted relative. But what is curious in this, that L—— certainly means Langley, and O. V. must be Opal Vansittart, that companion of whom Florian raved so in her letters to me a few months ago.'

'Well?' said Mr. Gunning, rather snappishly.

'Well, my love,' said Mrs. Gunning, with a puzzled air on her intelligent countenance; 'I don't understand it, that's all. When I called on the Langleys yesterday they never said a word about it.'

'Why should they?' asked Mr. Gunning.

'My darling Tobias, that question does not display your usual talent,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Don't you perceive, if there was no secret, they would have mentioned the matter to me frankly!'

'Why——' began Mr. Tobias; but he did not trouble himself to say the rest.

'My love, I am glad to hear you speak again with your usual ability and good sense,' observed Mrs. Gunning. 'Why, you say, should they necessarily tell me all their affairs? Why, my dear, because Florian is all frankness, and their affairs are usually so commonplace and simple, that they really might be placarded at the toll-gates, and it wouldn't matter. Then, again, poor Mrs. Langley is often very lonely in her blindness, and when she gets a chat with an old friend like me, she always tells me everything there is to tell. Now, she did not tell me of this advertisement; therefore I come back to my old argument, that this matter is out of the common run of their simple affairs, and so it was not commented on, and related to me.'

'Ah, yes,' said Mr. Gunning, 'I see. Now what——'

'That's just it, my dear,' continued Mrs. Gunning; 'that's exactly what puzzles me. As you sensibly observe, what possible mystery can there be connected with this governess, which they don't wish me to know? You see, if they had mentioned the advertisement to me, and said simply they didn't know the girl's address, and wanted to find her, I should have thought nothing of it. As it is, I am quite *intriguée*, as the French say.'

Mr. Tobias listened to all this silently, and then plunged his nose into the *Times* again, as though he considered he had now bestowed a sufficient portion of his time and attention on his wife. Mrs. Tobias, seeing this, perused the advertisements meekly, sometimes flashing her keen eyes across some interesting paragraph, which her husband was reading ponderously to himself. In doing this, she perceived that he selfishly held *Galignani* between the big sheets of the *Times*. This was more than even her wifely worship could endure.

'Now, my dear Tobias,' she expostulated, 'I declare that is very unlike you, to be selfish! I am sure you can't know that you are trying to read two papers at once. You can spare me one, love.'

Slightly abashed at this remark, Mr. Gunning drew out the smaller journal, and handed it to her.

'I shall want it soon,' he said.

Mrs. Gunning did not hear this long speech, for her astonished eyes had alighted upon this:—

‘If O. V. is in Paris, she is earnestly, passionately entreated to send her address to Bolster.’

‘Now, what can this mean?’ exclaimed the bewildered Mrs. Tobias. ‘Bolster is certainly the name of Charles Vigo’s dog. Other people in Paris may not know it, but I know it; therefore this advertisement betrays a good deal to me. Ah! O. V. too—the very same initials! what a singular coincidence! But, of course, they don’t mean the same persons.’

Her face flushed suddenly, as though some quick rush of thought, half forgotten, had returned to her, like an unexpected flash of light in a darkened room. And laying the paper on her lap, she sat with sealed lips, looking on the obtuse countenance of her husband. In her love for him, she deemed herself almost wicked for this silence—this concealment of that dim, strange thought, half a fear, which had struck her once before when conversing with Vivian Damerel. Yet she dared not speak it; no, in very truth, she dared not.

Receiving no explanation from his wife, Mr. Gunning drew the paper from her in sullen silence, and strove to find out for himself the cause of her excitement. His eye fell in a moment on the advertisement; but this did not explain to him why Mrs. Tobias should flush, and why her hand should tremble.

‘You are absurdly excitable, this morning,’ he said. ‘I see no cause for it here.’

This tremendous oration failed to rouse Mrs. Gunning into speech, and Mr. Gunning was again obliged to exert himself.

‘It is only the old affair over again,’ said he—‘some detective over here trying to get at that girl.’

Mrs. Gunning was roused now. She fixed her eyes on her husband in intense admiration of his genius.

‘My dear love,’ said she, ‘I hadn’t the wit to see that. I thought it was a genuine advertisement of Charles Vigo’s. Do you think the poor creature will be taken in by it, and send her address? But there is no direction given; so, after all, it must be the real Bolster.’

Mrs. Gunning changed her tone here to a more cheerful

accent; but she still looked anxiously at that fountain of intelligence, Mr. Gunning. For reply, he pointed to the advertisement; and she now saw, in small type, an address given at an inn, at one of the *barrières* of Paris.

'A well-known resort of the police,' said Mr. Gunning—'that is, known to the initiated.'

His wife heard him in silence. She let the paper drop on the floor, and rested her clasped hands on her lap.

'I wonder where she is?' she said at last. 'I wish I knew.'

The marital nose looked at her severely over the rim of the *Times*, and ejaculated, in a voice of astonishment, 'You!'

'You are surprised, Tobias dear,' said his wife. 'You were going to observe, it would be remarkably unpleasant for you and me if I did know. But somehow, I pity her. It must be so horrible to feel oneself hunted, as she has been.'

'Keep pity for deserving,' said Mr. Gunning. 'Poor John Trewavas ruined, unsettled in mind; Sir Hilton, career blighted; Lady Trewavas, old age miserable; Mrs. Maristowe, broken-hearted.'

'Stop, stop, my love!' exclaimed Mrs. Tobias. 'You overwhelm me with the fearful picture you draw of all those poor creatures. I will amend my words. I will say I wish I knew where John Trewavas is.'

The Gunning nose grunted assent to this, and added a wonder that Sir Hilton had discontinued to advertise in *Galignani* for his brother.

'Oh, he got so tired of it,' returned Mrs. Tobias. 'In every paper the same thing:—"Mr. Trewavas is earnestly implored to communicate with his friends, who are in great anxiety concerning him. He will find his brother at the Hotel du Louvre." I declare I was sick of seeing this, and of what use to continue it, if he has left Paris, as every one thinks?'

At this moment a servant entered, demanding to know if Monsieur and Madame were at home, as a gentleman below wished to speak to them. In reply to this, the Gunning nose made itself so startling, in an attempt to speak French, that the domestic stared at it in hopeless consternation.

'Your master is desiring you to show the gentleman up,' interpreted Mrs. Gunning, severely. 'It is wonderful, my

love, how stupid these French servants are,' she added in English.

In a moment Herbert Langley was announced, the servant saying at the same time to Mrs. Gunning, 'The laundress wishes to see madame, if madame will be so good.'

Madame was so good. She left the room after greeting her guest; hence she did not hear the conversation that ensued between him and her husband.

'Here is madame's handkerchief,' said the laundress, 'which was missing last week. It dropped from the basket as I was carrying it upstairs; but a *compatriote* of madame, who lodges in the attic above me, found it and gave it to me.'

Mrs. Gunning took the tiny web in her hand, and scanned it with a curious eye.

'This is not mine,' she said.

'Not madame's!' said the laundress. 'Ah, *mon Dieu!* what have I done? I have brought mademoiselle's own handkerchief, which she gave me to wash, instead of madame's.'

'Whose handkerchief did you say this is?' asked Mrs. Gunning.

'It belongs to the *compatriote* of madame,' replied the laundress—'the poor young thing, who gets her living by teaching English. Ah, it is a sad trade, that teaching; there are so many in it. But this little creature won't trouble the trade long. She has not given a lesson this fortnight—she has been too ill.'

'Ill!' said Mrs. Gunning, as she passed her hand across her forehead.

'Oh, madame need not be alarmed,' replied the woman; 'it's nothing infectious. If I permit myself to speak what I think, I should say grief and famine—that's her disease. Will madame settle the bill this week?'

Mechanically, Mrs. Gunning drew forth her purse, but her eyes were still fixed on the handkerchief.

'Grief and famine!' she repeated in a low voice. 'And she teaches English, you say?'

'Yes, madame. But she gets so few pupils; and for more than fifteen days she has not been out to give a lesson. What will you? When one can scarcely crawl up-stairs,

one cannot walk leagues over these Paris stones to get ten sous. Since she has been so ill, I have let our boy, Gustave, take lessons of her. That buys her a bit of bread, you see.'

'And has she no English friends in Paris?' asked Mrs. Gunning, whose face was strangely earnest.

'Not one,' was the reply; 'and I ask her in vain to write to her friends in England. But I trouble madame. Here is the change.'

'No, no—keep it, and buy a few comforts for this poor countrywoman of mine,' said Mrs. Gunning.

'Ah, madame is very good, very charitable,' said the laundress; 'but I scarcely dare do that; she is so strange, so proud. She would be very angry if she knew I had mentioned her to madame.'

'But you have not named her, and I have not asked her name,' cried Mrs. Gunning, eagerly.

'Her name!' said the woman. 'Oh, there is no secret about that. Madame sees the "O. V." in the corner of her handkerchief—Mademoiselle Olympe Valney—that is her name, and she is an orphan, she tells me; a little creature, no higher than that. And before she fell ill she was beautiful as an angel; but she is wasting away fast now. *Mon Dieu*, how changed she is! She is not long for this world, I think.'

Mrs. Gunning, whose cheeks had grown paler and paler, burst suddenly into tears, and covered her eyes with the handkerchief belonging to Mademoiselle Olympe Valney.

'What a heart madame has!' exclaimed the laundress, in great admiration. 'Never mind the handkerchief, I will wash it again with pleasure; or, if I took it to Mademoiselle Olympe, wetted with the tears of her *compatriote*,' she added, with a burst of French sentiment, 'she would cherish it all the more.'

'No, no,' cried Mrs. Gunning, don't tell her; don't, on any account, tell her! Don't name me to her, I beg of you. Where did you say you live?'

The woman named a narrow, dirty street, in the oldest part of Paris, by the Seine.

'You see,' she added, 'we laundresses must live by the river.'

'I should like very much to come and see you,' stammered Mrs. Gunning; 'you and your boy Gustave.'

'Madame is very obliging,' said the woman; 'but if madame will pay a visit to poor little Mademoiselle Olympe, it will be a real kindness.'

'I cannot promise,' returned Mrs. Gunning, hurriedly.

'But if madame comes to my poor place, she will surely see her countrywoman,' said the laundress; 'and perhaps then she will be able to persuade her to accept some aid. Ah, madame, without help, the poor young thing must soon die.'

'I will come to-morrow,' said Mrs. Gunning, with a sort of desperate catch in her throat; 'to-morrow, at eleven. Will that do?'

'Perfectly,' was the reply; 'and I shall be enchanted to see madame.'

Thinking herself now dismissed, the woman shouldered her basket and departed, leaving Mrs. Gunning so pale and so bewildered, that she sat down helplessly, and stared around her, as though she hoped to find some counsel and help in her difficulty from the four walls of the room. She avoided returning to her husband until she had heard Herbert Langley's departing steps, and even then she crept into the *salon* quietly, and sat down in the darkest corner.

'Had Herbert Langley anything particular to say, my dear?' she began.

She did not think he had; but she asked the question to rid herself of the painful embarrassment, which she fancied so legibly written on her countenance. To her surprise, Mr. Gunning answered, with pompous solemnity, 'He had something very particular to say, but I am bound not to mention it. The subject of our conversation must remain a secret between him and me.'

At any other time Mrs. Gunning would have had the whole story out of her recusant spouse in two minutes; but now she left him in peace, feeling thankful that the sin of reticence was not hers alone.

'Since he has a secret which he refuses to tell me, he will not feel so hurt at my keeping this from him,' she said to herself. 'Poor dear angel, how unhappy he would be if he knew that I could shut up my heart like this to him!'

She gazed at Mr. Gunning's smooth, foolish face till tears started to her eyes, then she stole towards him and kissed him.

'No coaxing, Priscilla,' said he. 'I don't mean to tell.'

'No, my dear, I won't ask you,' said his wife. 'But kiss me back, Tobias love, else I shall feel quite unhappy. I hate secrets—don't you?'

'Not particularly,' he replied; 'men cannot tell all their serious affairs to women.'

CHAPTER XXI.

VIVIAN DAMEREL was shut out from his heart's paradise. Herbert Langley's uncourteous words rendered further visits to Florian and Mrs. Langley impossible at present. Still he was not debarred from seeing her in her walks, her drives, or her rare appearance at the opera or the theatre. At these places, then, Vivian haunted her, mindful only of the pleasure to himself, though he saw with jealous pain how often she was weary, and how often her eyes strayed from him, as if eager to seek relief elsewhere from attentions that bored her.

If the rival that Vivian Damerel felt he possessed had been visible, if only he could have measured his strength, his talents, his love against him, he would either have come off conqueror, or have retired from the contest, acknowledging himself beaten. But this warfare with a shadow, this constant wrestling with an unseen antagonist, left him always in doubt, and did not justify any firm resolve to renounce a love which seemed now necessary to his life. Had she truly a lover, or did his jealousy raise up a phantom lover who had no real existence? This was the question ever tormenting him. If she were free, then was she as free for him to win as another, and he would never give up hope till she bade him. And if she had a lover, then at least he would not yield his hope until he had seen his rival. Should he renounce his chance of life-long happiness for a myth?

One wet afternoon, when the streets were dreary and the Bois deserted, Damerel wandered into the Louvre, and stood listlessly looking at the paintings. Suddenly, at the dim end of the long gallery, he caught sight of Florian, leaning

on the arm of a gentleman. Her back was towards him, but the turn of the head, the glossy hair, the graceful figure, were not to be mistaken. His longing eyes, never heeding her companion, took in, in one wistful glance, the exquisite charm, the tender grace of her presence ; then he went hurriedly away, lest Herbert Langley should turn, and vex him with a cold bow. But as he left the Louvre, he ran up against the very man he wished to avoid. Chadwick was with him, and as his amazed look fell upon the pair, the young marine, ever eager for chaff, asked him if he had seen his tailor.

‘Nothing but seeing that much-enduring individual, my tailor, would ever give my countenance so scared a look,’ said Chadwick.

‘Have you been in the Louvre?’ asked Damerel.

‘I hope I know better than to ruin my eyesight in that way,’ replied Chadwick. ‘We have been taking a shower-bath beneath the trees, on the Boulevards.’

Here Herbert Langley, who had stood a little aside, came forward.

‘Mr. Damerel,’ said he, ‘I hope soon to have the pleasure of introducing you to Miss Vansittart. When she is our guest again, I shall be delighted to accept your apology for your unjust suspicion ; and then I trust you will find me equally ready to apologise, if my conduct lately has seemed to you ungenerous.’

Lifting his hat, he moved rapidly away, thus sparing Damerel the pain of a reply.

‘Good-bye, my angel,’ said Chadwick. ‘You look as lost as a babe in the wood. It is dangerous to let you go about by yourself, I see that.’

He ran off, and Damerel watched him and Langley call a *fiacre*, jump into it, and drive away.

It was evident Herbert did not know his sister was in the Louvre.

Galled by what he considered the young man’s insolence, and tormented equally by love, pride, and jealousy, Vivian Damerel stood a moment irresolute, chafed to his very heart’s core. In that moment he saw Florian descend the steps of the Louvre alone, and hurry away in the opposite direction without perceiving him. After an instant’s hesitation he followed precipitately ; but he had already lost her, and could

only conclude she had entered some vehicle perhaps waiting for her in an adjoining street. All these circumstances were but so many links in a chain of evidence, convincing him that Florian's interview with this gentleman was a secret one. Her being out alone, and on a day when the drizzling rain made a walk a penance, and her hurried and frightened look as she left the Louvre, all fell upon his heart with a cold, convincing logic, unanswerable.

And who was this man whom she had thus dared to meet secretly, and alone? Could it be Sir Hilton Trewavas? And again Damerel recalled Florian's evident excitement in Sir Hilton's presence, her flushed cheeks, her fevered manner, the look of earnest, even anxious inquiry in her eye, as she scanned his face eagerly, at times when he himself was unob-servant. These signs of interest in him, but for Florian's own words, would have seemed proofs of love, and Damerel knew not which to believe. At all events, he was resolved to discover whether Sir Hilton was her companion in the Louvre.

A day or two before, Damerel had bought tickets for the opera, and sent them to Mrs. Langley, for the blind lady was passionately fond of music; and he resolved, when he joined her and Florian that night in their box, to question her, and, if possible, rid his heart of this mad jealousy.

Both ladies greeted Damerel kindly on his presenting himself in their *loge*; and Florian, he fancied, was brighter and more beautiful than he had ever seen her.

Mrs. Langley soon became entranced in the music, and sat silent and absorbed, as though her soul were all ear, to catch the sweet sounds that fell flowingly from the singers' lips. Seeing her unwilling to talk, and listening intently to the opera, it was natural that Vivian, as he bent over Florian, should drop his voice to its lowest tone.

'Have you been out to-day, Miss Langley?' he asked.

'I took a short drive,' she replied.

'In the Bois?' said Damerel.

'Even the nursemaids desert the Bois on such a day as this,' said Florian, smiling at the question.

'Ah, truly,' said he; 'it has been dismal! But where else could you drive?'

It was scarcely embarrassment, but a certain restraint,

that came over Florian's manner as she answered him—
'Surely Paris is big enough to drive in without going to the Bois?'

He dared not say 'Where did you go?' so he tried on another tack.

'Poor Sir Hilton Trewavas still lingers in Paris, hoping to find his brother,' he continued; 'but I fear it is a vain search—don't you?'

Again came that sign of nervous trepidation, which he had always marked in Florian at the name of Trewavas.

'I scarcely know,' she replied, in a very low voice. 'Perhaps he will never be found; he may have committed suicide.'

'Ah,' said Damerel, 'I see Sir Hilton has told you of his brother's melancholy temperament; you seem to know him quite well; the picture, I suppose, was as faithfully drawn as that sketch of yours, which I saw the other day?'

'You are mistaken, Mr. Damerel,' said Florian, a vivid flush colouring her cheeks. 'Sir Hilton has said very little to me concerning his brother.'

'But that little makes you think of him as a suicide?' asked Damerel. 'I believe Sir Hilton does his brother an injustice in conveying such an impression. I know John Trewavas well—a meek, gentle, quiet man—too weak for happiness; a man sure to fail and suffer if he strove for it, but certainly not a man to do so desperate a deed as to lay hands on his own life.'

'It is a great mistake to suppose that people, too weak to guard their own peace and happiness, are also too weak to sin,' she remarked. 'History tells us no such tale.'

'Then you still persist in your gloomy thought?' said Damerel. 'Well, mine is even more gloomy. I believe that, having a large sum of money with him, poor John has been robbed and murdered.'

'I do not think he is dead,' observed Florian. But here again that curious restraint fell upon her, evidently chaining her speech. 'Do not let us talk any more of John Trewavas,' she continued. 'I am so sorry for Sir Hilton,' she added softly.

'So am I,' said Damerel. 'Have you seen him to-day?'

'No,' replied Florian.

Her 'no' was perfectly unembarrassed, and without a shadow of reserve in it. Vivian's heart sank. Desperately longing to know the worst, he flung his last die.

'How lonely Sir Hilton Trewavas must feel in Paris on such a day as this has been!' said he. 'As for me, not knowing what to do with myself, I went into the Louvre.'

Instantly, over face, neck, and bosom, there rushed a crimson tide, that, as it faded away, left her white as a statue of marble.

'At what time were you there, Mr. Damerel?' she asked, in a voice which she tried vainly to steady.

'Between four and five,' he replied; 'but the day was so dark, that I can scarcely say I saw the pictures.'

'In which gallery were you?' she asked, with her face turned towards the stage, and her lips almost white.

Vivian named the same gallery in which he had seen her, and then waited for her to speak again; but it was nearly a minute before she moved her eyes from the stage, and fixed them on him with an intense and anxious look; and even then it was not until the middle of a clashing march and chorus, that she bent forward, and said, almost in a whisper, 'Mr. Damerel, you are playing a poor part when you act the spy.'

'On my honour, Miss Langley, I never tried so mean a rôle,' said Vivian. 'I was there by accident. I saw you by accident. Do you believe me?'

'Oh, certainly,' she said, after a moment's hesitation. 'But was there anything strange in my looking at paintings on a wet day, as well as yourself?'

'Oh no, nothing,' he replied. 'I only wish I had the happiness to escort you, instead of the stranger I saw with you.'

This was too much. Florian gazed at Damerel in amazement and indignation, her very fingers rosy with the burning flush that had suffused her face.

'Mr. Damerel,' said she, 'I refuse to be cross-examined on my actions any further. I refuse to reply to your questions, simply because I deny that you have any right to ask them. I was at the Louvre with a friend, whose name I decline to give you.'

The proud, calm words rushed over Damerel's like a wave from an icy sea, leaving him utterly powerless to reply.

‘Florian,’ said Mrs. Langley, ‘what are you and Mr. Damerel disputing about, in the midst of the loveliest music in the world?’

‘Paintings,’ replied Vivian. ‘I have been telling Miss Langley that I detest all galleries, the gallery of the Louvre especially.’

‘The Louvre!’ said Mrs. Langley, again—‘was it this morning I heard Sir Hilton proposing to take you to it, Florian?’

‘No, mother,’ she replied. ‘That was yesterday.’

‘Then it was Sir Hilton with her!’ thought Damerel, with an impetuous rush of anger. ‘And both are deceiving me.’

Turning her sightless face to the stage, Mrs. Langley again gave up all her faculties to the music; then Vivian bent towards Florian, anxiously.

‘If,’ said he, ‘it was Sir Hilton——’

‘The discussion is over, Mr. Damerel, not to be recommenced,’ said Florian, interrupting him coldly. ‘All I ask is, that you will not annoy my mother with it.’

‘You trust me thus far, then,’ he resumed, bitterly. ‘You believe I shall not betray you?’

Florian was evidently galled by this way of putting the matter; but perhaps she felt herself compelled to submit, for she bit her lip, and spoke hastily.

‘Call it what you will,’ she said; ‘but I shall certainly feel obliged to you for silence. May be, a more generous nature would have not spoken at all.’

‘You are always bitter, always unjust to me, Miss Langley,’ answered Vivian. ‘How do I know that the most generous, the kindest thing I could do, would not be to speak to your mother and brother?’

‘No, no!’ exclaimed Florian. ‘Heaven help me! What should I do?’

It was joy to hear her more meek, more submissive; it was triumph to see her look into his face with pleading eyes.

‘There are so many fortune-hunters, so many villains in the world,’ he continued, ‘who make a prey of the innocent, that I know not whether I dare give you a promise of silence. In meaning to do you a kindness, I may be doing you an injury.’

'I give you my word, my solemn assurance, there is no danger of harm to me,' said Florian.

Her eyes were still on him, filling with tears now; and the delicious sense of power—power over her—that ran through his veins, would not let him show mercy.

'You are too young, too inexperienced, to understand the danger that lurks in the clandestine,' he continued. 'The very fact of secrecy shows there is harm. Is it well to have secrets from your mother—a blind mother—Miss Langley?'

'You are cruel, Mr. Damerel,' she replied. 'Cannot you understand that, because she is blind, a secret may be kept from her?'

'I can understand no circumstance that can justify such a course, Miss Langley,' he replied. 'Perhaps if you trusted me entirely I might.'

'I cannot trust you, Mr. Damerel,' said Florian. 'You ask an impossibility.'

'Yet you ask me blindly to give you up to the designs, or the love, of a stranger,' said he—'a man whom, you confess, neither your mother nor your brother knows!'

He spoke so passionately that Mrs. Langley turned, and held up her hand for silence.

'Hush! I implore you,' whispered Florian.

There was silence for a moment, during which Florian grew so deadly pale that the lilies in her hair were no whiter, and her tears fell so fast that Vivian was thankful for Mrs. Langley's blindness.

'Mr. Damerel,' she said, 'if I give you my word that the person I meet has never spoken a word of love to me, and never will speak it' (oh, how fast the tears fell here!), 'will you be content to believe that he is no fortune-hunter, and will you then keep silent?'

Once more a faint hope beat in Damerel's heart, and he bent over her with a glow of passion in his eyes.

'He is not a lover?' he said.

'No,' said Florian—a sad 'no,' over which her lips quivered.

'And he never will be?' continued Damerel.

'He never will be,' repeated Florian.

Her face drooped on her flowers so low, that Vivian could not see the tears that wetted them.

'Then I give you my promise,' he said, reluctantly. 'Oh, Miss Langley, you make me accept a hard task! You will not trust me, but you force me to trust this stranger, into whose hands I yield your reputation, your happiness, perhaps your life!'

'You yield them into noble hands,' she said; 'there is nothing to fear.'

'So much trust and no love!' said Damerel, with a jealous pang in his voice. 'Oh, Florian, if you would but give me a right to protect you!'

Florian looked up with consternation in her eyes—a glance of such genuine fear and sorrow, that for a moment Vivian was checked. Then he thought he had confessed too much to stop now; so, stooping low, he continued hurriedly, 'You know I love you. Tell me, is there any hope?'

'None,' she replied.

Her voice was so faint and low, that Damerel scarcely heard it; but he saw her shrink away from him, and, moving to her mother's side, she put her hand within her arm, and stooped and kissed her. Vivian Damerel watched her in bitterness of spirit.

'She means me to think that her mother's is her only love,' said he; 'and care for her is her life-long duty. But I am not deceived; she loves this stranger.'

With the stage a blank to him, and the music one clash of furious discord, Vivian Damerel sat out the opera, and then saw the ladies to their carriage.

CHAPTER XXII.

'A LADY wishes to see you, Mademoiselle Olympe.'

'But I am too ill to see any one, Madame Lemoine: I am, indeed,' replied a startled voice. 'Say for me, that I am too ill.'

'The lady says she will not detain you a minute, mademoiselle. A friend of hers wishes to take lessons in English. She is very rich,' whispered Madame Lemoine, thrusting her

round face within the door. 'Think, my dear, how much you need money, and don't send her away.'

The sick English girl leant back wearily in her poor arm-chair, and sighed.

'I will call on the lady,' she said. 'Do, my good Madame Lemoine, ask her for her address. My poor garret is not a place to receive ladies in.'

But Madame Lemoine, propitiated by the five-franc piece bestowed on the little Gustave by Mrs. Gunning, was not to be driven from her resolve.

'What matters it how shabby the room is,' said she, 'if the lady has a fancy to see it? She won't expect to find a poor teacher in a palace. Here she is!—she is coming up stairs! Now you must see her, Mademoiselle Olympe!'

The round Breton visage of Madame Lemoine disappeared hastily, as she set the door wide open, and Mrs. Gunning, in some trepidation, found herself obliged to come forward.

'Olive Varcoe,' she said, 'as truly as I have a woman's heart within me, so truly do I believe that you are an innocent girl, and that you are taking the blame of this deed upon yourself, from some overwrought notion of love and gratitude.'

One wan hand fell down from the pale face—one instant the large dark eyes, swimming in tears, gazed on her in doubt and terror; then both weak arms drooped forward, and, sobbing piteously, Olive fell upon Mrs. Gunning's neck.

'Do not betray me!' she cried. 'I am too weak to bear it. I have taken upon myself a task beyond my strength. I am dying under it; oh, Mrs. Gunning, I am dying under it!'

'My poor girl,' whispered Mrs. Gunning, soothingly, 'you are not dying. We will soon get you well again.'

Olive did not heed this, but, clinging passionately to the homely figure of her comforter, she reiterated, 'You will not betray me?'

'Betray you!' said Mrs. Gunning. 'No; but being innocent, what have you to fear?'

'I am so weak,' said Olive, holding out her thin hands. 'I fear, were they to take me now, I should not have courage to be silent, and then I should have suffered all this in vain. Oh, I cannot bear that thought! I must save him all the

anguish, the shame, that I have borne for him. I must bear it to the end. I must have my reward.'

She wrung her hands together, while over her thin, pale face there spread a burning flush of crimson. With tears upon her cheeks, Mrs. Gunning stooped and kissed her.

