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RACHEL MARR



**THE WORKS OF
MORLEY ROBERTS**



Lady Penelope \$1.50

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of the Admiral 1.50**



**L. C. PAGE &
C O M P A N Y
New England Building
Boston, Mass.**

RACHEL MARR

BY

MORLEY ROBERTS

AUTHOR OF

"THE PROMOTION OF THE ADMIRAL,"
"THE COLOSSUS," "THE FUGITIVES," ETC.



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BOOK I

I

BEYOND the twin headlands that made Morna into a little fishing harbour, and sheltered its narrow strip of sand, the round moon hung clouded in the midnight sky. The shadows of the carved headlands were obscured by a tender mist of dissipated light; the sea was shadow to the shore, while on the horizon, where the moon shone clearer, a silver line accentuated the lucid darkness of the nearer waters of the land. In that silver showed the lofty canvas of a ship drifting eastward on the flood which inshore now began to slacken. The waters lapped less insistently upon the rocks; the silence of the night deepened sensibly; the whispers of the salt marsh, through which a slow stream found its way to the sea, grew fainter still; the eternal music of the pinewood above the little marsh ran off into the very ghost of a vibrant and musical murmur among its loftiest branches. It was midnight, full moon and full flood, and the warm world rested.

The houses of the little village, which could hardly be seen from the cove, since most lay behind a barrier of rock, the shoreward buttress of the eastern headland, were all asleep. Some of its few men were far out at sea long-line fishing in the great sweep of the tides. They would not return till the morning when they came from the eastward on the ebb and met the young flood and the breeze it brought with it from the west. A few boats lay upon the higher sands and shingle: one was moored beyond low-water mark, where it rested as quietly as any rock. For two long hours Morna had been still,

save when one solitary and uneasy dog howled unhappily at the moon and then dreamed again and whimpered over some remembered trail in the woodlands.

Yet, though the village slept and all its little flower-decked casements were darkened, and though the winds rested and the gathered tides were still, in the house behind the pinewood there was one who waked, one of those whom the moon calls even as she calls the tides. A candle glimmered in an upper room of the tall old house which stood so gauntly four square to all the winds that blew and then was extinguished. A minute later the unlocked front door was opened quietly and a girl came out into the garden, a wilderness of ancient and half-wild flowers. She lifted her head to the darkened moon, scented the odorous night air and then caught a big damask rose at the end of a wild untrimmed branch and pressed it to her face. As she let the branch swing the petals of the full blossom fell in a dark shower. She breathed deeply and marched forward to a side path that ran into the pinewood. In its gloom she stayed again and drew in the warm resinous smell with an equal abandonment to the passion of the senses. She sighed with a silent and intolerable delight, and then putting her hands upon the ruddy bark of a bigger pine, pressed her hot cheek upon the fine clean scales of it which shone almost like horn and were as cool. Then she listened as though she heard voices, and she saw the round moon among the branches, and went forward lightly to the shingle and the sea.

Here in the midnight wood, a dim cathedral censed by a thousand odours, and there by the sea purring upon the shore was freedom, and an intolerable, wonderful sense of it in the girl's veins made her long to break the heavy silences. Her head was bare, its curls free of a confining ribbon; her dress fell back from her neck and bosom, and she walked as though she had been confined to some gaol and now at last found freedom. Once or twice she paused, turned, looked back upon the wood, over which she could now see the roof of Morna House, and shook her head as though in some distaste for what

lay there in the darkness. Then her feet touched the road above the beach: in a moment she was on the shingle and then upon the lesser strip of sand. She bared her feet and stepped into the water. It was the height of the flood: the patient, steady sea rested at its mark of greatest endeavour; the warmth it drew from the land made it suave and tender.

And then the moon floated through the cloud, lipped it with silver and hung double in the sky and sea; in the heavens perfect and rounded, in the water gibbous, flattened, oblate, changing. Upon the breathless, burnished heave of a faint swell its reflection elongated, drew out, broke, and rejoined like globules of departed mercury. For a moment it looked as if there was no sea, but only a vast hollow, the double and complement of the silent empyrean in which the quiet lamp above was matched by an unquiet one beneath. And then the land-breeze breathed and the sea-moon broke, a band of frosted silver barred the tides, and the moon-wake rippled from the horizon to the inshore waters still untouched by the light moving air.