'My poor child,' said she, 'you are wrong—altogether wrong. This is Quixotic madness.'

'No, no,' exclaimed Olive, 'it is life or death to me: it is no madness. Oh, Mrs. Gunning, you have discovered me! You will not be heartless and cruel? You will not tell any one that you have found me?'

The trembling of her small hands as she held them forth, the wild look in her eyes, showed Mrs. Gunning that she was too ill to bear arguments or to endure any new terrors.

'I will do all you wish,' said Mrs. Gunning, soothingly. 'Now, tell me, what have you been doing to get so ill?'

'I don't know,' replied Olive, feebly. 'I have been very poor, and sometimes——'

She stopped, and, being weak, her tears fell fast in spite of her efforts to restrain them.

'My poor child! my poor child!' said Mrs. Gunning, 'don't cry so bitterly. Good Heavens! what a set of fools we have all been!—a poor little thing like you. My dear, I'll take care of you, and we'll set everything to-rights now; we will, indeed.'

But Olive was too ill to listen. The low fever, that had been wearing away her strength for many days, overcame her completely now, and she lay pale, speechless, and exhausted, with her bent head, like a broken flower, resting on the kind bosom that held her.

Mrs. Gunning laid her on the little bed that stood close by, and sitting down by her side, remained a minute in deep thought. And the result of her meditation was that she must find Charles Vigo.

'Ah! love is a grand thing,' said Mrs. Gunning to herself, as she wiped her eyes. 'Love gave that young man sense and clearsightedness to see the truth. He'll help me to take care of her—he'll tell me what to do. I'm a baby myself without Tobias, and I must not tell him all this just yet. I have not the least idea whether I ought to go straight to the police and tell 'em what I think, or whether it would be

wiser to hold my tongue. Upon my word this is an awful responsibility !'

Mrs. Gunning felt herself grow hot and then cold, as she reflected on the difficult position in which she had placed herself by coming to see Olive. But looking down on the slight figure, and the wan face, that lay so weak and helpless before her, she did not repent. Then, as the poor, hunted girl, growing more composed, opened her large feverish eyes, and strove to thank her for her kindness, Mrs. Gunning took her little hand between both hers, and leant over her.

'Listen, my dear,' she said; 'don't agitate yourself in answering me, but tell me, if you can, where I shall find Charles Vigo—that good, noble fellow who had the heart and courage to stand your friend when all the world fell from you.'

Olive grasped Mrs. Gunning's hand feverishly, and her eyes grew wild and bright.

'Yes, yes,' said she, 'he was a friend—a noble friend; but I could not let him be slandered any more for my sake. When I quitted Ireland, I resolved never again to let him know where I wandered. Is he not at home? Where is he? What is he doing?'

Her wild eagerness startled Mrs. Gunning.

'He is not at home, my dear,' she replied; 'but I cannot tell you where he is.'

'Oh, I guess what he is doing,' said Olive, a look of deadly fear passing over her face. 'I know what his resolve was. Mrs. Gunning, it will kill me if he searches out all the dreadful truth—it will kill me. Find him—bring him to me, that I may entreat him to have mercy.'

She fixed her eyes on Mrs. Gunning's face in an agony of fevered prayer, and clasped her arm with her small burning hands.

'I will bring him, my dear, rely on that,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Now tell me quietly, where was he when you heard from him last?'

'At home,' replied Olive—'in Cornwall.'

'And why did you not answer his letter?'

'Why deprive yourself of his help?'

'I would not trouble him any more,' replied Olive, in a broken voice. 'Why should I put any of my burden upon

him? I feared to cause him more sorrow. By his help I had found a home among kind people; but I was driven away—driven away!’

Here the tone changed to a wild whisper of fear, and crouching down in terror, like a poor hunted creature, she hid her face on the pillow.

‘Poor child,’ said Mrs. Gunning, ‘don’t tell me any more.’

‘Yes, yes,’ continued Olive, lifting her white face suddenly; ‘the rest is not much. I fled in the night. I walked a long, long way among the lonely mountains—that first made me ill; then I got on a canal boat, and so reached Bandon and Cork. Then I went to London.’

She closed her eyes in weariness, and lay down again, as though the thoughts of her dreary, lonely journey were too much for her strength. But no, it was not of herself she was thinking.

‘It was such a sad journey,’ she resumed, after a moment’s rest had given her power to speak. ‘I was so sorry for them—my friends—fearing they would be grieved and shamed through me. I was so sorry for Charles Vigo, thinking he would be blamed for helping me. And so, then—’

‘And so, then?’ said Mrs. Gunning, as the girl’s white, parted lips ceased to speak, and there stole forth from her closed eyes large, silent tears.

‘Then,’ said Olive, ‘as I sat alone in my little room in that great desert, London, I saw I had no right to make any other share the pain I had taken on myself; and I resolved I would never again vex another’s roof with my presence. I would live alone, and earn my bread as I could.’

‘Oh, you poor little, mad, loving child!’ said Mrs. Gunning, and down upon Olive’s white face rained the good lady’s kindly tears. Olive took her hand, and kissed it.

‘I stayed a long while in London,’ said the sweet, low voice, again; ‘I stayed till nearly all my money was gone. And I was driven away from those lodgings—through vain fears, perhaps—to another and another, till at last I thought I should be safer here; and I came over by the night-boat, a deck passenger.’

‘Now, Heaven help me!’ exclaimed Mrs. Gunning; ‘why have you borne all this?’

‘I had been so wicked,’ said Olive, as passionate sobs burst

from her very heart. 'I had been so full of pride, of temper, of ingratitude, revenge; I had never thought of how they had borne with me, and cared for me, all my life long. Oh! what other way could I repay them, than by doing this?—what other way to make amends for all my wilfulness? And I am so glad to prove that I have some love in me—some gratitude——'

Nature could do no more; it had fought long against the fever in her veins, but now it was powerless, and as her clinging hands dropped helpless from Mrs. Gunning's arm, so did Olive fall upon her pillow, white, faint, and weary.

In very pity, kindly Mrs. Gunning resolved she should not speak another word. There was one question she had been careful not to ask. Olive's weakness would not have borne that, and tenderness for her would have sealed the lips of clever Mrs. Gunning, even if shrewdness and consideration for Tobias had not kept them closed.

'No, my responsibility is heavy enough as it is,' she said to herself, dolefully. 'I must be careful not to add to it by hearing any kind of confession which it might be my instant duty to divulge. I may be a soft-hearted simpleton, but I have no right to compromise Tobias. Ah! I wish I had a tithe of his talent. At all events, I have sense enough, for his sake, to steer clear of that one dangerous topic. Not that the little thing would tell me,' she continued, looking down on the closed eyes, and small resolute, ivory face, that, all shrunken and shivering in its fitful fever, lay before her. 'No, it is my belief, wild horses would not tear it from her. And now, that she has suffered so much, it would be a pity indeed if——'

Mrs. Gunning stopped, then went on again resolutely.

'Yes,' said she, 'it would be a pity. I'll say it again. Justice! stuff! Nobody knows what justice is in this world. Will that brave, enduring little creature get it? No, of course not; and I must confess she never gave it either. What a fiery, passionate little mortal it was! Ah, well, there is not much fire, much passion left in her now; her bitter trials have softened away all the hard, sharp edges of her strange character.'

Thus Mrs. Gunning soliloquised, busying herself the while in many kind offices. Prompt, quiet, yet energetic, she

had soon made arrangements for the sick girl's comfort. In doing this, money streamed quickly through her generous fingers, and even the thought of Tobias's anger could not check the flow. At last, when the doctor had come and gone, when the table was heaped with dainties, and a placid Sister of Mercy took her seat by the bedside, Mrs. Gunning thrust herself into her bonnet and shawl, and, with a troubled conscience for the ill-treatment she was showing Tobias, in keeping all this a secret from him, she betook herself to the marital abode.

For eight days the doctor considered Mademoiselle Olympe Valney in danger of death, and during this time Mrs. Gunning mystified her husband, and angered his eloquent nose into snappishness, by going, day by day, to that poor garret in that poor quarter of Paris. Here she sat by Olive's bed, and heard the wild, murmured ravings of fever; and, as she listened, Mrs. Gunning felt immensely grateful to the builders of the Tower of Babel.

'If it was not for that blessed difference of speech,' said she, 'and that happy conceit which won't let French people learn English, what would become of me?'

She bathed Olive's temples, she kissed her face, and soon the large dark eyes learned to smile when she came, the parched lips ceased to murmur incoherently, the little, restless hands lay still.

'She'll do,' said the doctor. And Mrs. Gunning felt as grateful as if her husband had forgiven her, and his nose had said all manner of kind things, instead of turning her heart upside down all day long, through continued snappishness.

Through what pangs of conscience, remorse, and tears the poor little woman came daily, on her errand of mercy, none knew but herself.

* * * * *

Lieutenant Chadwick possessed an inquiring disposition, hence it is not surprising that he gazed with benign curiosity on the altered countenance of his friend Damerel; a countenance so sour and dolorous that the freshest chaff—the very latest thing out in chaff—failed to enliven it. Sitting in a brown study, with no company but himself and his cigar,

Lieutenant Chadwick brought the powers of his brain to bear upon the mystery, and discovered it.

'He's jealous,' said he—'jealous of me! By Jove! that's it. Poor Vivy! he shouldn't have introduced me to his friends—a fellow like me, with some life and conversation in him. He is rather a dead-weight himself, is poor Vivy. Nevertheless, he'll carry the day.' I can't marry, you know,' continued Mr. Chadwick, apostrophising his boots with great earnestness. 'I've got no money; he has. What chance have I against a fellow with a place in Devonshire, and six horses in the stable doing nothing?—a fellow who orders in the most expensive cigars by the box, and never wears his gloves twice. And here am I, looking upon a five-pound note as an object of curiosity, and always wondering why the House don't pass an Act, ordering tailors to give the British subaltern unlimited credit. Oh, the thing won't do, you know! I give it up magnanimously. There are five or six brothers in that family; the girl will have very little money. And of course, if I can't keep my wife—on her own money—in a proper manner, I won't marry. I resign at once. I'll go and put poor Damerel out of his pain. I can understand what he feels, having a fellow like me pitted against him. Poor Vivy!'

Part of this was serious and part chaff, for Mr. Chadwick was so accustomed to that light article, that he chaffed himself, and rather enjoyed it. And now, flinging the end of his cigar in the fire, he went to his friend's room, his mind filled with the most benevolent intentions, and forthwith slapped him paternally on the back.

'Vivy, old fellow,' said he, 'you are jealous; don't deny it.'

Much astonished, Vivian Damerel turned hastily.

'Jealous!' he exclaimed; 'nothing of the kind, Chadwick: but I am very uneasy.'

A man never is jealous; it is always some other feeling that causes his anxiety.

'Then don't be uneasy any longer,' said Chadwick; 'I'll settle it for you.'

'You, Chadwick!' cried Vivian, eagerly. 'What do you know about the matter? Who is the fellow she meets?'

There was great confidence between Vivian and Chadwick,

and the latter knew that his friend had set all his hopes on Florian Langley; but, in his haste, Vivian had now said more than he intended. Both young men saw this at once, and Chadwick looked grave.

'Upon my life, old fellow,' said he, 'I thought you were a little mad at me for my attentions in that quarter; but now I see I am mistaken. And look here. I don't want to know any of Miss Langley's secrets; but if there is anything going on, you, as a friend, ought to warn her. She is very young, and she only has a silly boy and a blind mother to protect her. And Paris, you know, is a doose of a place.'

'My dear Chadwick, I am as miserable as I can well be,' returned Vivian. 'I feel all that more strongly than you, and yet I can do nothing. I am bound to secrecy; you must ask me no questions.'

Damerel's evident distress filled Chadwick's good-natured head with schemes to relieve him, and the best and fittest was certainly to constitute himself a sort of body-guard to Miss Langley.

'Listen, old fellow,' he resumed. 'If you are bound to secrecy, you can't, of course, give her brother a hint; but if I see anything wrong, I can either lick the scamp myself, or I can set Herbert Langley to do it.'

'But you never have seen anything wrong, Chadwick, have you?' asked Vivian.

'Never,' replied Chadwick; 'and I don't believe Florian Langley is the sort of girl——'

'Of course she isn't,' interrupted Damerel; 'nevertheless, there is something going on that I don't understand; and Mrs. Langley knows nothing of it.'

'Well, I was going to observe, that I'll call there every day, and follow her about like a dog, if you like,' said Chadwick; 'and when I have discovered who and what the fellow is, let him look out.'

Mr. Chadwick finished his sentence with an expressive pantomime. There was something in his proposition that both pleased and displeased Damerel. It was true that he was very uneasy; he believed Florian to be the dupe of some adventurer, who was deceiving her with a tale of distress, or, worse still, a tale of love. And she, too young, too inexperienced, too pure to believe in evil, might have the whole

happiness of her life marred through that false sense of honour on his part, which hindered him from speaking to her mother and brother. Under such circumstances, would it not be well for Chadwick to set himself to discover the truth, and then, having something certain to go by, act as prudence and honour might dictate? The objection to this course lay in his fear of Florian's anger and contempt, should she discover a spy had been set on her actions. He spoke of this to Chadwick.

'My dear fellow,' said he, 'you will have nothing to do with it at all. The vials of her wrath will fall upon me. But the truth is, I shall not act the spy on her; that's not my plan. I shall dodge him. Let me see them together once, just to know the fellow—that's all. After that, my campaign is easy.'

For some days after this Mr. Chadwick went in and out with an air of bustling importance. Brilliant in chaff and bursting with untold secrets, he said not a word respecting his campaign until the fifth day. Then he entered Damerel's room late at night, and sat down silently, a grave and rather frightened air sobering his lively countenance.

'Well, Damerel,' said he, 'it's serious, and no mistake. They meet nearly every day.'

Vivian's face flushed with jealous rage, and he exclaimed, impatiently, 'Go on.'

'You know,' said Chadwick, 'I have called there so often in the last five days, that I have made myself a nuisance; but nothing came of that. In pursuance of my plan, I have had the impudence to call at all hours. By that means I discovered she was always out at three o'clock. You know the stand of cabs at the corner? Well, I get into one. "Where to?" says the man. "Nowhere," I answer; "just stop here in your rank till I tell you to move." Man thinks me mad, but lets me get into his shaky old vehicle, and keeps his eye on me from the box. "No pistols, nor poison, nor any of that nonsense," says he, "in my cab, if you please. If you want to kill yourself, go to the river." "What's the odds to you whether I blow my brains out or no?" I ask. "A deal of odds: you'd make such a mess," says the old fellow. That amused me, and I tried a bit of chaff in return, but could not get on—broke down in my French, you know.

All at once I see her—comes out of the house by herself. I shrink into nothing. She passes by with her eye upon the cabs, and chooses one with a good horse—those Irish girls know a horse. In she gets; then I pull at the coat-tails of the old cabby. “You saw that lady?” “Yes.” “Then follow, and don’t lose sight of her.” Cabby grins, and off we go. And a precious long way, too, we go. At last her cab pulls up, and then I see coming towards it a tall fellow—quite a swell, I assure you—who gets through the crowd like a prize-fighter, opens the door, gives her his hand, and leads her off.’

Lieutenant Chadwick paused to take breath, and gazed at his friend, who, with head bent forward on his hands, seemed lost in painful thought. But at the sullen silence he looked up, saying savagely between his teeth, ‘The miserable scoundrel! Go on, Chadwick! What are you stopping for?’

‘I didn’t stop—I went on,’ said Chadwick. ‘I slipped out of the cab, and followed them. Keeping at a good distance, I saw them walk up and down the Boulevards, then take a seat beneath one of the big trees. It was raining, but they didn’t heed the rain, though it scattered the nursemaids right and left. And I was glad of it, as it gave me an opportunity for pulling up the collar of my coat, slouching my hat over my ears, and otherwise making a Guy of myself. The rain also excused my standing under a tree pretty near to them, and I wasn’t afraid to do this, as she was so absorbed and so agitated that she never looked up. My dear fellow, I felt pretty considerably mean, I can tell you, as I found myself playing the spy in this beastly, ungentlemanly way. And if the girl’s mother wasn’t blind, and if you weren’t spoony on her, I vow I would not move a finger to stop her from running away with this swell pickpocket. No, on my word now, I would not.’

‘Chadwick, will you drive me mad?’ exclaimed Damerel. ‘Go on—go straight through.’

‘There isn’t much more to tell,’ said Chadwick, ‘and that — Look here now, you won’t think me a downright cad, will you?’

Damerel’s answer is not on record. It was very short, and rather strong.

‘You won’t?’ said Chadwick. ‘All right, old fellow.’

Well, then, it was, in fact, the fault of the wind ; the wind blew a scrap of their conversation towards me, and my ear caught it.'

'Yes—well?' exclaimed Vivian.

'And I heard him say, "This suspense is terrible! What can we do?"'

'Good Heavens! then he spoke English? He is an Englishman?' cried Damerel.

'Or Irish,' said Chadwick. 'There was a slight ring in his voice not quite English, I thought. I could not hear a word Miss Langley said, but I heard him implore her to meet him again, and I know by her face she said, "Yes." She was pale and frightened—I saw that; and after her lover had put her in the *fiacre*—he is her lover, my dear fellow, don't deceive yourself about that—she leant back on the seat, and shed tears. The gentleman went off down the Boulevards at a rapid pace, and I discharged my cabby, and plunged after him. He led me such a chase! He dived into quarters of Paris that I had never seen; and, lastly, he gave me the slip, but where I cannot say. I floundered about for another hour looking for him; then, quite exhausted, I retraced my steps to a civilised part of the town, dined, smoked a cigar, and came home. Now you must decide what we had better do.'

'I cannot see that I have any right to interfere further,' said Vivian Damerel, gloomily. 'Miss Langley will listen to no advice of mine. Do what you will yourself, Chadwick.'

'Confound the whole thing!' exclaimed that bewildered marine, 'It's a doose of a fix altogether; only I know I should be awfully obliged to any fellow—supposing it was my sister—for any hint that might be the means of saving her from perhaps a miserable marriage. So if you leave it to me, Damerel, I shall give young Langley a hint that he had better get his sister out of Paris.'

'Wait a week before you do that,' broke in Vivian, gloomily. 'Meanwhile, I will try to get a sight of this fellow. What is he like?'

'Like a gentleman—undeniably like a gentleman,' replied Chadwick; 'and good-looking as—as the doose.'

'See here, Chadwick!' exclaimed Vivian, in a more cheerful voice: 'it has just struck me that your aunt, Mrs. Gunning, is a sensible woman.'

'Come, now, no chaff about my aunt,' returned Chadwick; 'I am fond of her. I don't deny she is clever; she is a first-rate interpreter.'

'I am serious,' said Damerel; 'it is you that are chaffing. I think, Chadwick, if you were to speak to her in confidence, telling her you had been an accidental witness to a clandestine meeting between Miss Langley and a stranger, she would take the matter into her hands and manage it better than we should. At all events, a word of counsel from her would go further with Florian than anything you or I could say.'

'That isn't a bad idea,' said Chadwick. 'I'll do it. I'll speak to her to-morrow. But she mustn't tell that domestic elephant of hers anything about it, though. He'd trumpet the story all over the town.'

'Swear her to secrecy, Chadwick,' said Damerel; 'I suppose you can manage her? A clever fellow like you can certainly wheedle an aunt.'

'Good-night, old fellow,' said Chadwick. 'I see you are better. The vital spark is not quite put out; there's a rise in the funds—of spirit. As to other funds they are hopelessly low—at least in my case. Adieu! Try to-morrow to look a little less like a gloomy bandit, discovered in a cave, drinking.'

With this parting effusion of chaff, Mr. Chadwick wished his friend an affectionate good-night, and retired to his slumbers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE disappearance of John Trewavas began, in his own county, to excite great bewilderment and excitement. It was in vain now that Lady Trewavas endeavoured to keep secret the fact of her terrible anxiety. Friends pressed around her again, who had stood aloof in her great trouble, and advisers came in crowds.

Sir Hilton had deemed it wiser not to mention in his letters that fleeting apparition of John which had mocked

him in Paris ; hence in Cornwall it was only known that he had been traced to the London Bridge Station, and there was lost. Thus every species of conjecture was rife concerning him. He was murdered—kidnapped ; he had committed suicide ; he was gone to Australia ; he had formed some low marriage, and was hiding from his friends.

Meanwhile advertisements offering rewards for John's discovery, dead or living, continued to add their mystery to the morning papers. These were read eagerly and commented on, but they led to no result. At length, after that glimpse of John at Paris, Sir Hilton discontinued the advertisements in England, and inserted them in the Continental journals instead. What bewildering discoveries, useless journeys, and endless correspondence this brought on him, it is unnecessary to relate. Enough, that the impecunious gentlemen fished out of canals, the lonely gentlemen wandering unknown in foreign towns, and the adventurous gentlemen lost on mountains, were none of them John Trewavas. How often Sir Hilton started from Paris in hope, and returned in despair, it is needless to say. It is only necessary to observe that this constant stream of false intelligence detained him in Paris when he would willingly have comforted the solitude of his aged grandparent at Trewavas. And she, on her side, deluded by these false hopes, implored him to remain on the Continent, and forbore to speak to him of the gloomy horrors of her loneliness.

As day after day she sat alone, enduring her suspense, heavy thoughts bore her spirits down into the very depths of sorrow, and the hopelessness of old age crept chill about her. In the long, long evenings, when the wind moaned among the funereal trees, or wandered through the old house like sighing voices, the shadows rose up before her of her dead husband, her dead children—shadows of faces long departed to the world of spirits ; above all, the faces of a baby brother and sister, dead and forgotten so many years ago, that she could scarce find their names written on the tablet of her memory. Now, these infant faces came constantly, came shadowy, hand in hand, and they ever strove to lift some curtain held before her heart, ever strove to show her some dread thought, hidden down, down in the depths of her soul. But she would not let them. With painful eagerness she drove the

shadowy hands away, that would have torn away that veil, and, shuddering, she would glance upon the portraits on the walls, and remember how each one had died in honour and kindly love.

At such times, had an eye been there to see it, Lady Trewavas's aged face would look ghastly in the firelight, and her withered lips would murmur the dire word 'Murder!' Then, starting, she would wrap her lace shawl around her bent form, and raising herself defiantly, would smile with a proud lip, and say to herself, disdainfully, 'An old woman's fancies!—fancies grown childish—childish!'

How often, as she muttered this disdain of her own weakness, would the wind come sighing through the dreary length of the vast room, and whisper in her ear, 'Olive!—Olive!—an outcast—a prisoner—a wanderer? And why? Spirits, tell her why.'

Then they came around her in troops, spirits of the dead and of the living—Eleanor, with wet clinging garments, rising from the dreadful pool; Olive, with angry brow; the little dead children, sad and reproachful—all striving with shadowy hands to lift the veil from off her heart; but she, with clutching fingers, held it down, and shrieked aloud for servants and for lights.

Thus, with an awful presence creeping ever nearer, nearer, she lived on through the spring days, grasping her letters with eager, trembling hands, at noon, and carrying through the day and night their chill disappointment in her shrinking heart. At times she listened to the servants' tales of ghostly footsteps in the changed house, and smiled at their folly.

'Ghosts!' she said. 'Ah, the old have many ghosts around them.'

But one night, when she sat up late alone, writing to her grandson Hilton, there came a step upon the gravel, and a finger tapped upon the glass.

The woman was brave, in spite of overwrought nerves and loneliness: she was brave as the daughter of an ancient race should be. But now the pen dropped from her fingers, and, with face deadly pale, she raised her clasped hands to Heaven, and murmured, 'Oh God, have mercy on me! Is it come?—the thing I dreaded!'

Then she rose, walked to the window, drew the Venetian

blind aside, and looked out upon the night. All was calm and still as God's peace in a pure heart. Nothing here but the shadows of the great trees lying grey on the silvered grass, and the familiar shape of shrub and flower glistening pale in the moon's ray. Yet, as though unassured by the calmness and solitude, and deep silence around her, Lady Trewavas raised the sash, and stepped from the window to the lawn. And here, as the moonlight around her, dropping silver from every leaf, and shedding its cold, clear refulgence upon her pale face and her snow-white hair, she stood for a minute silent and motionless.

No sound, no step disturbed her. A slight rustle of wind among the tree-tops, a low murmur on the beach as waves rippled on the sands, a distant bleat of plaintive lamb—this was all that broke the silence of the night. Then, reassured, she turned her eyes away from the dark wood, where that deed was done, and fixed them on the sea. Its calm, its beauty, as it lay rippling and sparkling in the wondrous light of moon and stars, sank into her spirit, and with a sigh of thankfulness she bent her head a moment on her hands in prayer, and then re-entered the house.

'A fancy,' she said, as she closed the window. 'Ah! I am beset with childish fancies now.'

But if it were a fancy, it was one that came again and again; and like a woman in a vision, seeing and hearing what was to be, Lady Trewavas listened for the ever-recurring footstep, and the tap of the ghostly finger on the glass. Again and again she set the window open, and stood bravely on the lawn; and once she spoke aloud.

'I am here. Do you want me?'

The voice was low, unnatural, ghastly, and the words rang through the night air with a thrill of horror in them, that chilled her own blood, as they fell back upon her ear.

A momentary rustle among the shrubs, as though a bird had flown away, and then there was a blank silence; and in this silence she stepped within the window, closed it, and fell upon the floor.

'I have not strength for this ever-recurring terror,' she said, within herself. 'To-morrow I will leave this room, and sit in the library.'

So the next day a fire was lighted in that dim and distant

room, and she sat there, with all her ghostly fancies shadowing about her. It was a cold March day, and the wind blew, and the rain fell, beating fiercely on the window-pane with dreary persistence; and when night came it came in storm and tempest, with black darkness all around, while over the gloomy sea there swept furious gusts, the roar of which mingled with the sound of the huge rollers that, in massive walls of water, rushed upon the beach, breaking into thunder as they fell.

As the sun went down into the heaving waters, cresting the waves with fire, a sudden crash shook the house from roof to basement, and a cry arose that a giant tree has fallen. Peering through the gathering darkness, Lady Trewavas saw dimly the noble trunk lying on the lawn, with limbs broken, roots uptorn, and shrubs and flowers in ruin all around. The tree was reputed old as the house itself: a memorial elm, on the gnarled bark of which were carved the names of many a generation; an ancient tree, time-honoured, beneath the majestic shadow of which Trewavas, long since laid at rest, had played as little children.

As the aged woman, who had upheld the name her husband gave her so long in love and honour, looked upon the fallen ruin of the old manorial elm, her heart sank with a ghastly foreboding of evil. It seemed an omen of a greater fall, a deeper ruin, a more dismal death.

When, late in the stormy night, the servants went to rest, she still sat by the dying fire in that distant room, with the sadness of the fallen tree adding to her sorrows, and its regrets, its memories, its old, old love and tenderness, clinging to her spirit with all the grief we feel for the dead. It was gone—its place would know it no more. She would never sit under its shadow again, never more read the names carved on its bark by the dear hand that now beckoned to her from a better world.

Lost in gloomy thought, she forgot the footstep on the gravel, the finger on the pane, till suddenly the sound was here, startling her from her tears, and bringing her to her feet in that unnatural tension of nerve which terror creates. She listened breathless; and, amid the clatter of the fiercely beating rain, amid the fury of the storm, the ghostly sound struck the glass again in horrible distinctness.

What was it? And why had it followed her hither to this lone side of the house, where so seldom footstep strayed? Moreover, what was there in the sound to-night which made it differ, with some ghastly, dreadful difference, from the same haunting sound on other nights? Was the difference this—that now it was reality? As she asked this question she stood rooted to the floor, with parted lips and strained ear, catching her breath as she listened for the sound again.