At the western extremity of the tiny fishing cove lay a table of smoothed rock, which ran sloping from the cliff. From that ledge, under which a full pool lay even at low water, the village boys often bathed. For when the flood was in one might slide from its smooth surface into deep water. Now she who had disturbed by her moving shadow the deep and tremulous silence of the night came to this rock and climbed upon it as it lay hidden by the cliff above from the lamp of the moon. From where she stood the mouth of the little harbour, which was shaped from base to the headlands like the nippers of a crab's claw, was only visible to her as a narrow line. The moon shone on the eastern cliff, and touched the roots of two houses just visible over the roadway, but was not now reflected from the waters. What had been solitude before seemed even more solitary by the addition of darkness, by the visible reminder of a sleeping world. If any place was quiet and remote, then this was as far removed from stress and the tumult of humanity as any silent pool

in impassable woods girdled by wide moorlands in pathless and remote Acadie.

The narrow lines betwixt the rocks opened on a sea now sparkling like jewels. Towards the horizon rose the faint and ghostly white canvas of the one ship drifted in the early night towards the wide sweep of the bay. She who now sat upon the rock looked up and saw it within the influence of the land breeze. It moved still upon the last of the flood stream, but its sails were gently full as it drew off the land. There was something vague and mystical in the whiteness of its sails, and in the white painted hull. The vessel moved as some priest might about a quiet and holy task in a great deserted cathedral. It was a midnight mass upon the sea. Something not alien from this thought touched her as she viewed it; something sweet and bitter burning through her living senses into an act of worship. But when the vessel passed beyond the headland, her senses burnt again for this rare and fortunate liberty of a white night all her own. A passion born of the tender warmth of the air, and the immaculate purity of the waters, rose till her heart was a full fountain that must pour over into tears or into some strange act, half self-worship, half adoration of nature. All suddenly, and wholly in surprise at her white self, she dropped her garments on the rock, and slid fearfully into the waters. She gasped a little at the fine audacity of the sea which received her body and embraced it. She knew, even as Eve knew, that she was naked, knew that she was pure, perceived a healing mystery which was a revelation, and, as she swam, there floated into her mind beneath consciousness a passionate adoration of the flesh.

She made towards the entrance of the cove with clean quick strokes, and by the time she opened its full breadth, the urgent stimulus of the salt water had ceased to mark the separation between her cooling body and the warm waves. She floated rather than swam. She was suspended in the waters, was indeed but a soul and not a body, a thinking portion of the divine nature all her own because at this hour she alone perceived it. Her sense of unstained solitude raised in her the unconscious intui-

tions of the solitary. For to be alone is not to be more, but less, one's self; not less, but more, humanity.

Once again as she swam the moon clouded with faint filaments of mist, and the breeze failed for a while, and the moonwake ran once more into a great silver disc sunk in the depths of the sea. She floated, in darkness and in light, in what seemed a perfect silence until she turned her face to the sky and lay without motion upon the water. Then there came to her ears the far off faint thunder of the everlasting surf upon the Lion Ledge beyond Pentowan Headland where the tides crossed, and where, even in calm, heavy overfalls roared like cataracts. And over and through the rhythmic boom of the Lion's breakers she heard the voice of the land, a voice organic, secular, compact of the earth and its fertility, breathing tree and grass and beast, and all the multitudinous unnumbered melody of the lesser things of life. For one moment an unformed sense of irritation moved her to impatience. How impossible it was to be in silence. But that passed and the appeal of the earth touched her, and a dog barked, a dog she knew. Then clean and clear and clearer still she heard the rhythmic beat of a horse's hoofs upon the hard road from the eastward.

"Ah," she said, and turning she swam into the darker waters under the western wall of the cove. There she found a rock beneath her feet and stood, with the sea up to her chin, listening to the sound which came louder and then faded and leapt out again as the horse rose and dipped upon the winding way. And presently she saw the horse and his rider come to the pitch of the way that ran steeply down to the cove. By the side of the horse went a dog, a great Dane, and when she saw it she knew the rider, and knew the grey horse he rode.

"It's Anthony Perran," she said, and then the horse and its rider disappeared behind the houses on the winding hill. A moment later the great Dane ran out upon the rock where she had left her garments. He put down his head and sniffed, and being no more than a huge puppy picked up her gown with his teeth and ran with it to the road.

"Oh, Sigurd, Sigurd, you devil!" she cried, and then the man on horseback came into sight and she shrank back again as Sigurd dragged her dress right out upon the road. Anthony pulled up.

"What have you there, Sigurd? Put it down, you scoundrel." He got off his horse.

"Let go, sir."

And Sigurd gave up his trophy.

"It's a woman's gown," said Anthony, as he shook the dust from it and held it up to the moonlight. As he did so the girl in the sea raged with a curious and inexplicable fury, and yet was speechless. But though she choked back what she wished to say, she gasped and the dog pricked his sharp ears and ran down to the verge of the waters.