And it came. Not all the fury of the storm could cover it now; it was here, at her window—a ghastly hand, craving admittance. Should she do as she had done on other nights—set the sash wide open, and stand upon the lawn? How could she, on such a night, when the winds howled in fury and the flood poured down like a torrent? But she must—she must! That veil upon her heart is growing thinner and thinner, and to-night the last shred must be flung away.

Who shall dare to paint her face, as, step by step, she drew near the window? There was no Venetian blind here: it was closed by shutters, and as her aged hands tremblingly withdrew the bolt, her heart tightened and shrunk, and the thought of what she might see clutched her breath like visible fingers on the throat. A moment's agony of indecision, then the shutter swings open, and there is a face against the glass close to hers!—a haggard face, woe-worn, storm-beaten, drenched with pitiless rain! And as the rain beats upon it, and the woman falls upon her knees, she sees the white lips of this face move, and she hears a prayer that drops upon her heart with a wrench of agony, like the sudden touch of fire.

She cannot but listen to that fearful cry for pity—to that broken voice of anguish, craving only for a shelter in which to die. She rises; she sets the window open; but as that wild figure, wind-battered, haggard, forlorn, with madness in its fevered eyes, steps within, she draws back, and holds up her withered hand betwixt it and her.

'Stand back!' she cries 'Do not touch me. I know you—murderer!'

CHAPTER XXIV.

‘Now, don’t tell me any secrets, Dick,’ exclaimed Mrs. Gunning. ‘I am worn to a thread-paper already with secrets. I walk about like a mine all day long, ready to explode; and at night, when I see my dear, good, innocent Tobias sleeping like a dove, I——’

But here Mrs. Gunning’s feelings quite overcame her, and she wiped her eyes hurriedly.

‘But, my dear aunt,’ expostulated the amiable Dick, ‘surely one secret more won’t break your back; and you have just confessed that my uncle Tobias himself is going about like a modern Guy Fawkes, with some terrible plot in the dark lantern of his mind.’

‘I acknowledge it,’ said Mrs. Gunning. ‘But for that unkindness of his, I should feel like a domestic serpent. As it is, I fancy we are about quits.’

A twinkle in the good lady’s eye showed, that in spite of her contrition she was not ill pleased at the idea of possessing as good a secret as her husband.

‘Quits!’ exclaimed Chadwick. ‘Not a bit of it, aunt. I’ll bet you a month’s pay that uncle Tobias’s secret is three times bigger and wickedder than yours.’

‘Isn’t Herbert Langley here every day, whispering and conspiring? And wasn’t uncle out last night, and the night before, till two in the morning?’

‘Good gracious, yes! How did you know it?’ exclaimed Mrs. Gunning.

‘My dear aunt, you told me so yourself,’ replied her nephew; ‘and I am sorry for you, I am indeed. I am afraid Langley is taking advantage of my uncle’s unsophisticated innocence to—to—in fact, to play the doose; and the least you can do in return is to have two plots to his one. That will balance things a little more fairly—don’t you see?’

‘Two plots are more than I can manage, Dick; and there’s an end,’ said Mrs. Gunning. ‘So none of your wicked insinuations about your dear, good uncle. I know him; it is some good deed he is keeping secret from me—poor angel.’

'I wish I could get somebody to believe that I was an angel,' sighed Chadwick. 'I'd marry her directly; especially if she'd look upon my staying out till two in the morning as a good deed.'

'Dick, your friend Damerel is looking ill,' said Mrs. Gunning, changing the subject abruptly.

'He'll have a tombstone growing out of his head soon,' said Chadwick, 'if things don't alter. I'm worn to a bone looking after him. I call it cruel in you, aunt, not to help me. Another secret wouldn't hurt you.'

'So the secret is about Damerel, then?' said Mrs. Gunning.

'No, it isn't,' he replied. 'It's about Miss Langley; but that's the same thing.'

'The same thing!' said Mrs. Gunning. 'I don't see that, Dick. What has your sour friend got to do with Florian?'

'He's spoony on her,' he replied; 'and he's as jealous and miserable as a mad dog.'

'Is that your secret?' asked his aunt. 'Why doesn't your friend do his wooing in a more cheerful manner?'

'He hasn't a chance with Miss Langley, aunt,' he replied. 'There is a rival in the field.'

'Not Sir Hilton?' said Mrs. Gunning, her face flushing red.

'No, not Sir Hilton,' said Chadwick. 'Though, upon my word, the interest she takes in him is evident enough. Is she a flirt?'

'No,' was the quick reply. 'If it is not Sir Hilton, who is it, Dick?'

'That's the secret,' said he.

Chadwick here plunged into the story of the 'accidental' espial of Florian and her unknown lover; to which Mrs. Gunning listened at first with incredulity, and at last with dismay.

'I don't understand it in the least,' she observed. 'I should have imagined Florian was the last girl in the world to do such a thing as this. She has too delicate, too refined a nature to feel a pleasure, as some do, in a vulgar secrecy. A mystery would have no charms for her; her mind is too open and truthful.'

'Nevertheless,' said Dick, as he coaxed on his lemon kids,

'the facts are as I have had the honour of stating them. Love is a great leveller, aunt; and even the high-minded fall at last beneath his spell. In fact, dropping all humbug, girls, when once in love, will do anything for a man; and that fellow is a great scamp who ever asks them to do aught that might compromise their name or position. Get Miss Langley out of Paris if you can, aunt, and leave her brother to kick this rascal into the Seine. This affair, you know, mustn't go on. It's serious; and it will end in a general row, and be the ruin of the girl, if her friends don't bestir themselves. There, now; I have done my duty,' concluded Dick, in a paternal manner, 'and so I'll wish you good morning. You'll take the matter up in a satisfactory manner, I am sure, aunt. I give it completely into your discreet hands. Speak to the mother, or the brother, or the young lady herself, as you think best. I leave it entirely to you.'

'You are mighty magnanimous, Dick,' said Mrs. Gunning, ruefully. 'You put all the burden on my back in a most generous way.'

'Because I know you'll manage it splendidly, aunt,' replied Dick. 'And now I'll go home and muzzle Damerel with a cigar; he's getting dangerous.'

Mrs. Gunning lost no time in fulfilling her disagreeable mission. She rolled herself into a shawl, called a *fiacre*, and departed for Mrs. Langley's. But in the drawing-room, to her great vexation, she found Sir Hilton Trewavas and her own dear Tobias. The latter was in deep confabulation with Herbert Langley; while the former, who had only just returned from one of his fruitless journeys in quest of his brother, was conversing with Florian and her mother.

During this conversation Mrs. Gunning's sharp eye perceived that Florian was painfully uneasy. She grew red and white by turns, and was evidently desirous that the talk concerning John Trewavas should cease. Upon this, a strange suspicion darted into that acute lady's mind. 'What if it was John Trewavas himself that Florian was meeting clandestinely?'

The thought turned her cold. Better see Florian die than form an attachment to him.

'Florian,' she whispered, eagerly, 'I want to speak to you. Can't you come away?'

Florian looked surprised, but nodded to her affirmatively, and was moving quietly to the door, when a word from her brother arrested her steps, and she stood like one transfixed, pale as death.

'You ought to find your brother, Sir Hilton,' said Herbert, 'for all the police in Paris are helping you. Gunning and I found that out the other day, when we went to the *Bureau de Police* about an affair of my own.'

'I have never asked their aid,' returned Sir Hilton, a little stiffly. 'I do not understand their interference.'

With parted lips Florian listened, and Mrs. Gunning saw her grasp a chair for support. The kind woman herself grew pale from terror and sympathy.

'Well, at all events, they are more likely to succeed than you,' continued Herbert; 'and depend on it they would not interfere without good cause. They, doubtless, suspect something.'

Florian drew her breath painfully, and, turning her eyes on Sir Hilton's face, fixed them there in deep suspense, awaiting his answer.

'I shall go myself and make inquiries,' he said, rising. 'Heaven knows I am willing enough to accept any and every aid in this painful mystery; and it is only regard for John's peculiar nervous sensitiveness that——'

Sir Hilton had got as far as this in his speech, when Florian's hand touched his arm.

'Do not go to the police, Sir Hilton,' she said; 'they will not tell you anything.'

Every one looked at her with surprise, except Mrs. Gunning. That lady now felt sure that the man Florian had met clandestinely was the unhappy John Trewavas.

'Why, Flo, you are talking nonsense!' exclaimed her brother. 'How can you possibly know that the police will withhold any information from Sir Hilton?'

But Florian did not heed him; her small hand still grasped Sir Hilton's arm, and, bending down her head, she whispered in his ear, 'Wait till to-morrow; wait, I entreat you, for your brother's sake. If by to-morrow evening you have heard nothing, come to me, and I will give you news.'

While she whispered this, Mr. Gunning was making one

of his nasal remarks in his loudest manner, and as it was a favourite idea of Herbert's that his sister was 'spooney' on Sir Hilton, he was gallant enough to give all his attention to the Gunning nose. Hence Sir Hilton's sudden paleness and extreme wonder passed unnoticed by all but Mrs. Gunning.

'For mercy's sake, Miss Langley——' he began.

'Hush!' whispered Florian, in great distress; 'to-morrow evening; I am not at liberty to speak now. Spare me, I entreat you, and promise you will wait.'

Her agitation, her evident fear of being heard, influenced Sir Hilton, in spite of himself.

'I promise,' he said, softly; 'but I must pass twenty-four hours of anguish.'

His face was full of amazement, and, bowing to Florian, he quitted the room hurriedly. But the young lady followed him, and once more the light touch of her trembling hand arrested his steps.

'Have patience,' she said, gently; 'it will only be till to-morrow. Others have had so much patience—have borne so much for you. And remember, I have your promise.'

She waved her hand to him, and fled up the stairs quickly. She intended to go to her own room, but on the landing—the one above the drawing-room door—stood Mrs. Gunning. She looked stern and pale, and coming forward hurriedly, she seized Florian's hand.

'What is this you are doing?' she cried. 'You are mad, Florian, to mix yourself with this business.'

'What business?' asked Florian, faintly, striving to release her hand.

'This business of John Trewavas's disappearance,' replied Mrs. Gunning. 'You may deceive your blind mother, Florian Langley, but you cannot deceive me.'

'Mrs. Gunning!' exclaimed Florian, indignantly.

'Be angry if you like, my dear,' said Mrs. Gunning; 'it doesn't matter. I have known you since you were six years old, and I can bear your anger for your own sake, else my friendship is worth little.'

'Then you confess friendship must bear something—friendship must be active, not passive?' cried Florian, eagerly.

'Friendship!' said Mrs. Gunning; 'I wish I could think you were acting from friendship. Florian, Florian! it is

love, not friendship, that has led you to interfere in the affairs of John Trewavas.'

'Oh, Mrs. Gunning, of what are you accusing me?' said Florian, covering her face with her hands, and bursting into tears. 'This is unfair—cruel.'

'Florian, it is not cruel, but it is serious—frightfully serious,' said the kindly Mrs. Gunning, placing her arm around her, and drawing her within the adjoining chamber. 'Now sit down, child, and listen to me. First, do you own that you can never marry this man—never, never?'

There was a deep sob, a passionate cry of pain in the answer, but no denial of Mrs. Gunning's words.

'You can never marry him,' she continued; 'you acknowledge it, even if Eleanor Maristowe had not been murdered, he would not have loved you.'

'No, he would not have loved me,' said Florian, forlornly. 'I know it; why tell me so, Mrs. Gunning?'

'To save you, to warn you,' she replied. 'If there were no other reason, deeper, more dreadful, his want of love for you alone should keep you from meeting this man.'

Florian's hands fell from her face, and she gazed at Mrs. Gunning in dismay and terror.

'You know I meet him?' she said.

'I know it; and I warn you, Florian, your love can only end in pain, agony, perhaps death,' replied Mrs. Gunning. 'Save yourself while there is yet time, Florian. Promise me you will never see him again.'

'I cannot promise you,' said Florian. 'I must see him again, even this evening.'

'Florian Langley, are you mad?' exclaimed Mrs. Gunning, rising, and pacing the room angrily. 'Must I break your mother's heart with this story? Will you force me to call upon your brother to save you?'

'No, no!' cried Florian. 'Oh, Mrs. Gunning, I entreat you to listen to me! If you speak to my brother you will bring down such pain and misery upon my head that I shall die of it.'

'Can it be worse pain than you will bring upon yourself, Florian, if you persist in this course? Do you know what you are doing?' said Mrs. Gunning, drawing nearer to the trembling girl, and standing before her.

'Yes, I know what I am doing,' replied Florian, in a very low, gentle voice. 'I know I am destroying my own happiness, but it is too late now to let such a reason draw me back. Oh, Mrs. Gunning, when I first met him, could I tell that I was going to be so weak, so wicked, so foolish, as to love him?'

Sobbing, as though her heart would break, she let her head droop upon her hands, while her tears fell fast.

'Love him!' repeated Mrs. Gunning, with an indescribable accent of loathing. 'Has he ever dared to speak one word of love to you?'

'No, never! I swear to you, never!' cried Florian. 'Are not all his thoughts with another?'

The pain, the bitter, yet meek sorrow of her words rang through Mrs. Gunning's ears, filling her veins with fierce anger. She turned and gazed upon the anguish of the girl for a moment in silence; then she bent over her, saying in a low, clear whisper, 'Florian, I ask once more, do you know what you are doing? Do you know who killed Eleanor Maristowe?'

The horror in her voice, the shrinking terror with which she glanced around, showed that Mrs. Gunning asked this question with extreme reluctance.

'I am afraid I guess,' replied Florian, with face growing pale as her own. 'And you heard what Sir Hilton said just now. Oh, Mrs. Gunning, have pity on me! Keep my miserable secret; don't kill me with pain and shame.'

The deep carnation that spread over her face and neck seemed to burn her with its glow as she flung herself down on the cushion to hide it.

'I will keep your secret,' said Mrs. Gunning, compassionately; 'but these clandestine meetings must cease at once: they are a disgrace to you.'

'No; I deny that!' exclaimed Florian, raising her head indignantly. 'You mistake me and him. Have I not already told you that he has never spoken one word of love to me?—never will speak it?' she added, as she hid her face again.

'Then why has he sought you out?—why has he met you again and again?' asked Mrs. Gunning, incredulously.

'To entreat me to help him to find Olive Varcoe—to talk

always, always of her—to beseech me to search for her, and give her a refuge till he clears her name,' replied Florian.

'Oh!' said Mrs. Gunning, grimly, 'he wants to find poor little Olive, does he? He wants to do her justice at last.'

'It is all his thought, all he lives for, I think,' said Florian, in her saddest voice. 'And I have striven so hard, Mrs. Gunning, to find that poor girl. And all in vain. I want to give her a home here. I want to be kind to her. I cannot bear to see his misery about her, his anguish, and sickness of heart. He knows her innocent, and he fears that her silent martyrdom will crush her into the grave. She has hidden herself from him—from everyone—'

'Who can wonder at that?' interrupted Mrs. Gunning, fiercely. 'Have not the Trewavases driven that little creature out into the world, to suffer for their pride's sake, and to die for them if she will? Ah! the tale of that girl's sufferings would make a long romance, Florian Langley.'

'I know it,' she said; 'she is a noble, generous girl, worthy of the chivalrous devotion of a brave heart.'

Tears checked her utterance; but, recovering herself, she went on more calmly.

'Therefore, my dear Mrs. Gunning, I want to shield her, if I can, from further suffering. And this was my first reason for meeting him. I had a note from him, imploring me to give him news of her if I could. He was aware that she had been my companion, and he was in hopes that I knew where she was, but I did not; and when I wrote telling him this, his answer was so full of sorrow, and he besought me so earnestly, by my affection, my interest in Opal Vansittart, to give him my aid in his anxious search for her, that I resolved to see him. I had no adviser. Pity for my poor blind mother, whose belief in Olive's guilt I cannot overcome, and whose peace would be thoroughly gone if she knew I was conscious of the identity of Olive and Opal, held me silent towards her. And I dared not speak to my brother. I was afraid of doing I know not what mischief. You know he and your husband are seeking Olive, even now, to arrest her.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Mrs. Gunning, with grim earnestness, as her thoughts travelled swiftly to the dingy garret, where the worn and weary Olive lay pale and wasted on her poor

bed. 'When Tobias does things without consulting me, he generally makes a fool of himself. And is that your brother's advertisement about "O. V."?'

'Yes. And I cannot tell how it will all end,' replied Florian, wearily, leaning her head upon her hands.

'As far as Tobias is concerned,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'it will end very soon, my dear, as I shall take him out of Paris at once. I shall not permit your brother to make a cat's-paw of a man of his intelligence. And I would advise you, Florian, to act in the same prompt way, and clear yourself from any share in this business as fast as you can. That man ought never to have seen you, never have spoken to you. In all you have told me, I perceive no reason for your imprudence in meeting him.'

'You are very bitter against him,' said Florian, proudly. 'If there be any fault in that, it is mine, not his. I confess that I wished to see him—I confess I was curious. I had heard so much of him from Opal, that my heart was touched, my imagination warmed, by the history of his strange devotion—a devotion, too, so unreturned, so unregarded by its object.'

Mrs. Gunning listened to Florian with eyes wide open with amazement.

'I never thought to hear you confess to a morbid curiosity, Florian,' she said. 'I believed your nature a high and noble one.'

Florian was silent, but she did not look abashed or ashamed.

'And did this man—I cannot speak his name,' said Mrs. Gunning—'only come to Paris to search for Olive?'

'For that chiefly,' replied Florian, hesitating slightly. 'At all events, to find her and do her justice is his first, his most earnest desire.'

'And if he finds her,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'what will he do then?'

'He will go back to Cornwall instantly,' replied Florian—'I believe to Trewavas.'

'I am sorry for Sir Hilton,' said Mrs. Gunning, abruptly; 'and yet his pride well deserves the bitter punishment awaiting it. What will he say, what will he think, when he finds what Olive has suffered for his sake?'

'I wonder she can love him,' said Florian, softly. 'Nothing amazes me as does this strange, hopeless devotion of hers, for that self-contained man.'

'You wonder at it!' exclaimed Mrs. Gunning, turning on her fiercely; 'and yet you have just dared to confess to me a love a thousand times madder—a love that is a disgrace to you—a love that you should shudder to own!'

'Mrs. Gunning,' cried Florian, rising, with flashing eyes, and her cheeks scarlet with indignation, 'how dare you speak to me like this? I have borne too much from you. I have stood meekly silent, and permitted you to malign a man, before whom Sir Hilton Trewavas should stand bare-headed and ashamed—a man whose courage, whose generosity I revere. I was silent because I was ashamed that I had given him my love unasked—given it hopelessly, passionately, knowing that his heart is fixed on one more worthy than I; but I will be silent; I will be ashamed no more. No, I am proud that I love him; and for his sake I will stay single all my life long.'

Florian had spoken with wonderful volubility and passion; but her strength gave way now, and she fell back in her chair trembling and weeping.

Mrs. Gunning thrust both her little hands into her frizzled hair, and stared at her helplessly for a moment, in utter stupidity; then she shook herself, by way of bringing back her senses, and walked straight up to Florian's chair.

'My dear girl,' said she, 'I beg your pardon; I am a simpleton. I have been making the greatest mistake I ever made in my life. I thought——'

And here she stooped and whispered in Florian's ear. The girl started back in horror at the name she uttered, and her face grew very pale.

'Mrs. Gunning, how could you think anything so horrible?' she said, with a visible shudder. 'Don't you know that it is to find him—to track him down—that——'

'That your friend is come to Paris, my dear,' said Mrs. Gunning. 'Well, I guess as much.'

'And he knows now where that unhappy man is,' continued Florian, in a whisper; 'but he will not leave Paris till he has found Olive.'

'Then, my dear,' said Mrs. Gunning, 'let him leave' to-

night; for when you see him this evening, you may tell him Olive is found.'

She stooped and kissed the girl's tear-stained face, and then, kneeling by her chair, she told in rapid words the story of Olive's sickness, loneliness, poverty, and pain.

That same afternoon, Mrs. Gunning was destined to receive another trial to her nerves, and this in the shape of a pompous silence on the part of her lord and master, sorely distressing to her kindly nature. They drove home together in a hired carriage, and during the drive the majestic Tobias was as mysterious and silent as a pyramid. In vain his wife plied him with questions as to his health and spirits, or with genial remarks upon the weather, or the approaching London season. He cared nothing for any of it; he was impervious to flattery, and presented a face silent and stolid as a wall to all her adroit attacks. On his arrival at home he entrenched himself in his dressing-room, saying he had letters of importance to write, and he did not wish to be disturbed till dinner was on the table. There was nothing for it but to obey this command, and await hopefully an after-dinner thaw. That meal, however, passed like an Egyptian feast, with several skeletons served up as a reminder instead of only one, and the very servants seemed to stalk about like mutes.

'This comes of having secrets from each other,' thought the contrite Mrs. Gunning, as she glanced at the aggressively silent countenance of her husband.

'My love,' said she, 'these oranges are very good. May I peel you one?'

'You may,' said Mr. Tobias.

And there was an end; it was impossible to get conversation out of an orange; and, in the servants' presence, poor little Mrs. Gunning dared to try no stronger method of forcing speech from her domestic oracle. No sooner, however, were they alone, than she burst forth in an injured tone—

'Tobias,' said she, 'what is the matter with you? If I have offended you, speak out, and say so. I hate sulkiness.'

'Mrs. Gunning, I am not offended,' he replied, 'and I am not sulky. I have simply a reason for being silent, that's all.'

Good gracious! was there ever anything so trying? Here

was Mrs. Gunning herself bursting with secrets, and yet willing to be as chirpy and chatty as ever; while Tobias made himself as pompous, as arrogant, and as silent as the tombs of the Pharaohs.

'Mrs. Gunning,' said Mr. Tobias, looking at her through his eye-glass, 'will that dress you have on do for the opera?'

'Goodness me!—no, of course not,' she replied.

Then oblige me by changing it, as I have promised Herbert Langley to meet him at the opera to-night, in Mrs. Langley's box.'

'Is Florian going?' asked Mrs. Gunning, carelessly.

'No; she is engaged to go to some friends this evening,' was the curt reply.

Mrs. Gunning sighed deeply, and looked wistfully at her husband.

'Tobias,' she said, 'you recollect that advertisement about Bolster? Did you ever make any inquiries about it?'

Apparently she had touched upon a subject that startled Mr. Gunning, for he immediately shut himself, metaphorically, into a silent tomb.

'I decline to be questioned,' said he. 'I have ordered a carriage at eight: will you get ready, please?'

'Now, couldn't I annihilate him with a word if I chose?' thought the exasperated little wife, as she rose with great seeming meekness to obey his behest.

During the drive to the opera, Tobias was more aggravating still. Full of importance, and mystery, and triumph, he enjoyed himself immensely; while Mrs. Gunning shrank into the utmost insignificance, not to say cowardice.

'What can it be?' she thought to herself with terror. 'What is it he and Herbert Langley have found out?'

She was not destined to remain much longer in uncertainty. Hurrying her through the corridors to the box, Mr. Gunning made here a tremendous speech.

'Mrs. Gunning,' said the ungrateful nose, 'women are so long-tongued and mischievous, that I confess I have brought you here to-night to prevent your being a marplot. You will be under my own eye here till twelve o'clock; you will be able to send a message to no one, to write to no one; after that hour it will be too late, even if I did not take care—as I shall—that you seize no pen and paper to-night.'

‘What does this mean?’ exclaimed the little woman, trembling very much.

‘It means,’ returned the triumphant Tobias, ‘that I have very much suspected lately your visits to that villainous laundress. And to-morrow morning Herbert Langley and I pay a visit to your little friend, Mademoiselle Olympe Valney, and hand her over to the police.’

There was a clash of trumpets, a roll of drums, and Mrs. Gunning, pale as death, took her seat amid a rustle of silks and satins, to listen with what courage she could to music, which sounded in her ears like the braying of a thousand donkeys, each one with a head like her own Tobias. Nevertheless, in about half an hour the little woman recovered her serenity, and looked out upon the play with a smiling countenance.

‘Now I’ve got it!’ she said, suddenly, as her hand came down sharply on the silken and cushioned railing of the box.

‘Got what?’ asked Mr. Gunning, in a stately tone.

‘This horrid fly, Tobias, that has been buzzing about my ears all the evening,’ replied Mrs. Gunning.

It was a quarter past twelve that night, when Herbert Langley ran lightly up the stairs to his mother’s apartment on the first floor, whistling as he went. In the drawing-room, seated by a fast-dying fire, he found his sister alone.

‘Mrs. Gunning gave me something for you, Flo,’ he said.

‘A note?’ said Florian, eagerly.

‘A note!’ he repeated. ‘No; how could she write notes at the opera? It is your locket, which she has got mended for you.’

‘My locket!’ said Florian. ‘She hasn’t any locket of mine.’

‘Yes, she had,’ persisted Herbert; ‘she said she thought you had forgotten it. She took it off her chain, and here it is.’

Florian, with a flush of expectation on her face, thought it wise to be silent as Mrs. Gunning’s unconscious messenger took the locket from his waistcoat pocket, and handed it to his sister.

‘I shall have good news for you to-morrow, Flo, I think,’ said the young man, lighting his cigar at the dying embers. ‘And now, good night. I shall smoke this out in my own room.’

'Wait a minute, Herbert; I have got good news for you,' said Florian. 'I have had a letter from Opal Vansittart.'

As Florian spoke, a deep crimson flush crept over her face, even to the roots of her hair.

'The deuce you have! That *is* good news,' cried her brother. 'And why the—the dickens didn't the girl write before?'

'She has been very ill,' replied Florian. 'She has not seen the advertisements, nor had my letters. She has had fever. She is so sorry, she says, for all the trouble she has given us.'

'And why in the world did she run away from Langley?' said Herbert.

'That—that was the beginning of the fever,' replied Florian.

'Ah, poor thing!—out in her head, I suppose,' said Herbert. 'Well, Flo, we must have her here, and show the world, Mr. Vivian Damerel included, that she is herself, and nobody else.'

'I shall be delighted to have her here,' said Florian, faintly; 'but I have sounded mamma, and I see she will never consent.'

'Ah! that's a difficulty, Flo,' said Herbert, with a puzzled air. 'Well, I'll think it over, and let you know more about it to-morrow. Tell some one to call me at seven, will you, Flo? I have an appointment in the morning at the unnatural hour of eight.'

With a happy 'good night,' for he seemed in triumphant spirits, Herbert Langley sauntered from the room, and left his sister alone. Then she took Mrs. Gunning's locket to the light, and turned it over and over anxiously, and, lastly, opened it. As she did this, there escaped from its golden prison a poor little half-dead fly; and on the inner surface of the gold, scratched by a pin, was the word 'instantly.'

With burning cheeks and trembling hand, Florian stood a moment in wonder and dismay. But she was not long in deciphering this strange message; she never for an instant considered it other than earnest and urgent. Mrs. Gunning was too sensible to send her such a token as this, unless the danger was imminent and near.

'Fly instantly!'—this was her message, and she meant it.

Florian could easily divine that it was sent in this odd manner, because she must evidently have been under some strong restraint or surveillance, and utterly unable to find other means of communicating her warning. Recalling the great Tobias's pompous importance that afternoon, Florian felt sure that he and her brother had at length succeeded in their quest, and it was doubtless they who had mounted guard over Mrs. Gunning, and hindered her from sending note or messenger. And even in her dismay, Florian could not but smile at the sharpness of the little woman, whose keen wits had found means to circumvent their watchfulness, and even make a cat's-paw of the unconscious Mr. Herbert Langley.

'And he said he had an appointment at eight,' said Florian, gazing about her half wildly. 'What there is to do must be done at once then—now, this very night! Oh, how can I go to him at this hour, and alone?'

She sank into a chair, and for a moment seemed lost in bewildered thought. Then starting up, she clasped her hands, saying eagerly, 'I will go! She shall not suffer any more if I can help it. I would save her, if only for his sake.'

A few minutes after this, dressed in a dark cloak, and with a thick veil over her face, Florian crept quietly through the porter's lodge, and out into the street, where, with trembling hand, she beckoned to a passing *fiacre*, and sprang into it. She gave her directions to the driver in a low voice, and then drew up the windows as he went off at a rattling pace.

Very pale, very wasted, but with a calmness and peace upon her face, which it wanted in that old fiery time, when the passion of her nature, unchastened by sorrow, was ever ready to spring to eye or lip, Olive sat by her fire alone. She sat with her small thin hands lying idly in her lap, and her dark eyes, which often filled suddenly with tears, fixed sadly on the dying embers. Sometimes she looked wistfully at the little clock on the chimney-piece, the hands of which were just upon the stroke of one. It seemed as though she were chiding the weakness, which rendered the exertion of undressing and going to rest appear too great a trouble for her feebleness to attempt. And the clock struck one; and yet she lingered here, with her clasped hands still lying powerless, and large tears gathering slowly in her eyes, and

falling down unchecked over her wasted cheeks. She was not sobbing or weeping passionately : the tears welled up quietly from their fount, and fell in silence, not even a sigh breaking their weary flow. She was very lonely, and the poor room in which she sat looked chill and cheerless by this dim light, its very shadows having a weird and ugly shape, strangely expressive of solitude and pain. Upon the little table near her rested the remains of her frugal supper—she had been too weak to put them away ; and down about her feet, in loose folds, lay the large grey shawl that had slipped from her shoulders. The dying fire needed replenishing, and the wood was close by ; but her weary hands refused to unclasp their wan fingers at the mind's bidding.

Was she counting the cost of her strange deed as she sat thus alone in her sickness, untended and unwatched ? As she looked back upon the path she had trodden, so full of thorns and sorrows, did she shudder and weep for her own sufferings ? Did she repent as she saw her own act had made her a wanderer, an outcast, nameless, forsaken, shunned, hunted, and driven from place to place, even as one who 'seeketh rest, and findeth none ?' No ; her tears fell for none of these things : she counted her sufferings as nothing, if only they had not been endured in vain. In that fear her heart could yet bound in sudden anguish, and her pulse stand still. And here in this poor garret, between her tearful eyes and the dying fire, there rose up faint visions of Trewavas. Here a sunny slope, there a green glade, with shadows lying on the grass ; again, a wooded dell, with glimpses of the sea ; then the shining sands, the quiet ripple of the waves ; and the tall beeches, with silken leaves of golden green—all rose up before her in this mist of tears, making her heart swell with love and bitterness.

And this dear Trewavas, it was smiling, it was happy ; no blight had fallen on it, no shame, no pain. It still gathered beneath its ancient roof all it loved and honoured of its own lineage—not one missing, not one an outcast save her, the poor outlandish cousin, the dependent whom the world ignored. Did it matter that she was suffering, if the name was saved—the grand old Trewavas name ? Did it matter where Olive Varcoe was, so that the family pride was unscathed, the family honour sustained ? No, truly ; it

mattered nothing. And so, amid this rain of tears, the visions of Trewavas rose and fell: the Trewavas she had saved, the Trewavas between whom and the world's contumely she had thrust her own soul.

'And I do not repent,' she said, in a soft, thrilling voice, as she cast her tearful eyes upward. 'I owed them this. And surely, for this, God will forgive me my ingratitude, my impatience, my wilful bursts of passion, and my selfish love. Ah! not selfish now. Even for my love's sake I can give him up, and bear to see him happy with another. There is a barrier between us now, that time can never fling down. If he came to me and offered me his love, the world would say it was the bribe for which I had suffered this, and some shadow of dishonour would fall upon him. And that shall never, never be!'

Her head fell forward on her hands, and between the thin fingers her tears now fell fast.

'I have saved his pride,' she said; 'he loved his pride better than anything else in the whole world. I have saved it for him; there is not a word against his name. Intact, untouched, unspotted, the name of Trewavas will be honoured by the world while Olive Varcoe——'

But here she stopped. Her generous heart would not count up the ills it bore. She would not weigh in the balance against their honour her dishonour, her brand of shame and crime. Still less did one mean thought ever touch her soul of their wealth, their beautiful refinements of life, as contrasted with this sad poverty and lack of comfort. For how little could such needs count compared with those nobler, deeper sorrows, that she had borne so willingly! If health and strength had fallen before this grim misery, that was her body's weakness, not the mind's.

And how beautiful and glorious it was to think of dear old Trewavas, standing in its stately pride, still so honoured and beloved of all! More beautiful still to feel that her feeble hands had kept sorrow from it, her unvalued love had saved it from a dreadful shame. She, the tiny creature, so mean, so small, so poor, so overlooked, had stood in the breach, and caught the arrows in her own heart, that would have pierced its pride. And there was no self-praise in this thought, only a sort of humble joy that she had been permitted to do this,

that to her had been given the power to suffer in their stead.

Shut up as in a prison by her friendlessness, her sickness, her poverty, and her fear, the rumours of the outside world had not reached her, and she thought of Trewavas as peaceful, happy, safe. Above all, Sir Hilton was unscathed; no glimmer of the bitter truth had touched him, no finger pointed at him as he passed; his pride of birth and of name had suffered no shock; careless and happy, he was free to choose from the highest in the land another bride, as fair as poor Eleanor Maristowe. And if this thought caused a tear, Olive swept it away quickly. Lady Trewavas, too, would live out the remnant of her days in peace; unbowed by shame and pain, her honoured head would go down to its last sleep, still crowned with its ancient glory. Ah, what joy to purchase this peace for her, even at so great a cost! And Olive looked down upon her wasted hands, and smiled.

'They thought I did not love them!' she said softly to herself. 'My wilful words, my fierce temper, misled them all. And is this too great a return for what they did for me? No! I was homeless, and they gave me a home; an orphan, and they gave me a mother and brothers. Ah, how ungrateful I was!—how passionate, how wicked, how angry for fancied slights! It was not till that sorrow came that I knew how much greater than my anger or my jealousy was my deep, deep love. Oh Trewavas, dear old Trewavas, may God bless you, and give me strength to bear on to the end!'

Again her tears fell, and through their mist rose up the visions of turret and terrace, mullioned window and stately hall. She saw herself as on the first day she entered Trewavas, a forlorn, untaught child, gazing in wonder on these new scenes. Here was the dell where she had first seen English wild flowers, and gathered them in her little eager hands; here the shingly beach, where she had waited and watched so many times for Hilton's boat. Alas! that with these scenes there rose unbidden the dreadful wood, the Lady's Bower, and the lonely pool!

So they came and went, these fitting visions, while the fire died into darkness, and the lamp burned dim; and Olive's weary head drooped at last in sleep, with tears still staining the wan cheeks, and glistening on the long dark lashes. So

when there came to her door the tap of a gentle hand, she heard it not; and when a quiet figure, stealing in, stood by her side, and looked down upon her white worn face, she saw it not, nor dreamed whose tears fell, pitying hers.

'Opal! Opal!' whispered Florian, as she softly took one of her little wan hands, and kissed it. 'Opal, awake! I am here to help you, Opal.'

Then the large fevered eyes opened slowly, and gazed in terror on the sobbing figure by her side.

'Florian, why are you here?' said Olive, with a sudden start. 'You must not be seen with me—you must not speak to me. Go away, I entreat you! My name is not Opal. I am Olive Varcoe. There, now, you will leave me, I know.'

Suddenly Olive snatched her hand from Florian's grasp, and waited to see her turn away in horror.

'Always Opal to me,' said Florian, with arms closely clinging round the wasted figure of her friend—'always dear Opal to me! Olive Varcoe is too noble, too good, too great; I should not dare to kiss her; but Opal I can love.'

Ah, then tears burst forth indeed, and Olive's wasted arms fell about her neck, as, in her weakness, she drooped forward on Florian's shoulder.

'Then you do not hate me? and you forgive me for having deceived you?' she said. 'I have never deceived another,' she added. 'I have never dared to place myself in another home since I left yours.'

'And now you must come to mine again,' said Florian, 'and at once. There is not a moment to be lost.'

Olive raised her eyes to gaze at her friend with wonder, and to shake her head in sorrowful refusal.

'But you must,' persisted Florian, 'indeed you must, Opal; unless you have strength to bear the excitement of an arrest—unless you have courage at last to speak the truth.'

Olive's dead white face grew whiter, and her eyes, glazed with sudden terror, fixed themselves on Florian in mute agony.

'They have long been searching for you,' continued Florian, in a hurried way, 'and two people will be here at eight to-morrow morning, who suspect that Olympe Valney is Olive Varcoe. My dear, perhaps you have courage to bear it; you

will do right to stay and confess to them at once the bitter truth.'

'You give me cruel counsel, Florian,' said Olive, raising herself from Florian's embrace, and sitting upright. 'Weak, exhausted as I am, I will not be a coward, and turn back upon the path in which I have chosen to walk. But I will stand alone—I will not ruin you. I can but die, if they arrest me. I think—I fear—I am too weak to suffer much more.'

Her trembling hands, her quivering lips, her wan face, cruelly attested the truth of this; yet her determination still to screen, if she could, the Trewavas name from infamy, was as strong as ever.

Florian looked on her with tearful eyes, and a colour gradually deepening on her cheeks.

'Olive,' said she, 'whether you be right or wrong, I cannot say; but I know there is one man who will not permit you to slay yourself—one friend who will snatch this fearful task from your hands. He has been gathering evidence; he can prove now what he only suspected when he permitted you to go forth a wanderer. And to-morrow, if you are arrested, he will go to the police, and lay that evidence before them.'

With haggard eyes, Olive seized on Florian's hands, and held them fast.

'I will go with you,' she gasped forth. 'Save me, if you will, Florian. I never thought to trouble another's roof with my presence again. I never thought to embitter the peace of a kindly home again; but I am selfish enough to do this rather than see all my sufferings scattered on my head in vain. Oh, Florian, Florian, think of the misery at Trewavas, if Charles Vigo is so cruel as to do what you say!'

'Cruel!' exclaimed Florian; but she checked herself suddenly, and, rising, she wrapped Olive's little figure in the large grey shawl which an hour ago had slipped from her shoulders to her feet. 'You are too weak to argue with, little one,' she said; 'we will leave all that till another day. But to-night you must obey me; and now you must come with me at once.'

'And leave all here as it is?' asked Olive.

'Yes,' replied Florian. 'I have a friend who will take

care of these for you ; and if there be anything among your valuables that you wish particularly to have, it shall be with you to-morrow.'

Olive smiled feebly. It seemed to her, then, that she wished for nothing, she cared for nothing but to lie down in peace and die. Without further questions she put her hand on Florian's arm, who aided her weak steps, and led her out on the great staircase. In that large house, with its ten stories, there were many tenants ; and some of these were still up, but none made a remark as the two girls crept silently down-stairs. In passing the good laundress's door, Olive looked at it a moment wistfully, but she did not beg Florian to let her say good-bye. At the foot of the stairs she withdrew her hand from Florian's arm, and clung to the balustrade with trembling fingers. And here she made another and last attempt to induce her friend to forsake her and her forlorn fortunes.

'Florian,' she said, 'leave me here ; do not ask me to go to your home. I will call a *fiacre*, and seek a refuge somewhere. Mrs. Gunning has been kind to me ; perhaps she will help me now.'

'My dear,' said Florian, and her voice trembled strangely, 'you cannot go to Mrs. Gunning, for reasons I will tell you to-morrow. Now let me put this shawl completely over your head and face, for the night air is sharp. There, I will not hear another word ; now I am going to carry you across the court to the carriage.'

Olive could not expostulate, for the thick shawl was completely around her ; but the stout arms that took her up so gently were not Florian's ; and as she felt herself borne along in that kind, firm clasp, the strength that had hitherto sustained her gave way to the pressure of her weakness, and she fell back insensible. Then the tall figure, that at a signal from Florian's hand had come to her so silently from the dark courtway, paused a moment, saying, hurriedly, 'Miss Langley, I fear she has fainted ; but perhaps it is better so. How shall I thank you for this kindness ?'

'I need no thanks,' replied Florian, in the same trembling voice.

'Poor child !' murmured the young man ; 'she is so light in my arms ; she is worn to a shadow. Oh, Miss Langley,

the duty I have to fulfil is a cruel one. In tracking a murderer's steps, and bringing him to justice, I shall kill this little frail creature, who has already almost given her life for his. And she will think it so hard, that I cause her sacrifice, her devotion, her sufferings to be given in vain.'

'It cannot be helped,' returned Florian, gently; 'you must still do your duty.'

There was no time for further words; they had reached the carriage, and Olive being placed gently on the seat, Charles Vigo aided Florian to enter. Her hand was hot and trembling, and he could not but perceive that her whole air was fevered, restless, and frightened.

'Miss Langley, you have bound me to you in gratitude forever,' he said, eagerly. 'How can I ever thank you for your courage this night?—how thank you for the many times you have cheered me when my impatience and pain was past hope?'

'I need no thanks,' replied Florian, faintly, as she knelt down by Olive's side, and supported her head on her shoulder. 'Opal, are you better?'

But Olive opened her weary eyes only to close them again. Charles Vigo, leaning forward, caught a glimpse, by the light of the lamp, of her wan and changed face, and, covering his own with his hands, he groaned aloud. 'What shall I do?' he murmured. 'If I seize this man, I strike her a death-blow; if I spare him, I let her bear his brand for ever.'

Olive heard his voice.

'Charles,' she cried, stretching out her hand feebly. 'Ah! I might have guessed when kindness or succour came to me, it was your hand sent it.'

'Not all my hand, this time, Olive,' he said, holding her thin fingers in his, and leaning over her. 'Florian has been a generous, a true, a devoted friend. Without her, I should never have found you.'

As he praised her, as he uttered her name, Olive felt Florian's arm tremble, and the bounding throb of her heart beat painfully against the girl's worn cheek. Olive turned suddenly and kissed her.

'Charles,' said she, 'she is the noblest girl, the best and truest that ever lived. And she knows you well. I have talked of you so often.'

The tightened grasp of Charles Vigo's hand on hers told Olive that he was gratified she had talked of him, and that was all his thought. She sighed deeply, and raised herself from Florian's arm, and as the light showed her her lover's eager, honest eyes fixed so pitifully on her changed face, other sadder feelings swept painfully over her heart.

'I have been ill,' she said softly, 'and you are sorry.'

'Oh, Olive,' he cried, 'why did you hide yourself from me? — why refuse my aid?'

'Never mind that now,' she replied; 'what right had I to let you sacrifice yourself for me?'

'You have every right to all I possess on earth, Olive,' said Charles Vigo. 'You are my affianced wife, and I claim it as my due to protect you.'

'I acknowledge all your claim, Charles,' she said. 'It is you I obey now. I go whithersoever you take me; and I only make one request of you in return—tell me what you have been doing in England since you put me into the carriage, in that lone road between Trewavas and the sea.'

'Olive,' he said, glancing uneasily at Florian, 'have I ever asked you a question? Have I ever prayed you to turn against the roof that sheltered you, or bear witness against those you love? You chose a terrible path, on which you thought it your duty to walk; and I endured silently to see you take it. Do the same for me, Olive—endure to see me fulfil my duty, and do not visit me for it with your anger or your hate.'

Olive clasped her hands together, and fell forward on Charles Vigo's arm. He felt her trembling weakness; and if ever he relented in his purpose, he relented now, when he reflected what this feeble girl had done and suffered, and that his act was about to make all her sufferings vain.

'What shall I say?' murmured Olive, as she wetted Charles Vigo's hand with tears. 'If I ask your mercy, you will not give it. And yet I have a hope. It was only I——'

'Hush, I entreat you, Olive!' exclaimed the young man, eagerly. 'I will hear nothing, know nothing, through you.'

Olive was silent—there was a hope in her heart, for she knew nothing of the man Skews, and little guessed what he could tell.

In that momentary silence the carriage drew up at the

door of the house in which Mrs. Langley's apartments were; and as Charles Vigo wrapped the large grey shawl around Olive's tiny form, she bent forward and whispered in his ear, 'Charles, there is one secret you do not know—John Trevas is mad!'

Charles Vigo started, and turned pale as death. That one little word, 'mad,' altered everything. Should he indeed show mercy, or should he go on to the end? One glance at Olive's wasted figure and wan face decided him. Mad, or not mad, justice should be done to *her*. He took Olive in his arms, and carried her into the vestibule, where Florian already awaited her.

'Good-bye, Miss Langley,' he said, as he took her hand. 'In some happier time, I shall hope to thank you better for your noble friendship to Olive Varcoe. Now I can only say, that I entrust her to your care, knowing I leave her to the kindest hands and the truest heart that ever beat.'

'Farewell, Mr. Vigo,' replied Florian, in a faltering voice. 'Rest assured that I will fulfil your instructions to the letter. I am glad that I can prove my friendship by more than words. I am proud that I am thought worthy of your esteem and of Olive's love.'

Her lips trembled, and her hand, that he relinquished, fell droopingly by her side. Leaning on her shoulder for very weakness, Olive listened in silence till Charles Vigo came towards her to say farewell.

'You are going to England—to Cornwall?' she said eagerly.

'I should have gone long ago, Olive, only I could not leave Paris till I had found you,' he replied; 'I could not go, knowing you were in this great city, alone and in sorrow.'

'And you will not make me wish that you had not found me—not succoured me?' she pleaded, as she laid her hand upon his arm. 'Remember what I have told you.'

'I will remember,' he said.

As he spoke, Charles Vigo dropped her hand, and looked at her wistfully. He would fain have taken her in his arms and kissed her, but the dead white stillness of her face, the wanness of her aspect, repelled him.

'Farewell, Olive,' he said, sadly; then he closed the door softly, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON the second floor of Mrs. Langley's apartments was a little sitting-room, called Florian's own, and here she and Olive sat together. Mrs. Langley never mounted these stairs; her blindness kept her to her own chamber and the drawing-room. Florian, therefore, had little fear of paining her mother, by her coming in contact with Olive for a day or two, till the sorrow had fallen on Trewavas, and the secret was a secret no more. Looking at Olive's white face, Florian dreaded this day. It seemed hard she should have suffered so much in vain, and that shame, disgrace, and infamy should fall upon the house which she had almost died to save. What would she feel when the bolt fell? What would she say, when she knew Charles Vigo's hand had drawn it, and, step by step, and inch by inch, he had hunted down the guilty?

Weak and worn, Olive sat, with listless hands upon her lap, and her head reclining on the cushion of her chair. In contrast against the crimson silk, there shone out the glossy blackness of her hair, and the deathly paleness of the small face once so flashing, once so radiant with the colour of the damask rose; but, changed as she was, here still were those wondrous dark eyes, filled with a holier and far softer light than in the days of their pride and passion, and the long black lashes seemed longer now, when they rested on a cheek of marble.

As she sat she fell asleep, as Florian read to her, and her sleep was feverish, for soon a burning spot of crimson glowed upon each cheek, bringing upon her face an unearthly, painful beauty. Florian softly wrapped a shawl about her, and watched till her rest grew peaceful; then she crept away, and, closing the door gently, went to her mother's room.

Olive's sorrows had been many, and in the visions of her sleep old griefs rose up around her. She was a wilful child again at Trewavas, passionately sad or passionately gay, now gathering flowers or playing with sea-shells, now bewailing in bitter loneliness her orphanage, and the slights that set her hot Eastern blood on fire. In these sorrows how often

John had comforted her ; and in sleep Olive heard his voice, and saw his face, with that strange meek look upon it, which she, and she only, had seen sometimes change to fierceness. Then came troubled thoughts, and, half-waking, she started, as there rose up before her dreaming eyes the long green vistas of the wood, with summer shadows lying stilly over the limpid pool by the Lady's Bower. Then, laying down her head again, sleep grew more serene, and she dreamed that all the past was but a dream--this terrible vision of death, of exile, of crime and anguish, a dream--and she, back again at Trewavas, was marvelling why so dreadful a grief had visited her slumber.

The joy of this dream was intense. Heaviness was gone ; brightness, peace, and a relief past expression, lifted her spirit above the earth as on an angel's wing. Then it seemed to her that she was down upon the sands, with the soft murmuring flow of the waves rippling at her feet, and here she was telling Sir Hilton this dreadful dream of murder ; and he smiled as he listened, and said her dream was a folly, for circumstances black as ebony would never make him deem her guilty. He had never loved but her ; and as for John, did she not know he would soon be Eleanor's bridegroom ? Then she fell upon his neck, and cried, ' It is only a dream--only a dream. Oh, Hilton, Hilton ! '

Now Florian had desired her maid to admit Sir Hilton Trewavas to her presence the instant he arrived ; so, while Olive slept, the door was softly opened, and the girl, in whispering accents, announced his name.

' I beg pardon, sir,' said the maid, ' Miss Vansittart has been very ill. She is sleeping. I will go and tell Miss Langley you are here.'

She closed the door, and Sir Hilton was left alone with the sleeper. Almost hidden in the folds of the scarlet shawl, he had not noticed the tiny form till the servant named her ; then he turned, and, with all his blood rushing to his heart, he gazed on Olive's face. Her dream made it happy as an angel's, and she smiled as he looked on her.

' How can she look so peaceful ? ' he said to himself, bitterly.

Then, as his troubled eye took in more accurately the aspect of her face, he saw the change, the fever-spot upon the

cheek, the worn and pallid look of the faultless features, the emaciation of the once rounded form, the pitiful whiteness of the small clasped hands. She had been ill—she had suffered—perhaps she was dying. He made one step towards her, and at that instant she stretched out her hand in sleep, and murmured, ‘Hilton! Hilton!’

‘Olive!’ he cried; ‘Olive, I am here.’

For a moment, at the sight of her suffering, at the sound of her voice, he forgot all, except the love that he had so long deemed ignoble. But as she started up, and her large dark eyes in wild afright met his, he drew back, and mastered his emotion.

‘I am sorry, Miss Vansittart, if I have disturbed you,’ he said.

Olive knew what his words meant: ‘Save yourself if you can; I will not betray your disguise.’

She arose trembling, and letting the scarlet Cashmere fall from her tiny figure, she said, mournfully, ‘There is no disguise here, Sir Hilton. I am Olive Varcoe!’

Sir Hilton’s lip quivered as he replied, ‘There is no need to tell me that. Changed as you are, I knew you. You have been ill, Olive!’

His voice faltered, and his eyes rested on her face, as they had done in the old days, before he had deemed it a wise deed to quench his love, and trample ruthlessly on hers.

‘Yes,’ she said, simply.

Then, because of her trembling weakness, Olive sat down again, and with a slight shiver she drew the shawl around her. The hectic colour on her cheeks had faded, and her face looked like marble, as she leaned back on the red cushion. Sir Hilton could not see without emotion the sorrowful change in her, that told of pain and sickness.

‘You have suffered much,’ he said, softly.

Olive made him no answer; she knew *he* could not measure her sufferings, but she could not help the tears that started to her closed eyes, and welled from their long lashes over her pale cheeks.

‘Olive,’ he continued—and his face was scarcely less white than hers as he spoke—‘Olive, in all human probability this is the last and only time we shall ever speak face to face, and alone. For, like a great gulf, a crime stands between

you and me for all time, and we part now for ever ; but if it will comfort you to know that I repent my hardness of heart and worldiness—above all, that I repent the blindness and cowardice that made me fling away my love for you as a toy that had amused my boyhood—then know, Olive, that I acknowledge it as the great mistake and sin of my life. And remember, I take my full share of the sin of Eleanor's death, and, therefore, I can think of it mercifully and pitifully.'

'Oh, thank Heaven you say that !' cried Olive, clasping her hands. 'Thank Heaven !'

'And I can freely forgive her murderer,' continued Sir Hilton, in a low voice.

'Remember your words,' exclaimed Olive, suddenly falling on her knees, and holding her hands up towards him. Oh, remember your words when you are called upon to forgive ! Do not harden your heart then, and deny both your share in the sin and your pardon of it.'

'I will deny neither,' replied Sir Hilton, much agitated by her vehemence. 'Olive, let me think I have made you happier by saying this?'

'Happier !' she said, as she wiped the streaming tears from her eyes, and a smile broke over her face ; 'yes, you have indeed made me happier. I think, now, I can bear the worst pain of all.'

'What worst pain ?' asked Sir Hilton, glancing around, half in terror. He thought she meant a prison and death.

'The pain of knowing I have suffered all this in vain,' replied Olive, pressing her hand upon her quivering lips to still their trembling, and looking at him in such strange grief, that he could scarcely restrain his own tears.

'Not in vain, Olive,' he said eagerly. 'Surely all suffering cleanses the heart. I have confessed to you that I am sorry—that I have repented ; give me the same consolation. Tell me that this change, this gentleness I see in you, are fruits of deep repentance for the past. And though the world never forgives, though human justice punishes and degrades, I will forgive. This hasty sin, this mad crime shall not——'

'Yes, yes, this mad crime,' repeated Olive, eagerly.

'Shall not separate the sinner from my pity, my mercy,

and my love,' he continued. 'No, it shall not drive that sick, sorrowing, repentant sufferer from my heart.'

Olive covered her face with her hands, and her sobs burst forth in an agony pitiful to hear.

'Thank God you say such words as these!' she cried. 'Oh, how shall I thank Him for all the goodness, and the love, that have worked this miracle in your once proud spirit? Remember, it is a solemn promise you have made. You will forgive, though the world never forgives; you will show mercy, though the hand of justice deals a degrading death.'

Sir Hilton Trewavas felt his flesh shudder at her words, and for a moment he covered his eyes, to shut out the sight of her pale, imploring face, tear-stained, which looked up at his in an agony of prayer.

'If that awful and dreadful time should come,' he said, in a whisper, 'I will still keep my promise; but I pray that God may spare us, and avert that day. Cease—cease—do not speak of this; tell me rather of the change I see in yourself.'

'Change!' said Olive, stretching out her small, wasted hands, with a feverish action of impatience; then she let them fall on her lap, saying, more gently, 'You mean a change in spirit. You ask if I am sorry for the past. No one has such a right to ask me that as a Trewavas. Yes, I am sorry, with a great, an exceeding sorrow. I have gone in bitterness, and mourned as one without hope. In days of desolation, in hours of sickness, loneliness, and pain, all my sins have come, and cried against me, with a voice that would be heard. My anger and jealousy, my impatience and passion, my hasty, vindictive words, all have risen up against me, and judged me. And I grieve, too, for the cruelty of my angry thoughts, when I found all the desires of my untamed heart were thwarted. But deepest of all is my remorse for wild words said to John—words uttered rashly, with unthinking lips, when I taunted him with his meek endurance, or urged him to speak bravely to Eleanor of his love. Oh, how could I be so mad—I, who knew him—how could I?'

Olive's anguish overcame her here, and, bowing her head on her hands, she wept silently.

'Do not reproach yourself on John's account,' said Sir Hilton, pitifully; 'I trust I shall yet find him, and take him back in peace to Trewavas.'

Olive looked up, and her glance shook Sir Hilton Trewavas to his soul. What did it say? What did it mean? Why was it full of a pity so much greater than his own for John? Why, too, was her grief so unlike the grief guilt should wear? These questions did not come to him in any shape of words; they came like a flash, which vanished in the excitement of the time; for Olive, with somewhat of her old fire, broke out suddenly into bitter self-reproach.

'I meant only to rouse him into a manlier, braver course,' she cried, wringing her hands tightly. 'I thought, if he spoke to you—if he told you how he loved that poor girl, you would see how pale was your own affection for her compared to his, and——'

'Olive, every word you say is a stab to me,' interrupted Sir Hilton, hurriedly. 'Surely you have nothing to reproach yourself with respecting John; it is I who have been selfish and blind with regard to him.'

'Tell him so if you find him at Trewavas,' said Olive, in a very earnest tone, 'and say I asked him to forgive me. Is Lady Trewavas well?' she added hurriedly.