"It's Rachel's, by the red of it," said Anthony, and then Sigurd whimpered and walked a little way into the sea, going deliberately, for he did not really love the water. And he sniffed the warm air, staring out into the darkness. Then he barked almost joyously, and Anthony Perran turned towards him. Suddenly he understood and spoke.

"Is that you, Rachel?" he asked, "and are you at your strange tricks again?"

"Aye," said Rachel, "and what then? Put that down and call your dog and go."

From where she stood she saw him plainly; the moon lighted his face and the shadow of the cliff cut him off below the neck. He seemed but a head, for the full moon was strong, the shadows deep. The grey horse, with the reins loose upon the road, plucked at a bunch of salt-herbage. Sigurd floundered anxiously in a foot of water and whimpered at his own want of courage.

"What's this craze of yours for midnight and the sea?" asked Anthony Perran. He spoke with a tinge of harshness in his voice, a harshness that suited his strong face rather than his youth.

"What's it to you," she returned, "if I swim to Land's End?"

"It's in you to do it—Land's End, or any end. That's what they say of you, Rachel."

He shook her dress and stared into the darkness whence her voice came.

"Put that down and go."

He stepped out of the moonlight and saw her vaguely.

"You might be a white rock and seaweed," he said.

"But you shouldn't do it. If you were drowned now?"

She beat the water with her hand.

"I can swim as far as any man in Morna."

"And many drown in Morna," said Anthony. "What of your mother, if you were found floating?"

"She has her dead to think of now, so she says," answered Rachel angrily. "And I'm alive. I was with her all night, and so I slept all the day. Put my things down and go."

He moved back into the moonlight.

"I'm going. But it's not right of you, Rachel."

"You preach again. You always preach, Mr. Perran. Why isn't it right to love the sea at night if it's right to love it when the sun shines?"

"A girl should be in the house."

"You must have learnt much from your mother," said Rachel. "And who's keeping me now?"

"I'll go. If I thought your stubborn soul would do anything but please itself, Rachel, I'd ask you to be wise."

"For you?"

"Well, why not? I've known you these seven years."

And Rachel laughed.

"Not seven minutes. Would you do anything for me if I asked you?"

Anthony picked up the reins of his horse from the dust.

"Anything that I could."

"Anything that was right, as you say?"

"Aye, anything that was right."

And Rachel laughed at him.

"Oh, what a man you are," she cried, "how mean of you and little!"

"There's such a thing as right and wrong, Rachel."

"Yes, reverend sir," she mocked, "and so my mother

says, and so Mary says, and so Father Brant says, and so we all say. But which is which?"

Anthony swung himself upon his horse. He took his hat off.

"It's easy to know, dear. For God knows!"

As he spoke he looked fine and lean and strong. He was very fair, with a stern, half-ascetic face.

"Martha vows you should have been a priest," said the girl, "and I see why. I remember one like you when we were in Naples. Topsy Steve Penrose swears you are like Death on a pale horse. I heard him say it. He used to preach once, didn't he? But if I liked you, and I don't to-night, I'd do anything you wanted, and I wouldn't crawl about trying to find out whether it was right or not, I'd do it and confess afterwards—if I had to!"

Anthony sighed.

"You're a wild thing, Rachel, and never know what you are saying. Go home, girl. Come, Sigurd!"

He rode into the heavier shadow. But the dog lingered, whimpering on the beach for his playfellow. For Rachel called to him in a low voice, and came swimming till she floated to the shallows. Then he ran in till the cool water reached his flanks, and rubbed his great muzzle against her white shoulder. She caught his head between her hands and kissed him.

"Oh, Sigurd, you big darling. You don't want me to swim at night either. But if I asked you to come with me, you would, wouldn't you?"

Sigurd floundered joyously till he heard his master whistle from the top of the hill far above them.

"Go, Sigurd, go!" said the girl, and she pushed him from her. He whimpered a little unhappily, for he was divided in his simple mind. But Anthony Perran whistled again and the dog hurled himself into the darkness.

And then she rose, white and sparkling with dewy waters from the sea, and the moon dipped wholly into clouds behind Pentowan headland. The air of the summer solstice lapped her round like warmer waters, caressing her so softly that she revolted half unconsciously against any garment. But she clad herself swiftly and

went past the sleeping village into the path through the sombre pinewood, and upward to the house.

The air within its walls seemed chill and stagnant. The scent of the flowers did not penetrate its cold and heavy atmosphere, nor did any natural passion of the land or sea intermingle with its breath. The passages of stone struck cold to the girl's warm feet: she frowned as she walked quietly upstairs. Even in the dark there was something penitential in the house; it seemed rather a prison than the chosen dwelling-place of man. No sound broke its silence; neither wind nor sea nor any whisper of the woods entered its darkness. Rachel ceased to frown as she reached the first landing. But she shivered a little and put her hand across her bosom as she walked on tip-toe to her mother's room and after listening at the door opened it and entered.