'I think so,' he replied.

'I am glad of that,' said Olive. 'Tell her from me that I have spared her all I can; and say the child, the little Olive Varcoe she was kind to, is sorry that, in her wilfulness, she often seemed ungrateful; but she was never really so: it was all words—wild, wicked words—the meaning of which was never in her heart.'

'I will give her your message, Olive,' returned Sir Hilton.

He looked at her wistfully, with words on his lips that he dared not utter. She had fallen back exhausted, and; but for the tears on her cheeks, he might have deemed her dead, so marble white was the once radiant, flashing face.

'Olive!' he said, gently.

She started, and, opening her eyes, looked at him a little wildly.

'I am weak and tired,' she said, putting her hand on her head. 'You had better leave me, Sir Hilton. You will find Florian in the drawing-room.'

This was the first time in all his life that Olive Varcoe had asked him to leave her, and the request came upon him with a strange chill. But it was right he should go; it was time, indeed, this painful and final parting was over. He rose, and, gazing at her with sad eyes, wished that she would hold out her hand. 'I would not refuse to take it,' he said to himself. 'No, I could not.'

But Olive made no sign of asking from him such a mark of kindness, and, save in her sleep, she had not once called him Hilton.

'Farewell, Olive,' he said, sorrowfully.

'Farewell, Sir Hilton,' she returned.

Her voice was firm, though low and sad. But still he lingered, and, with face half averted, he spoke in a trembling tone.

'Olive,' said he, 'you left yourself without resources, when you so contemptuously refused my aid, and "repaid" me—as you call it—the cost of your education. It was a cruel thing to do—cruel to yourself, more cruel to me. I trust—I hope you have had aid from others——'

'You mean from Mr. Vigo?' interrupted Olive. 'No, I could not permit even him to maintain me. I have worked for myself.'

'Worked!' said Sir Hilton, and his lips shook, as he looked at the little frail creature who talked thus.

'Yes,' she replied, 'I taught English till I fell ill.'

'But you have wanted for nothing, I trust? Surely you had money during your illness, Olive?' continued Sir Hilton, and his voice trembled painfully now as he spoke.

'No, I had no money,' replied Olive, simply; 'but the poor woman who lodged in the next attic to mine was very kind to me. I should have wanted all things but for her. And then a lady came to me, who was very good.'

'Wanted all things!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, bitterly, for her words wrung his proud heart to the core. 'And you accepted charity from strangers! Olive, is this just? Surely you will let Lady Trewavas send you——'

'No, no!' said Olive, interrupting him wildly, and spreading her hands before her face in a kind of terror; 'I cannot accept Trewavas bounty. No money from a Trewavas shall ever touch my hand; I will die first.'

The proud man to whom she had owed all things all her life—a home, comforts, education, position, all the world holds dear—heard her, and bowed his head in humble sorrow. He saw that all the substance of his house would be to her now as nothing.

‘You—you fear to vex Mr. Vigo, perhaps,’ he said, bitterly, ‘in accepting from me what you would not take from him. But it is not I who venture to ask you this favour: it is your aunt, Lady Trewavas.’

‘I shall never vex Charles Vigo by what I do,’ said Olive. ‘I can take nothing from any one whose name is Trewavas, whether that person be aunt or cousin.’

‘Then what will you do?’ cried Sir Hilton, vehemently.

‘I can work when I am well,’ she replied.

Sir Hilton looked at the white face, the fragile figure of the little creature who said this, and strove in vain to quench the smart of tears in his eyes.

‘It will be long before you are well, Olive,’ he expostulated.

The anxiety and gentleness of his tone seemed only to irritate Olive, and she said, coldly, ‘Do not fear for me; fear for others—think of others who need your thought more than I do.’

Then the fire and fervour of her nature burst through her calmness, and she cried out, with all her old vehemence, ‘Go back to Trewavas, Sir Hilton, and stand by your grandmother’s side. The aged have more need of consolation than the young. I ask nothing, I want nothing at your hands; the time for that is past. This meeting was undesired by me. It is Miss Langley who wishes to see you. I am weak and weary. Leave me, I entreat you.’

She pointed to the door, and then, without another look, she closed her eyes, as though their interview was over, and she was now striving to rest.

‘I have had too much of his pity,’ she said to herself, bitterly. ‘Sorry though he may be for the past, he still deems me infinitely beneath him in all things, even in innocence. Like the scape-goat in the wilderness, all this sin is laid upon my head; and he thinks himself merciful, because I am only driven forth into the desert to die.’

She did not weep as she thought of this, but there grew

over her white face a shadow of disdainful pity for his pride ; and Sir Hilton saw it, and wondered. It seemed to him that they had changed places, and she was the accuser now, while he stood, humbled and abashed, before her ; she was no longer the wilful, petted child, or the passionate girl, whose humble, caressing tenderness he had first encouraged, then rejected. No ; she was a woman now, chastened and subdued—by a sense of guilt, he thought—and prouder and colder in her repentance than he would have deemed it possible that the fiery and loving Olive Varcoe could ever be. Then it was so strange that she should be cold to him—to him who had insulted and forsaken her, and deemed her guilty ; yes, strange, indeed, that the love that from boyhood, in all its wild devotion, had ever been his, could at last grow weary, and fade away. Was this pale icicle really Olive—the Olive who had loved him so dangerously and deeply, and whom he had dreamed of so often as weeping at his feet ? He had thought of her as loving Charles Vigo, but his first glimpse of her face had made him forget that ; now it came back to him bitterly, and he turned in anger to the door.

‘Farewell, Miss Varcoe,’ said he. ‘You desire me to leave you, and I go. I have no right to ask why you are here, or under what circumstances. I presume your conscience exonerates you from wishing to bring trouble on this house, and that is enough. You know best whether you ought to seek an asylum here, Mrs. Langley being a widow and blind.’

‘Blind !’ repeated Olive, mournfully ; ‘ah, blind, blind, blind ! Go, Sir Hilton ; go, before I say something that will kill you as you stand.’

In the school of adversity Olive had learned to discipline her soul ; so this was the only bitterness to which her heart gave vent, in return for his cruel words. If he wondered at her speech, he had no time to answer it, for the door opened, and Herbert Langley entered, followed by Chadwick and Damerel.

‘Miss Vansittart,’ said Herbert Langley, approaching her with deep respect, ‘I trust you will forgive me for intruding on you ; but I am anxious to introduce to you a friend of mine, who is bent on believing that you are not yourself. Allow me to make known to you Mr. Vivian Damerel.’

Olive half rose and bowed, with her large eyes fixed on the cold face of the man who had always looked on her with suspicion. He was pale as death, and his firm-set lips looked cruel in their contempt and scorn. He had fancied she would not dare to meet his glances; but she did so firmly, sadly, calmly, and his eyes were the first that fell. Neither of them spoke a word. Not noticing this, Herbert Langley eagerly introduced Chadwick, who rattled on in his usual way.

'You are scarcely strong enough to bear our presence, Miss Vansittart,' said Herbert Langley, apologetically, 'but my anxiety to introduce Mr. Damerel to you must be my excuse. Trewavas, how came you here?'

'I came to see Miss Langley,' replied Sir Hilton, in some embarrassment.

'And here she is!' exclaimed Chadwick.

Florian seemed much agitated; she was flushed and trembling. She held a letter in her hand.

'Herbert,' she said, eagerly, as she bowed to the three gentlemen who greeted her, 'I want to speak to you.'

'One thing at a time, Flo, if you please,' said her brother, putting her aside. 'Let me finish this affair with Mr. Damerel first. Damerel,' he continued, 'here is my hand—take it, if you can say you are sorry for the mistake that has caused so much trouble.'

Vivian Damerel looked at Florian—he wanted to make her understand that what he did, he did for her sake; but she kept her head turned away as she bent over Olive anxiously.

'If I have given you or Miss Langley trouble, I am sorry for it,' said Vivian, evasively.

'But now you have seen Miss Vansittart,' persisted Herbert, 'you are of course willing to acknowledge that your act in Ireland was prompted by mistake?'

Olive would have spoken here, but Florian pressed her hand earnestly, and she kept silent.

'Miss Langley,' said Vivian, turning to her suddenly, 'if I saw you cherishing some dangerous creature, would it be right or wrong to warn your friends of it?'

Sir Hilton, very pale, took a step nearer to Olive, as if to protect her; but Herbert Langley, at Vivian's question, broke into fury.

'What!' he cried. 'Do you dare still to question my honour and truth? Florian—Miss Vansittart—this man insults you both.'

Restraining his passion, Damerel answered, in his coldest tones,

'I see no necessity for a quarrel, Langley. If your sister will say this lady is Miss Vansittart, I will say the same, and acknowledge that I was deluded by a likeness, not so great now in illness as it was some months ago.'

'Speak, Flo!' cried her brother, vehemently.

Florian saw that Vivian Damerel was resolved to lay her under a personal obligation to himself. To gain her gratitude he would tell this falsehood, but not else; he would tell it as a favour to her, or he would speak the truth. Again pressing one hand on Olive's shoulder to implore her silence, she stretched the other towards Damerel.

'Read this letter, Mr. Damerel, without making *one* comment on it,' she said. 'When you have finished it, I will answer you.'

Her earnest manner, her grave look, commanded attention, and even Herbert let her have her own way in silence. Still, with that sad, pitiful shadow on her face, she turned to Sir Hilton Trewavas.

'Sir Hilton, three days ago I promised you news of your brother,' she said. 'I give it now. I heard to-day, by a sure hand, that he is at Trewavas, ill—perhaps dying—'

Olive would have started up, but Florian's firm hand still held her, and that nervous grasp still entreated her to have patience, and be silent.

'And I think you will find a telegram at your hotel, exploring your instant return,' concluded Florian.

'Thank Heaven, poor John is at least at home!' said Sir Hilton, with pale lips; 'what a comfort that he is found.'

No one echoed this. Vivian Damerel, with the face of one who has just seen a great horror, had that instant restored the letter to Florian, and he now stood leaning against the chimney-piece, pale, agitated, and silent.

'Here is Mrs. Langley coming up-stairs,' said Dick Chadwick, in surprise. Feeling himself *de trop*, he had stood in the doorway, whence he commanded a view of the staircase.

'My mother!' exclaimed Herbert, in dismay. Then he

hurried towards Olive, saying, excitedly, 'Miss Vansittart, do not speak while she is here, I entreat you. She is not aware you are arrived, and she is very nervous. If you are silent she will know nothing till we tell her to-morrow.'

Olive turned and looked reproachfully at Florian; but there was no time for words, as the blind lady at this moment entered the room, leaning on the arm of a servant, who quitted her as her son stretched out his hand and took hers.

'Who is here?' asked Mrs. Langley, anxiously.

'I,' returned Sir Hilton, quickly. He divined that Olive was here against the blind lady's will, and this further deceit pained and galled him; so, although he felt that he ought to go at once to his hotel, his anxiety made him linger.

'Sir Hilton,' said Mrs. Langley, taking his hand in hers, which trembled, 'I feel for you with my whole heart. Do you go on this sad journey alone?' she asked; and that sorrowful shadow of pity stood more visibly on her blind face than in Florian's tearful eyes.

'I go alone,' he replied, a little wonderingly.

'Not alone, Trewavas,' said Damerel, in a husky voice.

'I will go with you.'

'Mr. Damerel,' said the blind lady, 'you are kind in that offer; yes, go with him. And Mr. Chadwick, will you accompany us? We return to England instantly.'

Damerel heard this request, and yet he did not repent of his proposal to accompany Sir Hilton. The suppressed excitement in his face and manner checked the exuberant flow of thanks with which Chadwick accepted Mrs. Langley's proposition. Herbert, however, uninfluenced by the silent fever in the hearts around him, exclaimed, in a vexed tone, that he saw no reason for such a sudden move; but his mother interrupted his speech.

'Who is here?' she said, uneasily. 'Florian, what lady is here besides yourself?'

'Oh, mother, what nonsense!' cried Herbert. But his mother turned on him angrily.

'Children,' she exclaimed, 'do you take advantage of my blindness to deceive me?'

Her sorrowful voice pierced Sir Hilton's ear like a knell. What would happen, when she knew whose presence it was she felt so palpably? Vivian Damerel, still pale, still

excited, looked at Florian, and her eyes plainly answered back, Speak!

'Mrs. Langley,' he said, in a clear low voice, 'it is Miss Vansittart who is here.'

As he uttered this, Olive flung back Florian's restraining hand, and rose hurriedly.

'There is no Miss Vansittart here,' she said, in a sad, unflinching tone. 'Mrs. Langley, I am Olive Varcoe.'

Herbert Langley heard this; and, in amazement and pale as death, he rushed towards his sister, and wrenched her from Olive's side.

'Are you mad, Florian?' he cried, in fury. 'What villainy is this? And you, girl, how have you dared cheat my mother and sister, and contaminate their roof with your terrible presence?'

As he spoke thus to Olive, he saw his blind mother seek her way gropingly towards that pale, shrinking figure, and clasp her in her arms, while her face streamed with tears.

'Mother!' he exclaimed, in horror.

'Read this,' said Florian, in a whisper, putting the letter in his hand. 'It is from Mrs. Gunning. She is staying at Trewavas. Read it, and be silent. Mother received it this morning. I have just read it to her. It excited her so much that I deferred to tell her Olive was here.'

As she was saying this, Herbert half read, half listened; and now upon his face, too, there sat that shadow of pity which still rested pale and quiet on Vivian Damerel.

Olive Varcoe was weeping bitterly, while her small, trembling figure was held up by Mrs. Langley's supporting arm.

'Sir Hilton,' she said, turning her blind face towards him in the deepest pity, 'you must not linger here. Say farewell to this poor distressed child, and leave us.'

Stricken by amazement, and feeling as though a cold hand had been laid upon his heart, and yet blind, still blind to the bitter truth, Sir Hilton advanced towards her.

'Farewell, Mrs. Langley. Farewell, Olive,' he said, softly.

'Take her hand,' whispered Mrs. Langley. 'She has been fearfully faithful to you, Sir Hilton.'

Blindly wondering still, and thinking her love had indeed

been fearful, he would, in pity, have taken Olive's small pale hand, which Mrs. Langley strove to place in his; but Olive drew it away quickly, and, suppressing her sobs, she said, hastily, 'May Heaven help you, Hilton! Tell John from me—but no, my grief is past speech;' and clasping her arms round Mrs. Langley, she hid her face, while sobs choked her words.

'Take him away quickly,' whispered Florian to Damerel; 'and be merciful to him. Utter not a word of this on the journey. He will bear it best from Lady Trewavas's lips.'

'I will obey you,' said Vivian, taking her hand. 'Oh, Florian! when shall we meet again?'

'Soon,' she replied, hastily. 'We are going to Bosvigo with Olive.'

'Bosvigo!' he reiterated, in surprise. 'Then you will see Charles Vigo, once my friend—the noblest fellow on earth. Ah, Miss Langley, get him to forgive me if you can. I might have known such a heart as his could not err,' and he glanced at Olive. 'You know, he loves her.'

'I know it,' she replied. 'Go, pray go; Olive is too weak for this agitation.'

She was so pale, so agitated herself, that Vivian Damerel hastened to obey her. He made his adieu quickly to all, bowing to Olive as to a queen; then he took Sir Hilton's arm, and led him away. And Sir Hilton, looking back, saw resting on every face that strange shadow of pity, the memory of which followed him through the thronged streets of Paris, and haunted his broken sleep, or came suddenly upon his fevered thoughts, as he hurried on day and night in blindness to that awakening horror which awaited him beneath the grey roof of Trewavas.

And what was it speaking to Sir Hilton's heart on the journey in a sad, low voice? What is it speaking now aloud in this bitter cry of anguish, in these clasping arms, in this pale, wasted face? It is a truth, the whispering of which he thrust away with a strong hand, but it will be heard at last; for as his blood curdles beneath the sound, it cries to him in a voice of thunder, though the aged woman, whose trembling arms are clasped about his neck, utters it in the lowest whisper that can touch his ear.

'Hilton,' said Lady Trewavas, 'Olive is innocent. John

was the man—your brother! And he is hidden here—not in his right mind at times—mad, miserable, dying!’

He was in the library, whither she had drawn him, when she told him this; and as she spoke she pointed to the old arched door hiding the spiral stairs.

Staggering as though he had been struck, and cowering beneath the blow, Sir Hilton sank into a chair, and turned upon her a face of ghastly woe, with dumb lips that quivered but found no language.

‘Will you go to him?’ said Lady Trewavas. ‘He expects you.’

Go to him!—go to whom? His brother?—a murderer! and a Trewavas! No, it could not be. He was dreaming, as he had dreamed on the weary journey, when Olive, with white lips, said what his mother had uttered now, ‘John is the man!’ He tried to speak, but his voice—husky, low, unnatural—scarce obeyed his will.

‘Mother, Olive is innocent, you say. Did she guess the truth?—did she know——’

Words failed, but his eyes turned to that ghastly door which hid their woe.

‘I think she knew,’ said Lady Trewavas.

There was a stifled sob in her throat, and her wrinkled hands clasped passionately, and she sank down in despair.

‘And knowing, she yet suffered this great contumely, this frightful wrong, this hideous shame and pain?’ said Sir Hilton.

‘Yes; knowing the truth, she suffered all that for our sakes, Hilton.’

The sob could not be checked now; and, with a burst of anguish, Lady Trewavas struck her bosom with her clenched hands, as though she would beat back the pain into her heart, or die.

‘For our sakes!’ repeated Sir Hilton. ‘Then Heaven help me! for I am a broken man, beaten down with the weapons of my own pride. Upon this fragile girl has fallen the penalty of all our sins. And I love her as I always did. Oh, Olive! Olive! you have smitten me to the earth!’

Slowly down, down to his very knees, drooped his bowed head, while his agony called for tears that could not, would not come. No, the torture on him was like a fire, burning

heart and brain ; and starting up to bear his anguish erect, he paced the room restlessly.

‘If I had believed her,’ said he ; ‘if I had only spoken one kind word ; if I had given her that kiss of peace for which she prayed so humbly ; if I had even only touched her hand in mercy, I might now bear to think of her. But no ; blind, stubborn, cruel to the last, I never gave her one sign of compassion or of love. And for me she suffered even my contumely ; for a Trewavas, and to spare this house, she endured all things, even our desertion and our hate. Mother, it is I who am mad, not John.’

His voice swelled in passion, rolling like waters that gather strength as they rush to their fall ; then he stopped his hurried walk, and went on brokenly, in a more gentle tone.

‘Give me time,’ he said. ‘I cannot go to that man just yet. My mind is shaken, bewildered, filled with horror. Forgive me, mother ; it is of you I should think. I am sorry for you—in your old age, such a shame as this to fall upon you ! And Olive—what were we saying of Olive ? She tried to save you—to save us all. For nearly a year she bore our shame, our pain, the brand of our crime ; and she has been hunted from country to country, driven from every shelter, thrust out from every friendship ; and one word, one whisper of the truth, would have saved her from all sorrow : yet she would not speak it ! Great Heavens ! and I have despised her ! I have thought her not good enough to be the wife of a Trewavas ! Oh, why did she not blast me with the truth, as I stood in my blind, hard pride before her ? Why did she not say, “John is the man—your brother, John Trewavas !—and I will proclaim his crime, and bring your name and your pride down to the very dust ?” Oh, if she had only turned upon me once, with one bitter or taunting word, I could bear this sorrow better ; but now my cup is full, and I drink the gall to the dregs. Mother, she has heaped fire upon my head—this weak girl that we despised. I can never look her in the face again. Do you know that in exile and loneliness she has borne the sharpest pangs of poverty, and suffered sickness ? Oh, she is so changed and wasted, that I could hold her in the grasp of my hand ; and her face has a white and weary look upon it

that cuts me to the heart. To save my pride she has borne this. To keep the Trewavas name from infamy, to guard our foolish, false honour from the dust, she went forth an outcast, bowed down by our shame. Perhaps she will die ! Who can say that she will live, having suffered so much for me ? Oh, Olive ! Olive !'

* * * * *

There was a slight noise in the still chamber, and John turned his haggard face from the wall, and saw the tall form of his brother standing in the doorway. There was a momentary flash of terror in his mild eyes, then that faded, and he clasped his hands above his head with a vacant smile. This he did to show Sir Hilton that he expected no brother's greeting, no friendly clasp of hand in hand ; he, the guilty outcast, asked of him only a shelter in which to die.

Neither spoke for a moment ; each was gazing on the wreck of the other, and the hearts of both were full.

In John's confused mind and dimmed brain there seemed to float shapes and voices which he should never hear again.

'Are you married?' he said to his brother ; 'and have you brought your wife here to see what she and you have made me ?'

Sir Hilton's spirit quailed, and he rested his hand against the arched doorway to steady his trembling frame.

'John,' said he, in a hollow voice, 'I dare not say that I am guiltless ; but I solemnly aver that I was ignorant. I never thought to see you thus.'

John raised himself on his elbow, and stared fixedly in Sir Hilton's face. In that look of recognition memory returned, and a groan escaped his lips.

'To see me thus,' he murmured—'a hunted beast, fearing for his miserable life ! No, you never thought it ; you were happy and careless ; you trampled on Olive, and on me. Eleanor, you know, is dead.'

With a quiver of the lip, he stopped suddenly, while an expression of terrible anguish sprang into his haggard eyes.

'Oh, if I could forget—forget—forget !' he shrieked. 'It is a mercy to be mad ; it is when my reason returns that I

feel mad. Hilton, you know I am not so sensible as I once was ; but there are times when it all comes back to me—all.'

'Be comforted, John,' he whispered. 'The mercy of God is infinite.'

But with the touch of his hand—with the old fraternal embrace of boyhood—John's thoughts had gone back to days long buried and half forgotten.

'Don't row to-day, Hilton ; the sea is rough. I have a new cricket ball. Come and try it.'

He said this with the very look upon his face it had worn in boyhood, and he put his arm around Sir Hilton with a feeble smile.

Touched more by the childish words than by the most passionate prayer for pardon, Sir Hilton strove vainly to repress his emotion.

'But where is Olive ?' continued John, with a childish eagerness in his eyes. 'We cannot play without Olive ! Fetch her, Hilton—fetch Olive.'

Sir Hilton trembled, and there rose up in his heart a voiceless cry, that echoed Olive ! Olive !

'I would fetch her, John,' he said softly, 'Heaven knows how willingly, if I could—I would fetch her, never to leave us more.'

But with the sound of his voice John's woe—his reason—returned.

Removing Sir Hilton's arm from his neck, ashamed that kindness should be shown to such a wretch as he, his head sank back upon the pillow, and he said feebly, but with perfect composure, 'You come home, Hilton, to a sad sight, and to a terrible duty. I have only waited for your return to confess my guilt. You must send for a magistrate, and let him take my deposition.'

A sob rose in Sir Hilton's throat, which seemed to rend his heart : it was the last cry of his pride, ere it was torn from him for ever. To this was he come now, that he must send for his neighbours and friends to let them hear his brother confess himself a murderer.

'I will do it, John,' he said, in a broken voice ; 'but do you know the consequences of such an act ? It will be the duty of the magistrate who hears your confession to commit you to the county jail.'

'I know it,' answered the guilty man, with a ghastly look. 'But I *must* make some expiation before I die. I have cared for the old name, Hilton—I have indeed—else I would have told the truth at once; I would not have suffered all this horror. Oh mercy!—this horror!' he reiterated, shuddering, and hiding his face from the light.

Sir Hilton's lips quivered as he looked down upon him.

'Never mind our name now, John,' he said; 'think of yourself. It is right I should tell you that, except Dr. Burton and two of the servants, no one is aware of your being here. And I have no reason to believe these suspect the truth; perhaps, therefore, you may yet escape if you will.'

'And do you wish me to die in silence?' asked John, with his eyes fixed on his brother's face.

'No,' returned Sir Hilton, firmly. 'If you can bear the anguish of a prison, John, I can. I shall go with you, and stand by you to the last.'

John pressed his brother's hand, and smiled faintly.

'No prison will keep me long, Hilton,' he murmured: 'the prison waiting for me is the grave; and whether that is boundless freedom, or a strait and dark dungeon, who shall say? But I cannot face it—I cannot die in peace till I have done Olive justice. Send for her, Hilton. I cannot speak till Olive comes.'

'And when she comes, if she will come,' said Sir Hilton, 'what magistrate shall I send for?'

'Ask Mr. Heriot and Mr. Vigo to come to me,' replied John. 'What I have to say will not be new to them. They guessed the truth long ago. Hilton, you say I am not suspected. You err. Every eye suspected me; every hand was against me when I came here; and, but for Olive, I should have been pointed at on the very day Charles Vigo found her up yonder in the wood. Oh, I want to see Olive's face, and thank her before I die! Fetch her, Hilton; fetch her now, at once! The sands are running down so fast, and I float away into eternity, weakly, as I have lived. Oh life, life! thou glorious gift, what have I done with thee? A mistake, Hilton—a hard, bitter, terrible mistake—that is what I have made of my life; and through all eternity I cannot rectify it. Never through a thousand fires can these hands be cleansed!'

He wrung them together tightly, and looked down upon them in a wild way, relapsing into incoherent words, and tossing restlessly from side to side. His unhappy brother fetched the attendant from the room below, and left him.

'Who is guilty?' he murmured to himself, as he descended the narrow turret stairs—'he or I? And poor Eleanor herself, our victim, is she quite guiltless of her own blood? For two years she played with this poor weak heart, regardless of its sufferings. And at last the passion she had raised and despised turned upon her, and slew her.'

Sir Hilton spoke truly: Eleanor Maristowe was not free from blame regarding John Trewavas. Tacitly, she had given him encouragement, partly for her pride's sake, to hide where her real love was, and partly because she divined that while she suffered John's attentions with a pleased air, her mother would never refuse an invitation to Trewavas, and it was only at Trewavas she could see Sir Hilton.

Was this girlish selfishness a venial fault? Who would dare to say that any sin is small, could he trace back the source whence have arisen, and do arise, the deadliest battles, the direst events, the cruellest deeds done in this woful world?

Lady Trewavas was waiting in the library; and as Sir Hilton closed and locked the old arched door, which shut out from the household the pain of John's presence, she came forward anxiously, and laid her hand on his. She had no need to question him; she saw his resolve upon his face.

'Mother,' he said firmly, 'there is but one thing to do—the innocent must no longer suffer for the guilty. I go at once to Mr. Vigo, and lay this history before him.'

'I knew you would do this,' she answered. Her voice was scarcely audible, and her lips were colourless; but she made no remonstrance.

'It is the only course; and the duty has its worst sting extracted, because I go by John's own urgent desire. If he had implored me to spare him, my task would be hard indeed,' concluded Sir Hilton.

'But John is mad,' said Lady Trewavas, eagerly.

'Perhaps so,' he answered; 'but that is not a question for us to decide. I will defend him on this ground to the utmost. I can do no more, and no less. Take courage, mother, and hope for the best.'

These were his parting words before he rode away to Bosvigo. It would have been less bitter to him to ride on this errand to Mr. Heriot's, or even to the enemy of his house, Sir Anthony Roskelly; but in the present phase of his mind, the deepest humiliation seemed the fittest. He would go and confess his brother's cowardly crime to the man whose clear sense had always seen Olive's innocence, and whose noble heart had had courage to defend her.

Deep in thought, Sir Hilton rode with his head bent down, not seeing this very man approaching him. They met midway on the high breezy heath which looked down alike on the woods of Bosvigo and the park of Trewavas.

Charles Vigo reined in his horse, and raised his hat gravely.

'Sir Hilton Trewavas, I believe you returned home last night?'

'I did,' responded Sir Hilton, in mournful accents.