The apartment was bare and almost conventual in its white lack of ornament. The only touch of colour in the room was a little picture of the Madonna and her Child, which hung upon the empty wall. A chair, a chest of drawers, and an old travelling trunk covered with half-obliterated labels which spoke dimly of Rome and Venice and Perugia, and an iron bed without a rail at either end, comprised the whole of the furniture. There were no curtains at the window; it was hidden by a plain white blind. Upon the chest of drawers there gleamed a sunken nightlight. And in the bed Rachel's mother slept with her face hidden in the pillow. One thin arm was over her head, and in the other hand was an old ivory crucifix, stained yellow by innumerable years and the clasp of many penitents now mouldering to dust in some silent Campo Santo where peace dwells with folded wings.

The sleeper moaned a little and clutched the emblem of Passion and Redemption tight; and Rachel looked at her and sighed, and then with a certain fury of revolt against she knew not what, she left the room and ran upstairs to her own.

II

FOR all her moonlight wanderings Rachel Marr was out in the early morning almost as early as the very birds. The air was bright and sharp and keen, it touched her as the salt waves had done the night before; the breath of it was a fine stimulus: she breathed easily; the flow of her blood was sweet. The sun came up clear and shining over the pines that thinned out to a mere ring towards the eastward; the sea was calm and motionless, it glittered and glowed like polished steel under the sun and ran southward into deep blue by fine gradations. A column of faint smoke, as straight as the trunk of a pine, shot upward from the waking village; in her own woods and hedges she heard the song and chatter of many birds and the cluck of ranging hens that she herself had let go.

In the stream of the salt-marsh below the house a band of white geese swam like a slow, majestic fleet. A mare and her young foal grazed in the deep green field that curved downward from the edge of the pinewood to the marsh. Far across the little valley, on the browner uplands, a flock of sheep fed against the horizon, across which ran the white road that Anthony Perran and Sigurd had taken the night before. In the next valley lay his house and farm. Here all those who tilled the earth were marked out from promiscuity by the very nature of the country. Each seaward valley was a world to itself, for farm only joined farm on the treeless rounded uplands. Humanity was nowhere thick save within the very wash of the sea, at certain places sheltered by curved grey headlands from the south-west winds.

And at Morna House in the early day the world seemed vast by its very want of the narrowing influence of men. It was easy, Rachel knew, to breathe untroubled while others slept. The air of dawn knew of no obstacles to romance. At night or in the dawn she could be herself, and that was a passionate and unspeakable compensation for the hours of prison and of deadly teaching in which

every human being she met choked some seedlike aspiration within her.

She was seventeen and adored the sun and the moon and the moon's sea. She was young and worshipped very ancient unseen gods in the pinewoods and on the steep hill sides, or among the split and weathered rocks grey with hard sea mosses which the winds stirred even as they stirred the purple, emerald and amethystine sea beneath her. She was tall and strong, so strong that in her calmest hours she suggested the very passion of storm. And only when the wind and sea beat upon her house did she feel that it was founded on anything but sand. But even though it be builded on a rock the house of man is a frail thing.

She was very beautiful, so beautiful indeed that the women of the village owned it as freely as if she were a creature of another race, as if she were a bright child outside their human competition, beyond their childlike jealousies. Their big men, handlers of boats, fishers in the deep, eyed her as such do, with a dull admiration which saw but little of her beauty. They knew her strength of body, which was amazing, they perceived something in the fine curves of her body which they had learnt to admire in the build of boats running sweetly through the seas. She was dark and ruddy, but her darkness both of hair and eyes was lucid and sparkling: bronze and dark gold were hidden in her hair. And the colour of her health was flower-like, rosy, damask. Yet in her eyes there often gleamed a sullen fire, which seemed portentous and prophetic; in the curves of her sweet mouth there was something so complete as to appear, by an elusive quality, as inexorable as the close round of life and death.

"But though the mother's dying, she's her mother's daughter," said old Jose, the blacksmith, "and if I know aught of women, God help the man she favours."

There was hard wisdom about the old man of the village forge. He mixed old Cornwall with younger England and with Spanish blood that came ashore what time the Great Armada split upon a British anvil.

“To raise a family takes a woman like the rest of women. 'Tisn't the yacht built at Plymouth that catches the fish or faces the south-westerns off the Longships and the Wolf. I've a notion, bred out of seeing the like, that such are the last of their tribe. Mebbe, for all the body of her, and her young bosom, she'll give the breast to no man's children.”

Yet how she adored the fulness of the earth and the ripe increase of the herds and fields. The very cackle of the hens and the full murmur of their brooding; the mares and their foals; a litter of tumbling, yelping pups, excited her as greatly as the sound of the sea, though to a softer, more inexplicable emotion. Little children she adored; those who were childless she hardly knew: she rarely crossed their over-quiet thresholds: she did not pity them: they did not exist. A woman of the village only became a living creature when she bore life; when she renewed it. A baby was a miracle to her: she shed happy tears when she held one in her arms. Nothing young was ugly: even callow nestlings had a warm promise of a life of song as they shrieked unmusically for food in some high nest to which she had climbed. The earth might be the Lord's, but the fulness of it was all her own.

She had never had lavished upon her any of that maternal passion which throbbed in her own veins. She felt, with an instinctive and deep resentment, that her mother had no joy in her presence, and had never known any joy of her. There was always a question in her mother's eyes, a question unspoken, a question unanswerable; an accusation, it might have been almost fear. She could remember no caress, not even when she recalled the days long since drifted into the night of the past. It had always been the same: Martha had been her mother, for her real mother stood aloof with a grief unspoken and unspeakable. Nothing had changed since Rachel remembered anything at all. It had been the same at Naples, which was now a sparkling and broken memory to her: the same in high and lonely Perugia: the same in a quiet Catholic canton of snowy Switzer-

land. Martha, the old servant of the house, had mothered an alien, so it seemed, and a dull resentment sometimes burnt in the girl's heart when she felt that she had a mother and yet lacked a mother's love. But a livelier pity for the woman who lived indoors, out of the sun, with a yellow crucifix nailed to her bosom, wiped out all anger and resentment when she hugged the warm earth, and saw the spring return and the summer ripen and the full autumn yield its fruits.

Now in this fair morning, perfect, mature, odorous and warmly triumphant, she nourished no anger against any living thing. She lived for the moment, ardent and unchecked, like a lark singing in pellucid air above the earth. She wanted nothing, her thoughts rose not to her consciousness, she moved graciously among flowers and saw the world through the warm atmosphere of her unborn thoughts. The aspect of the landscape filled her mind with distances, gave it completions, rounded her soul. There was nothing wanted, nothing needed, that would not come in the due order of its season; nothing obtrusive, alien, bitter or provocative. The silence was only the timely want of human voices; in such hours the sound of any speech, though it was but the singing drawl of some fisher boy upon the beach, sent her back upon herself. At night and in the morning she was one with nature, one with the sea and the uplands, one with the streams and the pinewoods. As the day broadened she drew back, like some wild creature of the forests, and viewed with more distrust the narrower aspects of the little human world. Her native trust in her own instincts, evoked at her own peculiar hours, survived in an impatient hostility, easily roused though scornfully placable, against a folk who trusted nothing but God, interpreted for them by one whose duty was a forbidding survival of the past.

But this morning was her own. She fed the fowls and gathered them round her gladly. Their greed was delightful and simple: they pretended to no virtue not needed for the continuance of their race, and needed none. If the cock sometimes yielded a grain of barley

to a hungry hen, he did it, she knew, because he had already filled his crop. His air of general benevolence was inspired by no hypocrisy, but by a fat consciousness of digestion following on fed appetite. When she had no more to give them, they dispersed into the woods and fields. Soon some were hunting on the marsh-land: it was a fine and simple world to them since they suffered no pain from the haughty contempt of the sailing geese. In that same field the mare and her foal grazed. Rachel took the mother a handful of grain, saved from the fowls, and as she fed the mare out of one of her hands, the fuzzy-coated foal sucked at her fingers. He did not draw away from her when she fondled his soft ears and muzzle: he had known her as soon as he had known his dam.

Then the day's first beauty passed as the sun rose above the pines. She heard Martha call to her from the garden.

"Rachel, Rachel!"

And Rachel frowned a little when she turned towards the house. She shrugged her shoulders impatiently as she walked up the grassy slope from the water-meadow. Outside the world was always growing, renewing itself; inside were stagnation and the processes of death. She shuddered at times with an unconquerable distaste for her mother. She revolted incredibly against the slow involution of things: even Martha's wrinkles made her angry. She hated the old women in the village. These things, these sights of approaching death, wrinkled her mind. She perceived at such moments that youth was short indeed, a mere warm morning, lighted by an unrisen sun, while the heat and burden of the hot day were bitter.

"Well, Martha, what is it now?"

So the day began.