'Sir Hilton,' he continued, 'it is my painful duty to inform you that a warrant is in the hands of the county police for the apprehension of Mr. Trewavas. The inspector of this district has been long aware that he is at Trewavas; but precautions having been taken to render his escape impossible, my father and other magistrates, in consideration of Lady Trewavas's great age, deferred the execution of the warrant until your return. Without wishing to take any credit to myself for the act, Sir Hilton, I may add that this concession was granted to me by those high in authority, in return for the great efforts I have made to discover the truth.'

Sir Hilton bore this humbly, though the workings of his face showed the terrible struggle within.

'Mr. Vigo,' he said, simply, 'for the consideration you and others have shown Lady Trewavas, I thank you in her name. I would not have left her one day alone in this misery, had she made me aware of my unhappy brother's return.'

Charles Vigo bowed in token of his knowledge of the fact, and Sir Hilton continued more painfully—

'Mr. Vigo,' said he, 'I am not ignorant that the efforts you have made to discover the facts of this dire crime were made for Miss Varcoe's sake.'

'Entirely for Miss Varcoe's sake,' repeated Charles Vigo, 'and certainly without any feelings of rancour towards yourself or your family, Sir Hilton.'

'I believe it,' returned Sir Hilton, with a deeper and deeper sadness breaking through his tone. 'Miss Varcoe, doubtless, gave you every assurance of her innocence; while to spare me what she deemed would be a deeper pain, she refused all explanation of the circumstances——'

'Pardon me,' interrupted Charles Vigo, as his face flushed, 'Miss Varcoe gave me no explanations, no assurance of innocence, and I should have scorned myself had I asked her a single question.'

A burning flush covered Sir Hilton's face to the brow. The noble faith, the entire trust of Charles Vigo's love scorched him with shame.

'And I have asked Miss Varcoe no single question to this day,' continued Charles Vigo, a little hurriedly. 'I knew her feelings too well. I knew she would suffer all things rather than denounce a Trewavas.'

In the young man's voice there was a slight ring of bitterness. He did not see the thorns of shame and agony on Sir Hilton's brow: he saw him crowned with the glory and honour of Olive's love.

Did one drop of consolation fall on Sir Hilton's heart in this bitter tone of his? Apparently not, for there was a deeper falter in his voice as he answered, 'What Olive has suffered for my family is not unknown to me, Mr. Vigo; but I cannot speak of it.'

He broke off, and the trembling of his lip showed he was uttering the simple truth in saying he could not speak of this.

'I fear,' he continued, after a moment's silence, 'that Miss Varcoe must be the principal witness against my brother, should he live to be tried.'

'You are mistaken, Sir Hilton,' returned young Vigo. 'I have been most careful to spare Miss Varcoe that pain. The evidence of the man Skews, the creature you bribed, will be quite sufficient, and I have received a most sure promise that Miss Varcoe shall not be called.'

'Have I this bitter addition to my sufferings?' cried Sir Hilton, turning ghastly pale. 'Is it possible you and others believe that I paid Skews to spare John, and not to be silent respecting Olive?'

The sight of his suffering touched Charles Vigo, and he held out his hand in frank sorrow.

'I am grieved, Sir Hilton, that I once thought so,' he replied; 'but I discovered long ago that I was mistaken, and I only named it now to hear you take your own part. That villain Skews has confessed to me that, seeing where your agonised suspicions were fixed, he was careful not to shake them; he thought by that means to get money from Mr. Trewavas as well as yourself.'

'Can it be,' murmured Sir Hilton, 'that, in any honest man's mind, even for a moment, I have appeared as the cowardly villain who could put on a young girl's head a crime which I knew to be committed by my brother? Now, indeed, my cup is full!'

'You must pardon my thought,' resumed Charles Vigo; 'you must remember you have ever borne the character of a man inordinately proud of his family and position. To save these, I fancied you might be glad that Olive——'

'No, never!' exclaimed Sir Hilton. 'I confess that in my blind pride no guess came into my soul that a Trewavas could be a felon—that a Trewavas could be as weak, as wicked, as miserable as other men. But if my eyes had been opened, and I had known my brother to be as vile and as wretched as the most ignorant, time-hardened convict—flesh and blood like us—who dies in his chains unpitied, still I would not have let Olive suffer one hour's false suspicion. Mr. Vigo, I am happy in knowing her innocent; but you are happier, because you knew it from the first.'

Charles Vigo raised his hat as though in honour of Olive's name and Olive's innocence, but he made no reply. Then Sir Hilton, in a calmer tone, told of his errand to Bosvigo, and begged that he and his father would both come to Trewavas to hear John's confession.

'Would it not be wise to consult with your lawyer before Mr. Trewavas takes this step?' asked Charles.

'No; John thinks himself dying, and he wishes to speak,' replied Sir Hilton. 'You would say that his doing so will cut him off from all hope; but, I believe, since our only defence can be insanity, that his deposition will make little difference on the trial. It is not our intention to deny his guilt.'

Charles Vigo bowed his head gravely.

'Then, if you wish it,' he said, 'I will ride back and make

known your request to my father, and meanwhile you can go on to Mr. Heriot's. Perhaps it would be painful to you to visit Bosvigo. Are you aware that Miss Varcoe is there?'

No,' said Sir Hilton; and his lip shook, and his face grew paler as he spoke.

'She left Paris with the Langleys a few hours after your departure,' resumed Charles, 'and they are now my father's guests.'

'I am glad of it,' said Sir Hilton, steadying his voice, 'for now she is so near us, Olive surely will not refuse to see the unhappy man, who raves for her incessantly, and yearns to ask her forgiveness.'

'You allude to Mr. Trewavas,' observed Charles Vigo. 'I will tell her what you say; but, of course, she must herself decide whether or not she can undergo so painful a trial.'

Sir Hilton longed to send her a message filled with such passionate, pleading words, that, like strong cords, they should draw her to Trewavas; but he refrained. Surely she had suffered too much for him and his, and he had no right now to lay upon her a feather's burden, or claim a single tear. Gathering up the reins, he bowed gravely to Charles Vigo, and lifted his hat; the young man returned the salute, and they parted, both going on their different ways.

* * * * *

John sat up in his bed, propped by pillows; near him were Mr. Heriot, with keen face, sharply attentive, and Mr. Vigo, earnest and pitiful. By his bedside, close by his pillow, sat Sir Hilton, suppressing with iron force the misery that was eating into his soul, while he supported by word and look his guilty and wretched brother.

In the window, seated at a table, with writing materials before him, was the quiet inspector of police, who so long ago had observed to Mr. Eslick, that 'jealousy was a strong passion, and the slayer of Eleanor Maristowe was not far to seek.'

'We are ready to hear you, Mr. Trewavas,' said Mr. Heriot.

'But where is Olive?' asked John, piteously. 'I will say nothing till she comes.'

On hearing this, old Mr. Vigo rose and addressed Sir Hilton. 'Miss Varcoe, with Mrs. Langley and my son, is at the little inn at Trewavas church-town,' he said; 'will you allow me to fetch them, Sir Hilton? I brought them thither, anticipating this request on the part of Mr. Trewavas.'

Sir Hilton bowed his head in assent, and Mr. Vigo left the room quickly.

For half an hour there was almost a deathlike silence in that still chamber; then the sound of wheels reached them, echoing through the long avenue of the park, and Sir Hilton, rising hastily, quitted the room by the old oak door on the spiral stairs. In the library he found Lady Trewavas and kindly Mrs. Gunning, both silent and pale.

He offered his arm to Lady Trewavas, who laid her trembling hand on it, and together they traversed the hall, and stood on the threshold of the great doors of Trewavas. Here Olive saw them, as with faltering feet and eyes tear-blinded she came up the steps, leaning on Charles Vigo's arm. Where now were all her dreams of revenge for slights fancied and real? Gone, sunk for ever in this sea of sorrow; and profoundly humiliated by the sight of the aged, care-worn, quivering figure that stood upon the threshold to do her honour, Olive fell down at her feet, and, clasping her knees, looked up into her furrowed face with streaming eyes. Lady Trewavas raised her, and they kissed without a word. Thus, by her own touching grief, did Olive remove from the stricken woman's heart the overwhelming sense of gratitude that burdened it; and in that kiss each felt that all mutual wrongs, all mistakes and faults, were forgiven.

As Olive turned her head she met Sir Hilton's gaze, and he bowed to her as one bows to a queen. To him all worth on earth was enshrined in her—the little, weak, passionate creature, whom he had once deemed too mean to love. And now he dared not hold out his hand to greet her; he dared not utter a word to welcome her to the house from which he had cast her out. Yet a pang, like fire, shot through his heart as he saw Charles Vigo again take his place by her side, and look down proudly on the small white face, uplifted wistfully to his. But Sir Hilton confessed it was just that he should suffer, and that Charles Vigo should be honoured; so he held his peace, and quenched his jealousy.

Olive had looked at him but once, yet in that single glance she read that he knew now all she had done and suffered, and she saw that his soul was steeped to the lips in bitterness. Then a kind of shame seized her. In her quick sympathy his sufferings became hers; and the wonder, reverence, and gratitude he felt oppressed her; and his bleeding pride wounded her likewise. She dreaded to hear a word of thanks from him; she hated what she had done for him; she could not endure to be so high above him in his thoughts. Now she had conquered his pride, she wanted him to be proud again. So to hide from him that she saw his pain, and to avoid his thanks, she looked at Charles Vigo, and smiled for very sorrow, with a quiver on her lips. She knew that all she had suffered was in vain, that John himself had dragged his crime into the light, and implored of all men that he alone might bear the penalty. And though this took from her the sting of thinking that Charles Vigo had hunted him down, it increased the anguish of pity that swelled in her heart for all at Trewavas.

Sir Hilton had given his arm to Mrs. Langley; the others followed, Olive knew not how, for her eyes were blinded, and in another moment she found herself mounting the turret stairs, every step of which was to her a monument of agony. In the chamber there broke upon her, through her tears, a vision of John's face—a wild, haggard face, with madness on it, unutterable woe, and death. Then breaking away from some hand that held her, she rushed forward and fell upon her knees, and would have touched him, but he shrieked out, 'No, Olive, do not touch me! Say you forgive me—only that—and I can die contented.'

With broken sobs, Olive spoke words of peace to him; then she felt herself lifted from her knees, and saw blind Mrs. Langley's arm around her. Sir Hilton had taken his old place by his brother's side; Lady Trewavas, Charles Vigo, and Mrs. Gunning were here, and Olive understood that the trembling woman who supported her had come also only for her sake. Then she rallied all her courage, and gathered in her breath to listen, as John's feeble voice broke faintly upon her ear and heart. Without the breaks and interruptions which fever and unreason made, we will tell his words.

'Olive, only Olive, knew how I loved her,' said he. 'She

saw how tortured I was—how galled and maddened I was—by jealousy, and by the knowledge of the poor half-love Hilton gave her. The blame is not all mine. I loved her first, and for more than two years she tacitly accepted my affection. It was I who rode with her, I who walked with her, I to whose arm she clung when weary, or when, in pretty cowardice, she chose to fear some harmless creature of the woods. And this was all deceit—all done to blind Hilton, or to cheat her mother, who liked me best. She thought she could do this, and tread upon me, as upon some poor, harmless worm in her path; she did not think I was a viper, that could turn and sting. As Olive talked to me, with her childish outpouring of passionate words that meant nothing, I was devising in my mind the best way to die. At first I swear I never thought of killing her: that was the mad impulse of a moment; but I did think I would die in her presence, reproaching her with my last breath. Once I was sorely tempted to kill my brother. Hilton, you remember the day? We were in the garden, and you maddened me with your blind, careless talk; but Olive, who suspected me, and had greatly watched me of late, had plunged my pistols into the water. This saved him. But it was on that day I resolved Eleanor Maristowe should never be his wife. From his own lips I had heard he chose her for no great love, but because she fulfilled all the requisites his pride required in a Lady Trewavas; and languidly content with her beauty and her affection, he strove through these to drive from his heart a deeper passion, which he feared might lead him to a less prudent marriage. My heart burned at this. My whole nature rebelled at it, and in the warfare that rose up in my soul, order was overthrown. A something—I know not what—fell into ruins within me, and in the chaos I blindly groped for justice. If God would not hear me, and do justice, I would take my cause into my own hand, and deal out justice to myself.

Here John raved somewhat, mingling prayers with his madness; asking why one man, in blind selfishness and pride, should take coldly a blessing which would make another's Heaven.

'My lamb, my one ewe lamb!' he cried; 'but to him only an image to hang his name and his jewels on, and show to the world as his.'

Sir Hilton rested his chin upon his hand, and looked upon the raving man ; but he uttered not a word. When a great light pierces the brain speech is numbed. Olive, watching him, wept.

Then John got calm again, muttering to himself that it was a wrong world, and he had grown warped in it.

‘I thought Eleanor would be just,’ he said, ‘if I laid these things before her as I saw them in my own mind. So I watched an opportunity to find her alone ; but, knowing Olive followed my steps of late, I took advantage of a burst of temper on her part to lock her in her room. I gave the key to Lady Trewavas, saying, carelessly, I was going to fish awhile in the creek. I did not know that, the better to observe me—I believe she thought I meditated suicide—Olive had taken from the library the key of the old door at the foot of the disused stairs. From the creek I saw Eleanor go into the wood, with a book in her hand. I did not follow her at once. I thought over all that I would say, the arguments I would use, the prayers, the entreaties I would urge, to make her break off this marriage. Above all, I would be gentle, I said. I had poison with me—I had sent to London for it, under Dr. Burton’s name ; for, if it came to the worst, I would die before the wedding. And now I feared myself so much, that I took this bottle from my pocket, and broke it against a stone, throwing the fragments into the creek ; then I went lightly to the wood. I knew where to find Eleanor, for, in passing me, she had said, “How hot it is to-day ! I am going to the Lady’s Bower—the coolest spot in the wood.”

‘When I found her, she was weeping and angry ; and as I talked, she grew more angry. My prayers beat against her hard heart in vain. At last I reproached her. I told her she had encouraged my love, and made a stepping-stone of my bruised spirit to reach Hilton. Then she said I lied—and I bore that meekly ; but seeing she would not spare herself a miserable marriage for my sake, I tried her for her own. I repeated all Hilton’s words to me in the garden, and I told her where his real love was. I said his marriage would be a mockery, a gilded misery, and her smiling life a mask to hide her tears. And these, and her sorrow, and her prayers, would all beat against her husband’s heart as vainly as mine did now against hers.

‘Oh, I used strong words, but gentle—I did indeed. Yet they did not melt her, as I thought. She grew harder and harder to me; she opposed to all my vehemence a well-bred scorn—a coldness like an icy wall, against which my passion and my misery fell back upon myself, maddening me.

‘She was white with anger—that concentrated anger, self-possessed, which women accustomed to the world can hide, or vent in irony sharp and cold as cut steel. She did not seem to fear for herself in taunting me; she had been pampered all her life long. No harmful thing had ever touched her; and her soul, asleep in its soft luxury, never awoke to the thought of danger till too late. Never mind her words—they were cruel; having once broken through the well-bred surface of her serenity, she was not held back by any consideration for me. She owned scornfully that she had seen my love, and despised it too much to care whether she had wounded it or no. She confessed she might have made my crushed heart a stepping-stone to her own wish; she did not know—she did not care—she had not thought about it.

‘“And now, surely, I have had enough of your miseries, and of Olive Varcoe’s too, for one day!” she cried. “Stand out of my path, and let me pass!”

‘But I barred the way, holding down the demon in me with both arms. At that moment I hated her.

‘“You shall never be Hilton’s wife,” I said, resolutely.

‘“You mistake me,” she answered. “All this only determines me the more to marry him. And I will put such a barrier between you and him—between you and Trewavas—that your presence shall never insult me again. What! am I to bear for ever this insolent interference between me and my affianced husband?”

‘“Not insolent,” I said, meekly; “but well meant, kindly meant, to save you pain.”

‘“Insolent!” she repeated, “and cowardly! Yes, Mr. Trewavas, you are a coward, and, as a coward, I despise you!”

‘My meekness had given her courage to say this; and, as she spoke, she flung her hand towards me in a contemptuous gesture. Her hand touched me. She did not know what the touch of her hand was to me. I lost my power over that

strong demon in me, which some have said since is madness : the cords which held him snapped like threads.'

Springing up, John gazed upon his listeners with a haggard face, and then, falling back, shuddering, he went on more wildly—

'Her tranquillity would have chained me ; that being gone, my fear went too. I seized the hand that had struck me ; I flung my arms about her.

"Not a coward!" I cried. "Not afraid to die—with you. Let us die together!"

'I struggled with her, dragging her towards the pool. She shrieked aloud ; then I put my hand upon her lips, and said, softly, "Do not shriek ; there is no one in the wood but you and I. The very beasts die silently ; why should man alone meet death with cries?"

'Holding her thus triumphantly, I could philosophise like—a madman. But she tore down my hand and screamed twice, "Olive ! Olive !" then she fell down at my feet in a death-swoon. I thought her dead, and knelt beside her in an agony of joy. The ancient quiet of my life, before I knew her, came back to me in a great wave.

'At that moment her lips shook, her eyelids quivered, and I saw she lived, and my tranquillity was a deceit—I was as one enveloped in flames. I cried out that I must save myself—that I must have peace, even if she died to give it me. As I wrung my hands over her white face, I remembered a little phial in my pocket : not poison—oh no !—but something I had brought to use—being a coward—after I had taken poison. I drenched her scarf with this fluid, and held it closely to her lips. She will not suffer now in dying, I said. Then the thought struck me that the shock and chill of the water might bring back consciousness, and at this moment my eyes fell on a crimson cord lying on the grass ; I swear I know not how it came there, but I caught it up, and tied her wrists.

'There, you know the rest. I am faint, I am sick—I can tell no more.

'There was no cry, no sound save the splash of the water ; from which I fled madly. I ran through the wood in a time so short, it seemed incredible. I reached the creek, and caught up my fishing-rod again. I could not kill myself—

the means were gone. The tide was lapping the little rock on which I had spilled that deadly draught, and, looking on it with burning eyes, I asked why it had not saved her.

‘I went in, I spoke to Lady Trewavas, to the servants, to the gardeners, then leisurely I mounted to my painting-room—this one—and here I wrapped the bottle in double paper, and wrote “Carmine” on it. I did not think much about it. I did not care whether it was found or not.

‘When I came down I talked with Mrs. Maristowe, and as she spoke of fashions and of follies, I heard her daughter’s voice shrieking “Olive! Olive!” My sense was very dim: I could not tell why she had called to Olive. And in this same dim, dull way, I rode for Dr. Burton, and sat up that night among the watchers. Going to my room in the morning I found the packet gone, and on the cover Olive’s name. Leaves, too, were gone from my journal, and sketches were torn away.

‘I staggered to a seat, stunned and bewildered. I think it was then my sense came back, and I thought of safety. I began to understand why Eleanor had called to Olive: she must have been in the wood near us—perhaps had seen me—perhaps was trying now to save me. I tore up the rest of my journal and sketch-book, that no one might notice the pages gone, and threw the pieces carelessly among the waste paper. No suspicion touched me through them.

‘You know the anguish of the next few days, and how the cord was found and lost, and suspicion fell on Olive; but you can never, never tell how nobly she bore all this. I was sure now she was in the wood, sure she had seen me; but in her great pity for my shaken reason, my love, and all the suffering that had led to my crime, she uttered no word to speak her horror of it. She never let me know that my guilt was patent to her eyes, though hid to others, only she would not touch my hand—I saw that. I knew that she bore all the suspicion, shame, and hatred that should have been my portion—bore it silently—took it upon herself gladly, to save Trewavas. I knew that, in her great love, her deep devotion, she would rather die than let her voice, her hand, be the one to draw down infamy on our name. Knowing this, I felt safe, and, like a coward, I let her take this great burden on her, and never helped her with a word. She was but a

child, acting with a child's ignorance, a child's persistence, a child's simplicity. To spare Hilton's pride, to save Trewavas, that was her sole thought, and she asked not whether it was right or wrong. It was for me to spare her; for me to say, "Olive, child, speak!—do your duty, never heeding me!" But I was not brave enough for such words, and I saw her shunned and abhorred by those for whose sake she suffered; I saw wrong heaped on wrong, till one brave man took her part, and she fled from our cruel faces.'

The sobs of Lady Trewavas broke the silence here, and Olive, clasping her hands, implored John to speak of her no more.

Tears stopped her voice, and tears blinded many other eyes as they gazed on the small figure and brave young face, so changed and worn, that had suffered so much for love and a mistaken duty.

'Have you written it down—all?' asked John, eagerly, of Mr. Heriot. 'I will not spare myself one detail. Let me sign it when it is ready. Hilton, is there anything more to tell? You can say how I lived here, a coward, letting you think Olive guilty, till fear of Mr. Vigo, and still wilder fears, drove me out, striving to lose myself in a mad world. But I never once forgot myself. I never once escaped the horrible consciousness that I was John Trewavas, the murderer. Ah, what a life I led! Bring me Circe's crew to match it.'

And here, for the first time, there rang out that hideous laugh, never uttered by sane and innocent lips, which chills the listener who wanders in the terrible places of the earth where the felon and the madman are kept from sight.

Hearing it, Hilton started up, and, with a look, implored Lady Trewavas to take Olive away.

'Ah, let them go,' said John, wearily—'they cannot help me. I live in darkness; and their faces will never come to me again, in all my dreams, through a black eternity.'

'Our duty is hard,' said Mr. Heriot; 'but I think, Sir Hilton, you will perceive that we have no alternative but to fulfil it. It is my painful task to say, that unless Dr. Burton can certify Mr. Trewavas's life will be endangered by the journey, I and my brother magistrate must commit him on his own confession.'

'I wish it,' said John, eagerly; 'I am strong enough to go. I want no certificate, Dr. Burton; never fear my dying on the road. Better be in gaol than have a gaol made of my brother's house. Clear old Trewavas of the felon and the constables, and the stain of murder. Clear it, I say, and let me go.'

He raved again, and, after a short hesitation, Dr. Burton refused to give the certificate the magistrates required.

'There is no doubt of his madness,' he said, 'but that must of course be proved; and meanwhile,' he whispered to Mr. Vigo, 'I consider it safer and better for his family that he should be in custody.'

Sir Hilton offered bail to any amount; but law and custom would not permit of its being accepted.

'Then I shall go with my brother,' he said, calmly, as he bade farewell to the retiring magistrates.

Sir Hilton kept his word. He shrunk from no humiliation now; he seemed to seize the cup with a sort of fever, eager to drink to the dregs.

'Let me show Olive that I, too, can suffer,' was all his thought—'suffer, and own it just.'

So, in the local papers of the day, Olive soon read a clear statement, signed by Sir Hilton's name, in which he set forth his contrition and his shame that his mad brother's guilt should ever have touched her innocence. Here, too, thus publicly, he thanked her for the generous pity and magnanimous forbearance she had shown when falsely accused. And here, too, he asked her forgiveness for all the suffering heaped upon her through her devoted silence and the world's injustice. He wrote generously, largely, not saying a word too many or too few.

Olive wept as she put down the paper; she saw in this letter the cry of a generous but proud spirit, anxious to suffer for itself, and full of a tender yet angry remorse, that he should blindly have permitted her childish figure to come between him and the fire, and thrust her hand in the flame in his stead.

After the great excitement of this letter, and of John's confession, came a lull of many weeks. Olive and all the world knew that Sir Hilton had accompanied his brother, and had taken a lodging close by him, and visited him in

prison, and stayed with him every day, except when closely occupied in aiding to prepare his defence; but this was the only fact that passed the prison-house.

What Olive told of her share in that terrible day it will be better to relate here than in another place.

“When I quitted Eleanor,” she said, “I was full of scorn and anger; but as my temper ebbed, there came upon me a great sorrow for her. Sir Hilton did not love her—I was sure of that; and she would be “an image to hang necklets on”—not bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. I could have wept for her; and I, the outcast, would not have changed with her for worlds. In this spirit I thought I would go back, and ask her to forgive my hard words; and, as I still hesitated, I found I had lost the Syrian cord which I had worn as a girdle. “Now I must go back,” I said, “to find it.” As I retraced my steps slowly, searching always for the cord, I thought I heard a sharp cry; then, in a moment, Eleanor’s voice pierced my ears, shrieking “Olive! Olive!” It was a cry of such dire fear, that for a moment I stood still in terror, leaning in faint sickness against a tree, my strength gone, my eyes blinded.

“When I recovered from this, all was still as death; and in this stillness I ran on in desperate haste towards the Lady’s Bower. As I neared it, something fell into the water with a heavy splash. On hearing this, I did not faint, or stand still in horror; I rushed on blindly, and reached the pool, to find silence and loneliness. If there had been a deadly struggle, there was no mark now to tell it: all looked innocence and peace. But I was not deceived. Such a cry as I had heard only springs to human lips in times of direst agony; and, leaning over the pool, I peered with shrinking eyes into its depths. Then it was I thought I saw beneath the beech tree a shadow, a lilac shadow, like the folds of a robe. At that I uttered a cry that rang through the wood; then remembering none would hear me, I ran wildly towards Trewavas for help. I went by no path, but between the trees—the shortest way; and as I sat aside a branch, I saw a man running furiously, with madness in his face, and guilt and fear past words. The man was John Trewavas, and at sight of him the truth pierced me as suddenly as sunlight touches new-awakened eyes. I am not a woman given to

fainting, yet I fell now like one struck dead ; all my blood had attacked my heart at once, and, with an icy stupor on me, I lay, I know not how long.

'When I awoke, I gathered leaves and grass, like one bewildered ; and wandering on and on, I lost my way, and still thought I was nearing Trewavas—still thought I was going for help. Then I found I could not go—I could not denounce John Trewavas. Better die than bring such trouble to the roof that had sheltered me ; and flinging myself down upon the grass, I wept till my soul died away in me, and I had no more strength. Thus weeping, Mr. Vigo found me, and at sight of a human face I gathered courage and hope ; I began to tell myself that I had not verified that fancy of mine, of a lilac shade beneath the water, and the shadow might only be the darkness of the long beech boughs that overspread the pool. My heart bounded at the hope, and my agony grew calmer.

"Murder !" I said, within myself—"no, it is impossible. I have been mad to think it. She would have shrieked aloud—have struggled in the water ; she could not have died quietly like that. The shadow was the purple shade of the red beech, and I have pierced myself with a grief as vain as shadows."

'With this thought I smiled, as I waved a farewell to Mr. Vigo ; but as the great trees hid him from my sight, my heart fell again. Why had I heard that cry, "Olive ! Olive !"—why had John that upon his face which curdled my blood to think of ? And this great bell at Trewavas, why did its sounds come flying to greet me ? Who was missing ?

'Agonised in every thought, I resolved to avoid meeting any of the household till I had visited John's room and solved my doubts. I entered the house unseen ; I crept up to his painting-room. If he were here and met me quietly, I should know that shadow in the pool was a sick fancy, and Eleanor had only cried to me in terror of his anger. What more likely than, in pleading his cause himself, he should get angry, telling her of her blindness ? And perhaps he had threatened her that he would die. I knew he thought of that at times.

'He was not in his painting-room, and the drawing on the

easel had not been touched that day. Then I searched for poison, and in a small packet labelled "Carmine" I found chloroform. Could he kill himself with this? I asked myself. And fearing that—not thinking then how Eleanor had died—I took it with me. You know how heavily this weighed against me in Sir Hilton's mind.

'I knew now that Eleanor was missing, and I never questioned myself again whether the shadow in the pool was a fancy or a truth. She was a dead, and there only remained to me the power to save Sir Hilton and Lady Trewavas, by my silence, from the deeper anguish of knowing whose hand had done the deed. When I entered John's painting-room, I felt Eleanor was dead. This feeling impelled me to destroy his journal and sketches. Horror-stricken as I was, the sole clear idea in my bewildered mind was the resolve to save the Trewavas name from the stain of murder.