III

THE heavy atmosphere of Morna House and the gloom of her who owned it, but took no delight either in the

woodlands that guarded it or in the changing sea, had so grown into Rachel's mind that she had come to believe tragedy something inherent in the nature of things. So close did this sense of her environment cling to her, that curiosity only grew slowly. She had never known her mother aught but pale and oppressed, passionate and sullen by turns, and if these things had always been, they were natural, and could neither be altered nor mitigated. And yet she knew, without knowing how she knew, that behind her mother's visible tragedy there lay some actual tragic cause. There was a story of woe in that oppressed heart, and an intolerable sense of sin, as unforgiven and as unforgivable as the unpardonable sin itself. Far in the depths of the girl's mind she remembered even stranger passions than those masked by her mother's white face. Her memory ran far backward; for after her fourth year there were no lapses in its power of record. But even towards the end of her third year, when she and her mother and Martha lived together in an apartment over the Chiaja in Naples, she recalled certain scenes, that now stood out to her disconnected from any antecedent or consequent, like landscapes viewed by one flash of lightning.

For long years now she had never seen her mother clad in anything but black. She remembered her in scarlet and lace; in rose and warm gold. The pictures stayed in her mind with strange vividness: at times when she closed her eyes she saw her mother in her youth, and yet unhappy. In that unhappiness there was something reckless, something fierce and defiant, as though the soul was wretched and the body triumphant. Such unhappiness was not all unhappy; that Rachel knew now. And then there came a day when she saw her mother in bed. When she rose again she wore black, and her colour had gone from her cheeks.

Till that day her child, the little girl whose beauty was so great, had been at times very much to her. But the woman's affection had its phases, it was so veiled at certain periods that Rachel saw it not, and found herself alone. Then Martha was her only companion for long

solitary days: they drove out together over the Posilipo; they went to churches, to the convent on high Camaldoli, to the Belvedere of San Martino over the roaring, talking city. Some glimpses of these days returned to Rachel: she saw the glow of Vesuvius at midnight; the blue of Capri as the sun set.

Then came the day when the mother took to her bed. But from that hour onward the girl became almost hateful in her parent's eyes. She was viewed with strange hostility, sometimes even with loathing. Once she remembered that Martha took her in her arms and raged at her mother in English, a language which Rachel had only learnt after coming to England. And Mrs. Marr had cried out in anger——

“ I hate her, I hate her ! ”

She repeated this so often that the words sank into the child's mind, even though she did not understand them. Years after she heard Martha use the same phrase of a village woman, and she knew what her mother had said.

“ Mother hates me,” she said mournfully. And then her own native stubbornness and strength came to her aid.

“ And I don't love her.”

She saw even as a little girl how love begat love, and how love unregarded died at last.

Though Mary Marr was a Catholic, for many years after leaving Naples she never entered a church or confessed to any priest. In the most devout there is often the greatest strain of native disbelief, and her father had been a notorious freethinker, a pain and a disgrace to orthodox Morna, where good churchmen and dissenters united to counteract his influence and example. The one room in Morna House that remained unlocked and unused, as the old man had left it, was his library. Once Rachel had slipped back a window-catch with a knife and had entered its dusty precincts. She had been found there by her mother and had been driven out as though the books were contamination. For now and once again the elder woman was a devout Catholic, even though Father Brant, the priest at the great house of Caerhays, above Morna Cove, thought her half insane. He knew

her story, even as Martha did. He prayed for the welfare of her child. God's mercy was great. His wrath did not always fall even upon the second generation. If His grace could save the sinner, should it not avail for the sinner's child. And Rachel believed what he taught her. It seemed to her that religion made no difference to her life, except that it made it harder to be just. If one had to forgive everyone, how should one treat those who were cruel?

Her own passion was a living enveloping sense of affection: when she was affectionate, she was most, was all herself. Her disdain or hatred of the aged, which indeed marked her strongly, seemed even at its greatest something alien in her mind. It was rather an indifference than disdain, rather a fear than a dislike: she was so young that the old were aliens of another race. They loved, it might be, but their love was a cold flame: they desired, but she saw their desires dwindle. It was horrible, even if they belonged to a cold white species of humanity, to see the slow and dreadful processes of death at their work of placid, calm destruction. They said that all came to this at last, to the disgrace of time, and time's forgetting, and when Rachel heard them she shivered even as she had grown cold with fear at the picture of hell.