'When circumstances, and what I had done to save John, had fastened suspicion on myself, words are too weak to tell what I felt: it was a strange mingling of joy and pain—an agony when Sir Hilton looked at me with such bitter loathing—a joy when I saw his pride unbroken, his brother unsuspected.

'You will remember the finding of the poor girl in the pool, her wrists tied with that red cord? If Bolster had not brought it to me, I must have confessed that I was in the wood that day—I must have confessed that I had lost it near the Lady's Bower; and all that I had heard and seen would have been torn from my unwilling lips. So I burnt the chord, and heaped another proof against myself in Sir Hilton's soul. I did this, because I would not be a witness against his brother; yet that he should deem me guilty, cost me tears that seemed a rain of fire on my cheeks.

'Charles Vigo had guessed the truth. I saw it in his eyes when I thanked him for the cord. "You lost it near the pool; the knot slipped as you drew the cord through your hands in anger," he said, as he looked me in the face. I grew white to the lips, but answered, faintly, "Yes."

"You will not ask me questions?" I cried, as I grasped his arm.

"Not one," he answered. "I respect your motive, though I lament your silence. Olive, duty should be stronger than love."

“Let me alone,” I said. “Let me die for them if I will.”

‘I could not say more for tears ; I thought that what I did was a duty, an expiation. Passionate, wilful as I had been, I could not feel all guiltless of this sin. I had not poured oil upon the stormy waters around me ; my hasty words had often roused John’s dangerous moods, not soothed them. But I had played with fire, not knowing it. Before this crime I was a child, uttering every thought and passion like an unlearnt nursling ; now I was a woman, taught self-control, humiliation, and repentance, by a fearful lesson. I think but for God’s mercy I must have died.

‘Florian, my story is ended ; only I have left untold—because a pile of words high as Heaven could not tell it—all Charles Vigo’s nobleness, his generous pity, his brave defence of that poor outcast, Olive Varcoe.’

Thus simply did Olive tell the story of her suffering. Charles Vigo, hovering near as she and Florian sat together in the deep bay window at Bosvigo, heard Olive’s lips praise him ; but he saw it was Florian whose face kindled—Florian whose eyes paid him the tribute of her tears.

‘Miss Langley,’ he said, ‘I should like to relate that story to you my way. I should not tell it as Olive has done. I should expatiate on the indignation I felt when I saw a guilty coward laying his crime upon a weak child’s shoulders, and that child accepting the burden eagerly, blinded to her true duty by her passionate love and gratitude for people who, in my eyes, had wronged her from the beginning.’

‘No, no,’ interposed Olive ; ‘do not be unjust.’

‘And who now,’ continued Charles, ‘were so stone blind in their pride, that they could not imagine one of their name, their family, had done this deed ; they could not perceive the poor girl they half despised was a martyr, piling on her innocent heart all the tortures from which she saved them.’

As he spoke, Olive opened the window and stole out into the garden, leaving him to praise her to Florian alone.

‘She cannot endure to hear a word against them,’ said Charles, sadly ; ‘but Miss Langley, you will, I know, agree with me in thinking Sir Hilton Trewavas a poor fellow, utterly unworthy of the wonderful love which that girl has given him.’

'There is only one worthy of it,' said Florian, and her eyes filled with tears, 'and that is yourself.'

Charles Vigo glanced at her agitated face, and a deep colour stole over his own.

'I have only done what any man with a man's heart would have tried to do,' he answered: 'and Olive will never love me for it. I do not deceive myself in that respect: and I have never looked forward to that as my reward. The poor child promised to be my wife, because she had a generous idea that she ought not otherwise to make me suffer any contumely or annoyance for her sake; but never in my own heart have I held her bound by a promise made only in a spirit of self-sacrifice. If I have ever seemed to make any claim on her word, it was because otherwise I could not get her to accept the help she so much needed. And you know how she avoided all obligation; you recollect the trouble she gave you and me once to find her? I was compelled to make a claim upon her duty to save her from perishing; but not a real claim. No; Olive's is not a heart to love twice. And without her love, what would her hand be to me, Miss Langley? I should break my heart in having so cruel a gift.'

As Florian listened to his words her face grew crimson, then pale, then red again, and the brightness of a great hope lifted her spirit from its heaviness. Yet she could not speak. In her innocent self-consciousness, she fancied that the lightest word her trembling lips uttered would betray her secret. Seeing her silent, Charles Vigo began to talk more lightly.

'Here is the real hero of our story,' he said, pulling Bolster's ears. 'He brought that dreadful cord to me at the time when I sat by the pool, in a state of horror and bewilderment past telling. The sole, clear feeling that I had was the one that told of Olive's innocence. "But the outside world has not watched her as I have—does not know her as I do," I said to myself; "and this cord which she lost by the pool, yesterday, will accuse her." Miss Langley, I had seen her lose it. Flinging it angrily from her hand as she passed the water, it slipped from her waist and fell to the ground, and I saw it lying on the grass as she disappeared beneath the beeches. But what would it avail to tell this?

Would it prove that she had not returned to the bower, and used it as an instrument of murder? "Oh, give me time!" I cried within myself, "and I will prove her innocent; but I must have time. Ah, good dog! take this to its mistress." I rose; I patted the dog—I talked to him, and pointed the way to Trewavas. I am convinced Bolster understood every word I said, for he set off at full speed, not by the path, but beneath the trees; and you have heard with what sagacity he obeyed all my instructions.'

'But were you not afraid of his being met?' asked Florian.

'Of course I was,' he replied; 'but I saw it would make things no worse, and the chance of his success was worth trying for. My wish was to keep Olive's name entirely out of the affair; and you can imagine my distress and amazement when I found I had sent her the cord in vain, and she was almost courting suspicion instead of repelling it. But when I saw this—when I listened to her prayer to me not to say she was in the wood—when I heard her appeal to Lady Trewavas to prove she had not quitted her chamber, the truth came to me like a flash of lightning.'

'And not earlier, not instantly, at the pool?' cried Florian.

'Scarcely,' said Charles. 'The idea had seemed too dreadful, too wild then, and I thought of the foreign sailors on board the Brazilian ship in the harbour. But now it was different; Olive would not take suspicion on herself to save one of them—would not hide she was in the wood to avoid giving evidence against one of these. She would do this only for a Trewavas. She would bear this load of sorrow and contumely herself, to spare them, but not for any other living creature; of that I was certain. At first I did Sir Hilton Trewavas the honour,' he added, a little bitterly, 'of suspecting him, not thinking him, you see, so grand a knight as poor Olive does.'

'Oh, that was horrible—too horrible!' exclaimed Florian.

'Not more horrible than his suspecting Olive,' continued Charles Vigo. 'But as the shadow came into my mind, it fitted; it did but pass through. I think I have always done him justice.'

Florian was silent; she thought more kindly of Sir Hilton than did Charles, and she believed, when the fumes

of jealousy were cleared away, he would see him in a nobler light than he did now.

'Go on,' she said, eagerly—'tell me all the rest.'

'Then I spoke privately to the quick inspector, whose observant eyes had met mine once or twice,' said Charles; 'and I found that he had laid his finger mentally on John Trewavas. "But there is not a tittle of evidence," I said. "That young lady, Miss Varcoe, can speak, if she pleases," he answered. "But she is taking suspicion on herself instead," I continued; "and I know her—she will die rather than speak. I want to spare her; indeed, I have promised her she shall not be called upon. You see what a cruel task it would be for her!" "Then we must do without her," said the man; "and meanwhile, sir, get her out of the way, for Mr. Eslick is blind with self-conceit, and Sir Anthony Roskelly is bent on getting a victim." Then we hunted up that rascal Skews between us, Miss Langley; and—and I think that's all.'

'Except all your generous zeal in righting the innocent—except all your courage, coolness, and devotion,' said Florian.

'Never mind that,' returned Charles Vigo, whistling to Bolster. 'What do you say to a stroll in the garden, Miss Langley?'

CHAPTER XXVI.

Was John Trewavas sane or insane? This was the great question of the day; and doctors, as usual, differed. Each had his theory to propound. Men, wise in their craft, called together from all parts of the kingdom by Sir Hilton, only added to his distress by their diversity of opinion; and yet he could scarcely wonder at their perplexity, for John, often for days together, appeared as rational as the sanest man that watched him. His health, too, seemed no worse, though he was worn to a very shadow. But the time now drew near when his doom would depend on the belief or disbelief of twelve men, on the evidence of those doctors and witnesses

whom his family had called together to prove him mad ; and as the days went by it was no marvel that Sir Hilton's anxiety grew upon him like a fever. At last it was here—the day he had so long dreaded ; and John Trewavas, held up by his brother's arm, stood at the bar, and pleaded guilty, in a weak voice, low and sad.

Then his counsel started up, and demanded that a jury should be empanelled, to try if he was in a fit state of mind to plead. This was done, and throughout the dreary hours counsel examined and cross-examined, and doctors argued and differed ; but long before the day had closed, the great point at issue undecided still, the prisoner had fallen exhausted and been carried away in the warder's arms.

'Hilton,' said John, suddenly, as his brother sat by his bed, 'have I spared myself any shame, any pain that my crime should bring upon me ?'

'None, John, none,' he replied ; and Sir Hilton turned away his face from the haggard eyes looking into his.

'I know there is something wrong here,' said John, putting his hand upon his head ; 'but I have not tried to hide it—I have not sought to escape through that. No ; let them find me guilty, if they will. I have suffered the prison patiently—Hilton, have I not ? Say yes, say patiently.'

'Patiently, John ? Yes. God help me !—yes,' answered his brother, holding in his pain.

'And to-day, Hilton,' said John, clutching at his hand, eagerly, 'I did not shrink from that public shame. I let the iron sink into my soul—say, patiently, humbly—did I bear it so ?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Hilton, 'humbly. God have mercy on you, John !—you bore it humbly.'

John's haggard eyes lighted up at this with some wild hope.

'I came home to suffer all this—voluntarily to suffer it,' he said, excitedly ; 'that was not cowardly, Hilton. And now will she—will she let me see her again ? Will she think this enough ? Can she forgive me now ? Is there anything more that I can suffer—anything more that I can do, so that she may stretch out her hand to me, when I die, and say, "John, I forgive you my death ?"'

Sir Hilton's tears were falling, but he brushed them away,

and answered steadily, 'You have done all that man can do, John, to expiate your guilt; you must go now to that great, that divine sacrifice for pardon.'

John was silent; but Sir Hilton saw by his lips that he prayed, and for a minute not a sound crept through the cell. Then again he began to murmur softly, as if to himself, 'The poor—it is written: He will have mercy on the poor. Who is poorer than I?—stripped of rank and honour, stained with guilt, covered with shame, stricken with remorse and sorrow—and not always having a mind to know these things, because of the cloud upon my brain—the mist that comes down and puts my thoughts in confusion, bringing me childish tears and idiot laughter. Oh, I am poor, indeed! Am I one of the poor to whom the promise is given? Say, Hilton, is there light?—is there hope?'

For answer, Sir Hilton stooped and put his arm around him; and John, with a wild look, burst forth with a loud voice, singing: "I will praise Him with my mouth, for He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

Then subsiding into sudden calm, he turned his eyes upon his brother in pleading agony. 'Oh, Hilton, is there nothing I can do?—nothing more?—no reparation I can make?'

'My poor brother, be at peace,' replied Sir Hilton. 'What can you do?'

'Nothing through all eternity,' murmured John—'nothing! Oh, blot it out! blot it out! Let it not be written against me for ever. Let Eleanor say she forgives me—else I cannot die.'

'Here is a letter, sir, for your brother,' said a man, opening the harsh door softly.

Sir Hilton took it mechanically, but turned pale as he saw Mrs. Maristowe's writing on the envelope. John seized the letter with his thin eager fingers, and tore it open with a frenzied look. The paper was blurred with tears.

'I forgive you,' wrote Mrs. Maristowe, 'strange as it may seem to say so, I forgive you my daughter's death. I came into Court to-day, and saw your face; and having seen it, with all the pain and madness on it, I write again that I forgive you. I do not look upon you as the most guilty, and I wish others——'

But Mrs. Maristowe had here erased her injudicious words, and, with a prayer for his peace and pardon, she concluded abruptly.

‘She has listened to my entreaty at last,’ said John, with clasped hands. ‘Pardon and peace!—she prays for these for me! Peace!—can peace come at her cry?’

‘Then you have her forgiveness, John?’ said Sir Hilton. ‘I am glad of that.’

‘I wrote to her weeks—many weeks ago,’ said John, wearily, ‘confessing the truth, and imploring her pardon; but she would not answer me. Peace!—peace! She says peace now. If the mother forgives, will the daughter forgive me likewise? Hilton! Hilton! is the gulf narrowed?—will this pardon bridge it? And what I have done and suffered, will that count for a little?—a breadth of a man’s hand—a step nearer to her? I might have died, you know, and spared myself all this: twice I loaded the pistol that would have ended all. But that would have widened the gulf—do you see, Hilton?—it would have widened it.’

‘Try to sleep, John,’ said Sir Hilton, bending over him anxiously; ‘you are weary and excited.’

‘Soon—I shall sleep soon,’ said John. Then he took Mrs. Maristowe’s letter of pardon, and, putting it on his pillow, rested his haggard cheek on it. ‘I think I can sleep now. Peace!—peace!—peace! She said peace—she prayed for peace. When I die, bury me in the prison-yard in a nameless grave—that will be another step—another link in the bridge of pardon. I see the gulf narrower. Put the letter on my heart, Hilton: let it lie there when I am dead. Peace!—peace! Let us pray for peace.’

The word peace died away softly on his fevered lips, and his last breath passed with it. For one moment a deep grey shadow over the wan worn face, a fixed look, and all was still. Mad or sane, responsible or irresponsible, the spirit of John Trewavas was gone to its Maker.

* * * * *

In her grief and bereavement Mrs. Maristowe had not been without comforters. The terrible crime which had struck her childless, surrounded her sorrow with a halo, the glory of which was wonderfully consoling to her self-love. Never

had she been so visited, so sought after, as she was now. Great ladies jolted over fifteen miles of cross-roads to see her, and county magnates vied with each other in civilities, invitations, and condolences. All this made life pleasant to her; moreover, the death of that fair young daughter rendered her the richest lady in the land, and the report of her great wealth brought to her suitors, that might otherwise have been Eleanor's. At forty-two a lover is not unwelcome; so amid flattery, sympathy, and suitors, Mrs. Maristowe was in no danger of breaking her heart, even over the untimely grave of an only child. Half her liking for John had arisen from the instinct which told her he was a weak man, who, as a son-in-law, would yield to her every power and influence which the Maristowe property gave; while Sir Hilton, on the contrary, would be lord of himself, his lands, and his wife. In visiting Trewavas, she intended John to be her son-in-law; but, thwarted in this hope by Sir Hilton, she grew to dislike him, and to hate Olive Varcoe, whose passionate, generous nature was antagonistic to hers in every fibre and vein. Olive, not being cut to the conventional pattern of her goodness, was incomprehensible, and, therefore, a creature to be feared and hated.

From that cruel summer, through the autumn and winter, and on to spring, she had vented this hate of Olive in bitter words, outspoken and whispered. In castles and mansions, towns and villages, a shadow following Mrs. Maristowe's steps had gathered round Olive's name. To lords and ladies, squires and dames, she had wept weak tears and uttered weak regrets over her inability to punish the wicked woman whose hand had been guilty of her daughter's death. Her feelings, then, can be imagined when John's incoherent letter acquainted her with the truth. He had done it, and Olive had borne all this contumely in generous pity and in generous love.

As Mrs. Maristowe read John's wild, despairing words and cries for pardon—as she read his entreaties to her to do Olive justice—she felt as Haman felt when he grasped the bridle of the horse that bore Mordecai the Jew, and proclaimed through the royal city that thus should it be done 'unto the man whom the king delighted to honour.' But she would not take the part of Haman on herself, unless

obliged to do so ; so she meanly hid the letter, and kept its contents a secret. She tried to think that she did not believe it ; she told herself John was gone mad with grief, and this self-accusation was a thing not uncommon in the insane.

When Vivian Damerel came to her, he found her querulous and excited, and, until John's confession was published, still unwilling to believe the truth ; and when belief was forced on her, she exclaimed, passionately, that Olive had incited John to the deed, in order to be Sir Hilton's wife ; and the more indignant Damerel grew at this, the more bitter she became against them.

'I came hither,' said Damerel, 'to entreat you to bear witness to John's gentleness and kindness, when sane. Your testimony will have great weight with a jury ; and surely you will not refuse to show this pity to the family, whose affliction is even greater than your own.'

'Let Sir Hilton promise me that he will never marry Olive Varcoe, and I'll say, what I think—that John is quite incapable of crime, when in his senses,' she replied ; 'but without this promise, I will not come forward. I'll never help that girl to reap the reward of her sins.'

'Sins !' cried Damerel. 'She has been the victim of all our prejudices, hate, and injustice. I am ashamed of my part in the matter ; show some generous shame for yours, Mrs. Maristowe.'

But Mrs. Maristowe was hard as stone ; all her tears and pity were for herself, and all her shame for other people. At length, however, Vivian persuaded her to come down to Bodmin to watch the trial ; and once there he easily prevailed on her, through her curiosity, to enter the Court. Then she saw John, and seeing all the madness and despair upon his face, her heart smote her with pity, and that unanswerd prayer of his for pardon came back to her memory, as the desperate cry of a perishing soul. She no longer doubted his madness, and madness is worthy of pity and pardon, even though its hand be red with violence. When he fell senseless, she hurried away, his pale face haunting her ; and then with tears of mercy dropping on the paper, she wrote the letter of forgiveness, which calmed the agony of John's despair and death.

'Tell Sir Hilton to call on me to-morrow,' she said to

Damerel; 'I will swear there was no quieter, gentler, or more harmless being on earth than that poor creature; and he must have been mad indeed when this deed——'

Tears stopped her; and used as he was to tears in Mrs. Maristowe, Vivian Damerel pitied her now, and, glad to do her behest while her heart was merciful, he hurried away to find Sir Hilton. Thus it happened, that as the great gates of that doleful house wherein his brother lay were opened for Sir Hilton Trewavas to pass out, he saw Vivian Damerel standing in the street.

'I have been waiting for you,' said Damerel. 'Mrs. Maristowe——' But looking on Sir Hilton's face, he checked himself. 'What has happened?' he asked, in an awed tone.

'My brother is dead,' answered Sir Hilton. 'He has appealed from man's judgment to God's. May he find mercy!'

There was a moment's silence; then Vivian grasped his hand, and said, softly, 'His death is a relief—a blessing. Do not think me hard in saying so.'

Sir Hilton did not attempt to reply to this; he simply bowed his head, and they walked on a few steps in silence.

'I came hither with Mrs. Maristowe,' continued Damerel. 'I could scarcely refuse her this kindness, though the task is painful. And she is not generous; she shows no contrition for the mistaken judgments of the past. She even persists in her cruel dislike of Miss Varcoe and yourself.'

'That she should dislike me is natural,' said Sir Hilton. 'What is her message for me?'

'One that it is useless to deliver now,' answered Damerel. 'She desired me to say she would be a witness on your brother's behalf.'

'Her kindness comes too late,' responded Sir Hilton, bitterly; 'and a few days ago it was offered to me through Sir Anthony Roskelly, in the shape of an insult. She would speak for John, she said, if I would give her an assurance that no marriage would ever take place between me and Miss Varcoe.'

'She said this also to me,' said Damerel; 'but I could not bring you such a message.'

'Olive has borne too much for me and mine,' continued

Sir Hilton, 'for me now to suffer any man or woman on earth to name her to me, save with all the honour and reverence that are her due. But least of all will I endure a word against her from Mrs. Maristowe.'

'You are right,' said Damerel. 'She and I especially owe to Miss Varcoe a reparation which, on my part, I feel can never be paid in full.'

'But Mrs. Maristowe will have no such feelings,' returned Sir Hilton. 'Hers is a nature incapable of comprehending a soul like Olive's. Tell her I felt too much for her grief to ask her to testify to my unhappy brother's unflinching gentleness when sane; but had she done this at first, and voluntarily, I should have been most grateful. Such words from Eleanor's mother would have been worth much to me; but I would never have consented to accept this justice from her lips on any condition, least of all on one involving Olive's name. Tell her, also, that all the sin and all the suffering we laid upon that innocent head will go down now into John's nameless grave; and for his sake, and because she pardoned him, I pardon her this last insult to Olive, sent to me through the venomous tongue of an enemy. This is my farewell to Mrs. Maristowe.'

Let it be ours, also, unless our readers care to hear that she married the needy brother of a marquis, and that a son was born to her, whose pattering feet and childish laughter chased away the sound of Eleanor's name from the halls of Maristowe Court.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was a fortnight after John's death, and Olive, clad in deep mourning, sat upon a great rock by the sea-shore, looking westward. Her eyes were fixed on the dying splendour of the setting sun, whose glory trailed along the sea in lines of purple, crimson, and gold. Dazzled by these, she did not see creeping near the shore—now flashing into the light, now darkling in the shadows—a small boat, impelled by a single rower. But her tiny figure, conspicuous in her black gar-

ments, stood out darkly against the glories of sea and sky, visible to him as a beacon might be; and, with hands somewhat unsteady, he rowed swiftly towards her. Then, as the keel grated on the sands, she turned, and saw Sir Hilton Trewavas. He came towards her hurriedly; and as she rose, and would have sprung down from the rock, his hand seized hers, and aided her. It was but the touch of a moment; yet her heart beat, and her cheek crimsoned, while Sir Hilton grew pale to the lips.

'Do you hold out your hand to help me now?' said Olive, a little wistfully—'you would not touch mine less than a year ago, even to say a last farewell.'

'Be cruel to me if you will, Olive,' he answered. 'I long to hear reproaches from your lips. I wish you would speak bitterly to me; then I might have a hope.'

Olive looked at him in the same wistful way; and, as her eyes half filled with tears, she turned her face from him.

'Always the same cold gentleness,' he said, in a despairing voice. 'Oh for a tone of the old waywardness, a flash of the old passion! Shall I never, never see it back?'

'No,' answered Olive, sadly; 'it is gone for ever. Sorrow has broken my spirit to the yoke. I shall never vex the world again with the fire of my tongue.'

There was something in her tone that spoke of a broken heart, and Sir Hilton looked at her till his eyes grew dim.

'Olive,' he said, pleadingly, 'listen to me, I implore you. Do not send me away from you for ever. Be my wife, and come with me to Italy for your health's sake. You are ill—you are weak; you seem to me the shadow of yourself.'

His voice shook, and he held his hand towards her imploringly as she shrunk away from him against the rock.

'I cannot be your wife,' she replied. 'I am engaged to Charles Vigo. I have promised to be his wife. You heard the promise down yonder at the little inn when—when you refused me your love.'

'Pity me, Olive!' said Sir Hilton, passionately. 'I was blind then. Is this your forgiveness, to remind me of that bitter time? Heavens! what right has this man to steal you from me?—to rob me of all I hold dear on earth?'

'You gave him the right,' returned Olive, sorrowfully; 'all that woman could say to man, I said to you that night.'

I did not turn to him, till all my prayers to you had failed me.'

Sir Hilton hid his face in his hands; he could not answer her.

'And even then,' continued Olive, more softly, 'it was for John's sake I went. And shall I be so selfish now as to leave the man who helped me? Had I a right to make his name a byword, and heap the world's contempt on him, and then forsake him? No; he has suffered for me. I will be true to my promise to him.'

'Suffered!' exclaimed Sir Hilton, catching at the word. 'Is it because he has suffered for your sake that you will not desert him? Then you must not forsake me. I tell you it is I who have suffered—suffered horribly. And if we speak of sufferings, Olive, what right had you to suffer for me?—what right to load me with this burden of gratitude, of wonder, of love, and now thrust me away from your life, telling me I shall bear this burden for ever, and you will take no payment—you will endure no return of love from me?'

'I cannot help it,' said Olive, with a quivering voice; 'I belong to Charles Vigo now. But do me justice, Hilton; own that I tried to spare you this pain. Remember how I pleaded with you that night, with what tears and anguish, and with what patience I bore your scorn.'

'Olive, you madden me!' cried Sir Hilton. 'Is it comforting to know that this misery is my own fault? And why not have said to me, then, "I am innocent?"'

'You would not have believed me,' replied Olive; 'and to explain the circumstances surrounding me would have been to denounce John. I thought it better to bear your hate than to see you dishonoured; and to know the truth would have brought on you two terrible alternatives—each one a dishonour.'

'You would not give me the choice of either,' returned Sir Hilton, bitterly. 'You let me act in ignorance—reject you in ignorance.'

'Could I dare to give you such a choice?' asked Olive. 'Could I put before you the alternative of being the denouncer of your own brother, or the coward who permitted a girl to take upon herself his guilt? It would have been a shame to help me to flee, knowing the truth.'

'You are right, Olive,' said Sir Hilton. 'I should have been a coward, indeed, if I had kept your innocence within my lips, even for a moment.'

'Then, you see,' she continued, mournfully, 'it was impossible, of all men, to explain the truth to you. Have we said enough? Let me go now. This only pains me.'

'And you will leave me like this?' he said, with increasing passion—'you who, for my sake, have suffered your innocence to be branded with crime; you who have bowed your head to the outpourings of a blind world's wrath, to save me from sorrow? Oh, Olive, you cannot, you shall not leave me.'

'I must—I must!' returned Olive. 'Charles Vigo took me with that brand on me—gloried in so taking me—bore with me the blind wrath and hate of an unseeing world—suffered for me. I will not desert him now—I will not!' she cried, impetuously.

'There breaks forth the old passion, Olive, but not for me,' said Sir Hilton, in a sad voice.

'No, not for you,' she answered, and her face flushed a sudden crimson. 'I have no right now to break into passionate tones for you. I told you on the night we parted I would never ask you for love again. To spare your pride, I gave it up, and put my hand in Charles Vigo's, and bound myself to him for ever. Sir Hilton, on that day you saved your family name, but you lost me.'

Once more Olive turned away as if to leave him; but he stood before her with outstretched arms, his face pale and resolute.

'You shall not forsake me thus!' he said, with desperate calmness. 'I have loved you too long to let you go, and you have loved me. It is for me you have suffered, not for Charles Vigo; and by the mark of your sufferings now upon your face, I claim you. You shall never be any man's wife but mine!'

'Do you threaten me?' said Olive. She smiled as she spoke, half sadly, half proudly.

'You smile, Olive!' he cried, eagerly catching at hope. 'Then you do not mean to forsake me utterly?'

'I do not forsake you,' she replied; 'we shall always be friends, and Bosvigo is very near: we shall even be neighbours.'

Olive said this with her eyes bent on the ground, and a faint colour stealing into her cheeks. She had a thought in saying it which Sir Hilton did not understand. He fancied it was said cruelly, with the intention to wound.

‘Olive, you have grown bitter to me,’ he cried, angrily. ‘You insult me, when you offer me friendship and neighbourly civility instead of your love. I will have neither. You might have spared me this last insult of neighbourliness, Olive.’

Olive glanced at him reproachfully, but he read her look wrong.

‘Yes, I know,’ he said, ‘how I insulted you in the old time—I know I denied love and offered charity—I know that before your eyes I promised my hand to another woman, but I did *not* know that you could stoop to take revenge for all this.’

‘I revenged myself long ago,’ said Olive, softly. ‘There is no vengeance in my heart now.’

‘You revenged yourself,’ he answered fiercely; ‘but how? By heaping benefits on me beneath which I writhe. You chose to bow your soul into the dust for me, and despised me while you did it.’

‘No, no,’ said Olive, gently. ‘I pitied—I—I loved you.’

‘Loved me,’ repeated Sir Hilton, bitterly, ‘and bound yourself to another man! I do not want such love as that, Olive; I ask your whole soul.’