And then the dawn rose and she was herself, a well-spring of youth, an adorer of the warm body and the insolence of the growth of youth. If people died they did so because they did not wish to live. She saw them cease to wish. This was a failure of the soul rather than of the creature. They were weak and did not deserve the strong continuance she perceived in her own passionate delight in life. What of her mother? This illness of hers was a prolonged and bitter suicide. How came it that the world ceased to be sweet and how was it that music died out of the winds for the ears of men? By what cause, or what grave causes, came the loss of all the pleasure of the eyes, the sight of the immortal sea, the waving of the windy singing pines, the hushed melody of the whispering wheat and nodding grasses? Who

could destroy the celestial glory of Orion, the mystery of the Pleiades, the song and chant of the moving heavens, even if one grew deaf to the melody of birds?

And if melancholy came and overwhelmed the soul so that the day lost its brightness, and the songs of birds their sweetness, and the sea its glory, was there not the embracing over-arching clasp of the night? Night came to her like a lover, it kissed her even as the warm tides did. Neither pain, nor any woe she yet imagined, nor any loss, nor the destruction of any dear hope conceived as vital, if any hope were vital when the senses burnt clear and renewed themselves, made her foresee night as anything but a period of renewal, as hours, whether in sleep or waking, in which the soul spread itself in strange calm and absorbed peace and strength from the earth and the stars.

By what mischance, by what open denial of the powers or the godlike night, came it that her mother found no solace in the deep dark silence, and was less rather than more at each succeeding dawn?

She thought these things and thought them not; she was only a girl, but was yet a creature of life with a mind as active as the sea itself, as the wind, as the processes of life about her. Every stimulus drew forth its response; every touch of the nature-god made her give up music of strange discord. Martha herself, though strange and old, was not old in the way Rachel abhorred, and this faithful servant of her mother was part of nature to the girl, a gift of old time and a portion of the brighter world even yet. Only with her was the girl what others would have called natural. For with her mother she was cold and strained; with the villagers she was a wild thing, even when they suckled children whom she touched with warm and thrilling fingers; with Anthony Perran she was odd, aloof, an embodiment of ripe unripe sex, a challenge and something to fear. And as for other men, she ranged them among the noble or ignoble beasts.

"I was swimming last night, Martha," she said when she entered the house.

"Aye, but you shouldn't," said Martha, busy at the

fire. She was bright-eyed, withered yet strong. "But what's the use of talking to the breed of Tregilgas, mother of daughter? You are like your mother, Rachel, and she was like hers."

Rachel frowned heavily, and when she contracted her brows she looked a woman.

"Don't say I'm like mother——"

"A lovely woman she was, and so will you be if you don't drown yourself at midnight, or fall over the cliff," said Martha with a certain cheerfulness of accent out of tune with her words. "But why talk? It's in the blood, and the cliff path is for some, and the water below. I remember when your mother laughed."

Rachel shook her head impatiently.

"And so do I."

"She laughed fierce when you knew her first, my girl."

Martha crackled with laughter, scornful laughter, and the pan over the fire crackled and spat too.

"You old witch, you croaking raven," cried Rachel, "you're a devil this morning. What's in this house, Martha, that makes the sun cold when it looks through the windows? When you're outside you're good, and so am I. But don't say I'm like mother. How is she?"

Martha turned fish in spitting fat.

"Oh, but she's herself, and a good, good Catholic this day; I'm main glad I'm what I am and can eat what I like. 'Tis Friday, Rachel."

"What's she eaten?"

"Bread and water. Sit down and eat."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Give me a plate, I'll eat outside."

"You'll be sleeping outside soon, my girl."

"I can't breathe here," cried Rachel. "I went out at midnight and as I swam I saw Anthony Perran riding home with Sigurd. When I can have my own way I'll sleep in my wood. Give me the plate, you dear old devil of a Martha."

And Martha shook her head.

"That's what your mother used to call me when I

was young and red as a rose. And now I'm a dried up old stick, Rachel."

The girl kissed her withered cheeks.

"You old dear, I love you. What else have I to love?"

But there was the outside world, and all young living things, and the young gifts of God and the eternal sea and the voices of the wind and strong men riding on the big road of life.

"Ah, what else? You'll find him," said Martha, "and then I shall be like a dead leaf to a budding tree."

And Rachel took her food outside and sat on a log by the wood-pile, and heard the chatter of the birds, the cluck of the hens, and the song of the morning.

Overhead her mother's window had its white blind down.

IV

IF Rachel spoke to her mother thrice a month it was thrice too often for the woman who had borne her. She sat with her sins in the shadow of the house and communed with the ghosts of dead days and dead delights, and finding joy in nothing found none in her child.

They said in the village that Mrs. Marr was mad. Some of the older folk remembered her as a girl as strong and bright as Rachel.

"And then she married Mr. Marr," they said.

He was a "foreigner," an Englishman, without Cornish blood in him, a painter of the sea, a singer of songs, a man of many paths and strange blasphemies, an alien from their religion, a Londoner.