‘I cannot give it,’ she said, steadily. ‘I have no right to love you now any more than you had to love me when you were bound to Eleanor Maristowe.’

Sir Hilton’s face paled as she spoke.

‘Your words are just, Olive,’ he said, ‘though their sting is bitter. But I have a right to love you now; and you know, you have always known, that my love for that poor girl was as a pale icicle compared to my love for you. A moment ago you spoke of giving Charles Vigo your life, because he had suffered for you. Then you cannot deny to me the same right. I give my life to you because you have suffered for me. You may hate me if you will, but you cannot prevent my doing this—you cannot prevent my choosing exile, and solitude, and sorrow, for your sake. Let the Trewavases die with me, and let the name perish, since

Olive Varcoe will not ennoble it by mingling her blood with theirs.'

There was a day when Olive had never thought to hear such words as these from Sir Hilton; but now she listened to them in mournful calmness.

'Do for me what you will,' she said. 'I cannot deny to you the poor privilege of sorrowing for my sake. Now let me say farewell: the sky grows dark.'

'It is all darkness for me now, and I go out into a dark world,' said Sir Hilton. 'Olive, your calmness maddens me! You speak to me as Eleanor Maristowe would, and not like Olive Varcoe.'

'Leave me, I entreat you,' returned Olive, sadly. 'Do you know, that great happiness and great sorrow are alike calm? Eleanor's calm was the first, mine the last.'

She gave him her hand as she spoke, and as he clasped it his anguish and despair burst all bonds. The thought that, when this hold relaxed, he should never grasp her hand again, made his heart quail.

'Olive, Olive,' he cried, as he drew her towards him, 'is my misery nothing to you? Will you give yourself to a man you do not love?'

'You try me too much,' murmured Olive, reproachfully. 'I have given my word to Charles Vigo. I belong to him. If he wishes me to be his wife, I shall marry him. I shall never be yours, unless given to you by his hand.'

'And you say this to the man for whom you have nearly died!' cried Sir Hilton, desperately—'to me, for whose sake you endured in silence such agony and such shame!'

'It was not such agony as you think,' said Olive, honestly. 'I had my innocence to uphold me, and the joy of knowing that I was suffering in your stead.'

'Oh, Olive, Olive! and I have lost you!' he cried; then his voice broke, and he stood silent, looking in her face with a sorrow fast growing into despair.

Olive strove to relinquish her hand from his grasp.

'Let me go!' she said again, gently. But he did not heed her words.

'Olive, you have heaped coals of fire on my head,' he said, in a broken voice, 'and now you desert me, and leave me desolate!'

'No, no,' she returned. 'You have your home, your name, your pride : all these, which I suffered so much to save, are yours—unscathed, untouched by John's sorrow and sin.'

'These are nothing to me, compared to you,' he answered, in anguish.

Olive smiled wistfully ; it was so strange to hear him say such words.

'Do not tell me so,' she continued. 'Leave me the consolation of thinking that, when I took away from you my love, I left you what you valued more—your pride. Let me believe that, on the whole, you chose well that night, when you held fast to this, and rejected me. Remember, had you lifted me to your heart then, you must have shared my terrible secret and my misery—you must have borne shame and dishonour ; for John, though at times shaken in reason, was surely not altogether mad then, and if suspicion had fallen on him instead of on me he must have perished beneath the law. Comfort yourself, then, that in the time I gained for him, his insanity became an undisputed fact, and you have been spared a great shame and agony. So your loss of me is in reality a gain : your pride is saved, your name is saved, and you have lost only Olive Varcoe—a slight loss, Hilton, for I am but a penniless girl, a dependent, a mere poor relation, unworthy the honour of your name. I know all that now. Believe me, I have learned in the hard world the distance there is between us.'

She spoke fast, saying all this with meekness and true humility ; but to Sir Hilton it seemed that she had chosen words purposely to torture him.

'Go on, Olive,' he said, vehemently. 'Why not stab me to the heart at once ?'

Olive raised her eyes to his face with sad surprise. It was so new to her to be valued, honoured, lamented by Sir Hilton Trewavas, that she could not understand this change in him. The fact was, she did not think much of what she had done, it had seemed to her so natural and right to suffer for her great love's sake. But now, as Sir Hilton's reproachful tone fell on her ear, she blushed painfully, as the thought struck her, that if indeed his love had at last out-grown his pride, then he truly had no consolation for her loss, and her words must have appeared to him half cruel, half scornful.

'Oh, Hilton,' she said, clinging to him with both hands now, 'I did not mean to wound you. I did not say this to remind you that it was for your sake that I put my hand into Charles Vigo's. I thought to console you by——'

'By showing me,' interrupted Sir Hilton, 'that Olive Varcoe had saved for me my cold, dead pride, in depriving me of her living loving self. I am fitly punished, Olive; say no more. It was my cruelty, my hardness, my blindness that forced you to throw yourself on Charles Vigo for the help and the faith that I had not soul enough to give.'

'Oh, Hilton, Hilton,' murmured Olive, 'I thought I was saving for you what you loved best. I thought that Olive Varcoe was nothing to you, compared to your name. And it was not till I had read John's letter, saying that, unless I accepted aid, he would place me in safety, and I saw there was no way left to save you and him but by escaping—it was not till then that I sent to Charles Vigo. Though you hated me, though you scorned me, though your cruel thoughts of me made me shudder, I would have kept my love for you if I could. It was for your sake I tore it out of my heart at last: for your sake I flung it away, and would not let it stay me in the path I had chosen. Oh, do not tell me now that I did wrong, and you would rather have kept me than have saved your brother!'

Sir Hilton could not tell her this, and he was ashamed to say that he wanted both. He could not reconcile himself to the fact that he had lost Olive—he could not believe it; he writhed under the thought. She had been his, always his; he knew now that he had never intended to part with her, and, like a man looking into some fearful pit, he recoiled from the void of his own life, deprived of her. Yet, remembering all that Olive's great love had spared him, he grew calmer, and in his heart he felt that Charles Vigo was more worthy of her than he. Humbled, softened by this thought, he spoke less selfishly.

'Do not grieve, Olive,' he said; 'you did well—you have always done well. Mine was the sin: mine be the punishment—mine the loss. You are taken from my life for ever; and my honour and my name are left to me in cold pride, in famine of the heart, and in loneliness. Henceforth I am a solitary man. I will never seek to love or to be loved.'

Olive, you have pledged your troth to a good and true man, who succoured you in time of need. Bitter as it is to me to say it, I know it would be ignoble in you to desert him now, especially for a man so infinitely beneath him in true nobility as I am—a man, Olive, who basely forsook you, and, unable to comprehend your nobleness, dared in his poor, mean thoughts to stain your innocence with the crime committed by one of his own blood.'

Olive was weeping; but she put her hand upon his lips to stay his words, and he caught it, and pressed it there, kissing it many times.

'I am glad,' said Olive, falteringly, 'that you can at last see my duty as I do. I have pledged my faith to Charles Vigo for ever. I will not turn even one lingering look to the past. My life is his to dispose of as he will. He merits this from me, and more.'

Then rousing herself from her feebleness, she drew back from Sir Hilton's clasp, and covering her eyes with her hand, she entreated him to leave her.

In the fierceness and misery of his love, Sir Hilton longed to touch her lips, and he bent towards her, half hoping she would yield him this last caress.

'Olive,' he said, in a trembling voice, 'you once asked me for a kiss that I would not give; and then we parted, as I thought, for ever. Now we part again, but not in anger; and you will not, I hope, refuse me this last sign of your forgiveness.'

Olive was silent; but she turned away from his gaze, and waved her hand in farewell.

At that moment he thought of her as he had seen her at the little inn, kneeling at his feet, imploring him for a word, a look of kindness, and his soul sank, and the desire to hold her only for an instant to his heart came upon him fiercely like a fever.

'Olive, you cannot, you shall not refuse me!' he cried passionately. 'This is my last request; when I see you again you will be Charles Vigo's wife.'

The anguish in his voice rang through Olive's soul, but she answered him calmly—

'I am as much bound in honour now as I shall be then,' she said. 'I should feel it to be a treachery if I yielded to

your wish. Farewell, Hilton. May Heaven bless you! Tell Lady Trewavas Olive Varcoe will never forget her, or cease to thank her for her kindness to an orphan.'

'Kindness!' repeated Sir Hilton, bitterly. 'You were the light of our home, Olive, and we goaded you into fury.'

'Good-bye,' said Olive again.

She held out her hand—coldly he thought. He took it, wrung it in a desperate clinging grasp, dropped it, and turned away without a word.

And this was their parting. But, as he rowed away, Sir Hilton kept his gaze riveted on Olive, till a mist came down from the evening sky between her and him, hiding each from the other's sight.

An hour after this, Sir Hilton Trewavas, with a haggard face, came and stood silently by Lady Trewavas's chair.

'Have you seen her? Have you asked her?' she said, eagerly.

'I have seen her—I have asked her—and we are parted for ever,' replied Sir Hilton.

Lady Trewavas sighed deeply.

'Then may Heaven help us!' she said; 'for you and I, my son, have lost the love of a noble heart.'

It was an hour later still than this before Florian found Olive by the sea shore. She was weary with weeping, and her face was white as snow. Ah! her love was always greater than theirs, and so her grief was greater.

'If I had kissed him,' she said, 'I could not have let him go. Oh! I am glad I conquered—glad I kept my faith.'

And saying this, she bent her face upon the rocks, and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'AND all is forgotten and forgiven, old fellow?' said Vivian Damerel, holding Charles Vigo by both hands, and looking much as if he wanted to hug him instead.

'Well, Olive forgives you,' returned Charles; 'and, after that, I can scarcely call you out and shoot you, though I

must own you deserve it; for in spite of all my expostulations, you hastened to join the army of donkeys and blunderers.'

'Write me down an ass,' responded Vivian, gaily. 'But in these unromantic days, who would suppose that a little creature would take upon herself, in innocence, such a burden of sin and sorrow?'

'Who would suppose it?' echoed Charles, sadly. 'He that had eyes to see her genius and her love would guess it and understand it; but the evil-thinkers of this generation, to whom it is so easy to believe in crime, so hard to believe in good, they would not suppose it. Their dull imaginations could comprehend guilt, but not a noble deed.'

'I accept your rebuke,' said Vivian, 'and I stifle magnanimously all the cynical philosophy rising to my tongue. You mean to say that if we had given Miss Varcoe credit for a good motive, we should have instantly gained a clue to her conduct, and we should have rushed at the truth at once, as you did.'

'Precisely so,' returned Charles.

'I suppose they have changed their opinions now respecting the fitness of Olive Varcoe to be Lady Trewavas, and she will marry Sir Hilton soon?' observed Vivian.

'Olive is engaged to me,' responded Charles, in a hard tone; 'and if she does not refuse Sir Hilton, I shall never forgive her. But I have no fear: she is honour itself; she will make him understand his position if he speaks to her. Come on to Bosvigo, Vivian, and see her; and the Langleys are there—you know them.'

This conversation took place at Trewavas church-town, at which spot the fastidious Vivian Damerel had chosen to take up his temporary abode. His motive was a double one; he wanted to see Florian—he longed to be reconciled to his friend. And now he caught eagerly at this invitation, and before nightfall he was installed as a guest at Bosvigo. What he felt in seeing Florian again this history will not chronicle, though it records a short conversation he held with Olive, they two being alone.

'Miss Varcoe,' he said, 'when I look on your friend's face, I dare not hope; but tell me, shall I speak to her again?'

'I think not,' answered Olive. 'I think it would only

pain her as well as yourself.' Vivian was silent a moment. It is so hard for a man to play the rejected 'spoon.' But, conquering his embarrassment, he said, nervously, 'If Miss Langley rejected me for some one more worthy of her, I would bear it patiently; but I fear she has formed some unworthy attachment.'

'Florian is incapable of an ignoble love,' said Olive, warmly.

'But, Miss Varcoe,' said he, 'she almost confessed to me at Paris that she loved some one whom it was impossible for her to marry, and I know she met this man clandestinely.'

'Is it possible you do not know whom she met, and that it was for my sake she met him?' cried Olive. 'Is it possible you do not know it was Charles Vigo?'

'Charles Vigo!' exclaimed Vivian. 'And is it Charles she loves?'

'Hush!' said Olive, softly. 'I have no right to talk to you of this; but how can I help hoping that she will be happy?'

'And is he blind?' asked Vivian, dolefully. 'But he cannot remain so long; and as for me, I see now, indeed, I have no hope. Well, since I must lose Florian, I would rather yield her to Charles than to any other man on earth. Time will reconcile me, Miss Varcoe.'

'I hope so,' said Olive, kindly.

In spite of his languid tone, Vivian was pale and agitated.

'And you hope, too,' he said, 'that Charles Vigo will not continue insensible to Florian's affection? I can understand your feelings, Miss Varcoe, and your motives for that wish; and with you for my enemy, and my dearest friend for my rival, I must perforce retire from the field.'

Olive blushed deeply.

'Not your enemy, Mr. Damerel,' she said. 'Nevertheless, I do hope that Charles Vigo will eventually love the woman who loves him; and I hope this for his own sake. Florian has a whole, an unwounded heart to give him; she will make him happier than I could.'

'Yes,' returned Vivian, 'you are right.'

For a moment he seemed unable to say more; then he rose, and held out his hand to Olive.

'Miss Varcoe,' he said, 'once you deprived me of my friend, and now, through you, I lose the woman I love; but I recognise this truth, that in both instances the fault was my own. If I had been with Charles, instead of against him, I think I should not have lost Florian. One circumstance has arisen from the other.'

'But you must not think,' resumed Olive, 'that Charles and Florian met in Paris as lovers. He was searching anxiously for me; and, knowing she was my friend, he wrote to her, and——'

'I understand it all, Miss Varcoe,' interrupted Damerel; 'let us say no more.'

Strangely to all, except Olive and Florian, the next post brought Vivian news which called him away on urgent business, and the same business took him on a long tour. And he, the languid unbeliever—he who had sat always in the 'seat of the scornful'—chose for his travelling ground the land of Syria and Palestine. There, where the mighty in faith have left footsteps for all time, he wandered to and fro, dimly wondering, with soul half awakened, half longing to slumber in darkness again.

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Mrs. Langley was preparing to go back to Ireland; and Olive, in much pain and perplexity, watched Florian's cheek grow paler day by day. During their long visit to Bosvigo, Charles had uttered not a word to Olive of love, but neither had he in any way released her from her promise. Bound by this, she had answered Sir Hilton as we have seen; but through this anxious and uncertain time she suffered much, and her great longing for Florian's happiness added to the fever of her mind. There was perfect confidence between the two girls; indeed, without this mutual confidence and affection, Florian would not have stayed at Bosvigo. It was Olive who urged her to remain—Olive who encouraged her to have hope.

'Oh how glad I am you love him!' she had said to Florian. 'I shall not reproach myself so bitterly now; I shall not tell my heart, in anger, how hard it is that it will not give him love. I shall bestow on him a gift a million times better than myself—I shall give him Florian.'

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And Florian had at last ceased to answer, 'My dear Olive, he will never love me;' she had changed it to, 'When will he see how much I care for him?—when will he see that you, Olive, cannot love him?'

And Olive answered, 'Let us have patience. Oh, Florian! you are my only consolation and hope. I trust in you to give him all the devotion, the tenderness that my hard heart withholds.'

Thus the friends waited, both seeing that, until Charles Vigo himself set Olive free, it was impossible she could do aught but hold herself bound to him by every tie of gratitude and of honour.

It was in the wood near Trewavas that Charles spoke at last. He led Olive away from the others into that little leafy glade where he had found her weeping so passionately on the day Eleanor died.

'Olive,' he said, 'it is just a year ago since, on this very spot, I asked you to be my wife. You remember your answer, and how, refusing me as your lover, you took me as your friend. Have I been faithful to that trust and that name?'

'You have been the truest friend that woman ever had,' replied Olive.

She clasped his hand in both hers, and trembled as she spoke. Charles Vigo looked down on the earnest face raised to his, and smiled.

'Yes, Olive,' said he, 'a friend. I have never been more to you in all this time; all my love has never won more for me than this—your friendship.'

'And the dearest, truest love that ever sister gave to brother,' cried Olive, as her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears.

'I believe you,' returned Charles, softly. 'But you have promised me more than this, Olive: you have promised to be my wife. And you gave me this promise freely and unasked.'

'I know it,' said Olive, lifting her eyes suddenly and frankly to his; 'and I give you my whole life now, as freely as I did then. Command me, dispose of me as you will, but do not ask me to do you a great wrong.'

'A wrong, Olive!' he said, mournfully.

'Yes, a wrong,' she repeated. 'Charles Vigo, a few months ago I would have married you, deeming my affection, my esteem, my gratitude enough for your happiness; now I know better—now I know I should do you a life-long injury——'

'Stop, Olive!' he interrupted, eagerly; 'hear what I have to say first, before you mistake me further. Hitherto, I have only reminded you of your own words; now let me remind you of mine. "Olive," I said, "I will never claim your promise. I will have your whole heart and soul, or only a poor remembrance. Nothing between those two." So, Olive, I would not let you marry me for gratitude, even were you as willing to do so now as you say you were months ago. No, Olive; you are free. Give me the poor remembrance, and let us say farewell.'

'I shall never say farewell to you, Charles,' said Olive, clinging to his arm with both her hands. 'I would be your wife to-morrow, only I know I should deprive you of a great happiness; I should take from you a heart that has given you its whole worship—a heart worthy even of you.'

'Who can care for a poor rough fellow like me, Olive?' asked Charles Vigo, wistfully. 'And as for yourself, my poor little sister, I never expected—I never hoped for your love. No, let me tell you all the truth now. I have permitted you to think yourself engaged to me, that I might the more easily befriend you; but in my own mind I have never considered that your words at the little inn gave me the shadow of a claim on you.'

Olive could not restrain her tears.

'You have always been a generous, a self-sacrificing friend to me,' she said.

'Not quite generous, Olive,' he answered, 'because I have delayed till now to tell you all my mind. I confess the truth. I could bear to lose you, but I could not bear that Sir Hilton Trewavas should gain you too easily. You have seen him, Olive?'

'I have seen him,' she replied, while a sudden crimson rushed to her cheeks.

'And you refused him?' asked Charles.

'Yes,' she said, faintly. 'You have a right to demand this of me, but do not question me more.'

'I will not ask you another word,' responded Charles, taking her hand kindly. 'I will only beg a favour of you, Olive.'

'You are sure I shall grant it,' said Olive; 'so ask at once.'

'Then do not tell any one,' he returned, 'for a whole year, that you and I are not affianced.'

'May I tell Florian?' she asked; 'she is so good, so true, so loving, you may let me tell her.'

'Well, Olive, tell Florian, then, if you will,' said Charles; 'and at the end of the year, when you refuse me again, as you will, Olive, then you shall tell me who it is that has given a thought to your friend Charles Vigo.'

'I promise you I will tell you that,' said Olive. 'And you will come over to Ireland to see me during the year?'

'I will come as often as I can, and you will come to Bosvigo?' he said.

Olive glanced sorrowfully towards Trewavas.

'I think not,' she answered. 'See, Charles, there lies all my life spread before me—my childhood, youth, love, sorrow, joy, and pain: all are there beneath that roof. I cannot see it and not long to be among them once more.'

Charles Vigo was silent a moment; then he put his arm around her tenderly.

'Olive,' he said, 'you have offered me all your life, and I ask you for only a year of it; but if you regret this, if you would rather go to them at once——'

'No, no!' she cried; 'I will go to Ireland with Florian. He is acting now, perhaps, from impulse—from gratitude. I would rather wait the year, Charles, I would indeed.'

And so it was settled; but when they departed the next day the old squire looked dismally at his son.

'Bosvigo is a doleful place without ladies, Charlie,' he said. 'I must have a daughter soon; and upon my word I don't care which of those two girls it is, lad, so long as it is one of 'em.'

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Charles Vigo went often to Ireland; and here, if he saw Olive Varcoe, he also saw Florian Langley; and long before the year was out, he found himself becoming very confidential with the latter.

'You see,' he said one day, 'I never meant from the beginning to make the slightest claim on Olive; but I could not resist the temptation of forcing that poor, proud, pompous baronet to suffer a little. That is why I have begged Olive to wait a year.'

'Surely Sir Hilton Trewavas has suffered a great deal?' said Florian.

'Oh dear no, Miss Langley,' remarked Charles. 'You see, through the whole affair he has been so insufferably conceited; he has thought Olive loved him with her whole soul. Now, when he hears of my going over to Ireland so often, I am sure he must gnash his teeth in secret. He thinks I come over to see Olive, you know,' concluded Charles, quite simply.

Florian blushed rosy red.

'And don't you?' she said, innocently.

'Well, I—really now, Miss Langley,' stammered Charles, 'I think that lately I—I have been coming over to see you.'

Quite frightened at what he had said, Charles Vigo felt it as an immense relief when Herbert Langley, hailing him as 'old fellow,' called to him at the moment to look at a wonderful catch of fish.

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The year was not nearly done when Charles Vigo, with his frank, honest face covered with girlish blushes, said suddenly one day to Olive, 'You once told me, Olive, there was some kind heart in the world that—that——'

'Loved you,' said Olive; 'such a true, noble, loving heart, Charles—and all yours: such a good, true, and beautiful woman! And she has loved you from the first.'

'From the first?' repeated Charles Vigo, in a bewildered way.

'Almost from the first day she saw you,' said Olive. 'I guessed it from the beginning; but I have kept the secret till now—now, when I perceive you know that a woman who loves you is dearer a thousand times than a foolish little sister, who thinks you the best brother in the world.'

'Olive,' exclaimed Charles, 'do you mean that I am so

happy?—do you mean that Florian—— Oh! I have scarcely dared to hope this!’

‘There she stands,’ said Olive, pointing to the great beeches on the lawn, where Florian stood—‘there she stands beneath the trees, where she and I sat so often last autumn, when I talked to her of you. Charles, I think she loved you even before she ever looked upon your face.’

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Olive sat beneath those same trees that evening, reading, when two shadows fell across her book, and, looking up, she saw Charles Vigo and Florian. There was no need for them to speak: she read upon their faces that henceforth those two were one for ever; and, starting up, she clasped her arms around them both, with tears of joy.

‘Olive,’ whispered Florian, ‘I shall make him write to Sir Hilton Trewavas this very night.’

‘No, no,’ said Olive, hiding her face on Florian’s shoulder, ‘not now—not yet. When you and Charles go home to dear old Bosvigo to live, that will be time enough.’

That time came in a few weeks, and Sir Hilton Trewavas, seeing the bonfires, and hearing the music and the cannon at Bosvigo, asked of the crowd gathered on the heath what it meant.

‘It’s the young squire bringing home his bride,’ cried the country people; ‘and a beautiful young lady she is.’

Sir Hilton Trewavas turned away with a face pale as ashes, and rode homewards as though his steed were goaded by a fiend. He went straight to his own room, and, with locked door, wrestled with his spirit alone. No one dared to disturb him; but in the morning a letter reached him from Bosvigo, and it was with a strangely changed face that he hurried through his toilette, and then went to Lady Trewavas’s room. His step aroused her, but she did not look through the curtains and see his face.

‘Hilton,’ she said, feebly, ‘these fits of gloom are destroying you. Why remain here to guard a poor old woman? Go abroad, and recover your health and spirits.’

‘If I would not leave you at the first, mother,’ answered Sir Hilton, ‘I am less likely than ever to leave you now. Do you know Charles Vigo is married?’

'Yes, yes,' she said, 'I know it; they told me of it last night. Don't talk of it.'

'He has married Miss Florian Langley,' said Sir Hilton.

Then Lady Trewavas started up, drew the curtains, and saw his face—a face radiant with hope, yet marked with spent sorrow and broken pride.

'Hilton, Hilton,' she cried, 'where's Olive? I want her; I have never had a moment's joy since Olive went away.'

'Olive is at Bosvigo, mother. I will go to her at once. Charles Vigo has written, begging me to come,' said Sir Hilton.

Lady Trewavas saw his emotion, and waved him away with her hand.

'Don't delay here with me,' she cried. 'Tell Olive her mother waits for her, and she has but a few sands of time ere her pilgrimage is over; so entreat her not to linger, lest she and I see each other's faces no more. Ah,' continued the old lady, as Sir Hilton's hurried hand closed the door, 'I am very thankful to Miss Florian Langley—very, I am sure.'

* * * * *

Charles Vigo entered the library at Bosvigo with Olive on his arm.

'Here is the best gift, Sir Hilton,' he said, 'that ever one man gave to another; but if I had not found Florian, I would not give you Olive.'

He was gone almost as he spoke, and those two were left alone.

'I told you we should one day be neighbours,' said Olive, timidly.

'Olive, I had not a hope then,' said Sir Hilton; 'now I am all hope. Lady Trewavas is ill and feeble; she asks for you anxiously. Will you come to Trewavas, Olive?'

'Yes, I will come,' replied Olive, in a low voice.

'As a daughter, Olive?' he asked.

She did not answer in words; but as her large dark eyes met his, Sir Hilton gathered her in his arms and kissed her.

There is nothing more to tell, for happiness has no history; and, but for sorrows, chronicles would cease. Yet to please those who like to wind up every thread, let us suppose that

Sir Anthony Roskelly, like a bloated spider, died of spite ; and that Mr. Eslick, having, from the most humane motive, beaten a little boy nearly to death, was, 'for the sake of humanity,' incarcerated in a very favourite and model prison, which he had much admired, as with the greatest gentleness and kindness it usually, through silence and solitude, ground prisoners down to the grave. The wretched Skews and his family went to New Zealand ; where, it is to be hoped, they prospered.

Mr. and Mrs. Tobias Gunning are as fond of each other as ever ; and Mr. Gunning devoutly wishes that ladies were admitted to Parliament, as then, through Priscilla, his remarkable speeches might meet with listeners and a reporter ; for, of course, that admirable woman continues to interpret the Nose with an eloquence and power of words which he unconsciously considers to be all his own.

Dick Chadwick is still in the service. He is in debt to five tailors ; but, having lately had a small legacy left him, he made up his accounts, and found he had three pounds in the world which he could call his own—a fact which raised his spirits to such an extraordinary and dangerous height, that his friends, out of pity, borrowed ten pounds of him. This had a most happy effect, and there is no longer any danger of his becoming a lunatic ; moreover, as the unpaid tailors have begun lately to use the penny post to a great extent, there is every likelihood of his soon reaching his normal state of mind.

Herbert Langley is married ; and blind Mrs. Langley lives at Bosvigo with her daughter. She and the old squire play cribbage together every night, he counting both for her and himself.

Charles Vigo is very friendly with his neighbour, Sir Hilton ; and he told his wife, the other day, that really he had been too hard on him in the old times, for Sir Hilton Trewavas was not such a bad fellow, after all.

And Olive—she who, as a poor relation, despised and dependent, had fought with fiery impatience against her chain ; she who, when galled and miserable, had been proud, fierce, and impetuous—is now the gentlest of women. When poor and hated, she was proud ; but rich and beloved, she has grown meek : and, amid all the ladies of the land, there

is not one humbler than young Lady Trewavas, once Olive Varcoe.

At the Lady's Bower, on that spot where the smooth, treacherous pool once lurked among the ferns and beeches, there stands a granite cross, inscribed thus :—

This Cross—

THE CHRISTIAN EMBLEM OF SORROW, SUFFERING, AND PARDON—
IS ERECTED BY HILTON TREWAVAS

TO THE MEMORY OF ELEANOR MARISTOWE.

Save me, O God! for the waters are come in unto my soul.

Many a wreath and garland, woven by the hands of the little children at Bosvigo and Trewavas, are laid now on this cross ; while good old Bolster—a patriarch among younger scions of his name and race—gets a thousand caresses and tender words, as he watches the little ones with loving eyes.

F. E. M. N.

THE END.

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