"And her father was the cause of it," said the village, "for old Tregilgas loved to meet those who did not believe in God and were like himself. But he hated Marr after his daughter married him."

They knew that, and more. They had heard of Marr and his wife in London town. It was a strange thing that Rachel had been born abroad, years after the mar-

riage. It was stranger still that Marr was then in England. But soon after he died, and someone said in Morna that Mary Marr was dressed at that time in scarlet and fine linen, and rode in carriages in the Chiaja of Naples. A seaman wrote this to his people. He himself had seen her, so he said. And he had seen Martha with her. For Martha had been her nurse and had gone to London with her when she married.

Surely all these things were strange, said Morna village. And years after she came back to her father's house, then her own, and was a white and broken woman, and a Roman Catholic. These things were stranger still. Many doubted whether she had a better chance of heaven than old Tregilgas, who died, they declared, blaspheming God, as all atheists did who would not seek salvation at the very edge of the pit.

And Martha knew all the truth about her; knew about Marr, and about Rome and Naples, and the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, and the sunlight and shame of Naples, where there was a mountain of fire to remind papists of hell. And she knew, if any knew, whether Richard Marr was Rachel's father or not. But then Martha was no longer a woman of Morna. She had been and was not. She looked at the old women whom she had known as girls as though they belonged to another world.

"She's a furriner," said the curious with bitterness, "she can speak Italian. And if she goes to chapel she never stays to speak with us. And she lives in a house with a crucifix. And she says 'Yes, Father,' and 'No, Father,' to the priest up to Caerhays when he comes to Morna."

Few but Martha and Rachel said very much to Father Brant. The itinerant preachers passed him as though he were a living infection, in the narrow days of Queen Elizabeth. The village boys sometimes hooted him afar off, but hid as he approached. If his religion was the way to the pit, of a surety he carried the keys of it in his girdle. If the man within him grieved, the priest and ecclesiast smiled a little bitterly, as he went on his lonely

way to see the woman, smitten of God, and even yet hardly repentant. But then she was smitten of God. What the villagers said, he knew. She was not sane.

"Shall I not let in the sun?" asked Martha every morning.

"What have I to do with the light?"

Or what with the blue skies above the sea, or with anything of life? Before her inward eyes blazed a southern summer, and the glare of white roads, and a glittering sea whereon danced white sails. She smelt the odour of ripe grapes, and heard the song of the peasants as they drove their oxen from the raped vineyard. And yet even there went something more than the shadow of herself. Her affection and her passion had all the strength of a great religion. Out of passion springs the desire of God: out of balked passion the pain and knowledge of Him. The power of disbelief in her father turned in her to belief; she believed and sinned and cried for forgiveness without repentance—without the desire of it. Why should God not make those happy who could not repent? Was not man made in His image? Was not the Lover His likeness?

"What have I to do with the light, with this light, when I can turn from it and behold the desire of my eyes, now as far from me as God himself?"

If those are mad who find no relief by the sweet alternation of nature's functions, by the power to renew affection, by the fresh growth of any sweet dead affection, she was mad and lived in a dead garden of the soul.

"Father, I *cannot* let him go with my mind. If death could not do it, how can his repentance, since his repenting seems a weakness to me?"

"Do you grudge him peace, if he has found it in working again for God?"

She was white, and answered nothing; not a word. But she answered to herself in her silence, "If I gave my soul for him and gained him for a time, how can I redeem what I gave, even if I would? For I cannot and do not repent."

She trod a worn path upon the white boards of her

room, for she rarely left it, save at night, when she wandered in the passages of the old house. Sometimes she opened her father's room, and sat among his books, and heard the fierce and jovial old man declare again that if God was not a good fellow he would have naught to do with Him. Even as a girl such cheerful blasphemy made her shiver and creep to bed, afraid that the house would fall, and the fall of it would be great. In those days the church she knew was the little bethel in the fold of the hills at the back or Morna, and though she was forbidden to enter it, she often listened to sallow men in dark clothes speaking fiercely of the wrath of a jealous God, who delighted more, as it seemed to her, in the destruction of the sinner than in his repentance. Now that she knew the great God of Love, the Ark of Refuge for all true faith, she still heard the sound of His thunder rather than any saying from the Mercy Seat.

If only she had had no child!

She had betrayed herself and her lover in the pain that might have been sweet and was not. She had cried aloud for him, and had been answered by suspicion. Her anger grew into madness, into delirium; and out of delirium again grew suspicion of him who was suspected and watched by his superiors. She betrayed herself and him in confession three years later when she was ill, and was betrayed by her new confessor. The father, brought back to the fold, laboured among the heathen ten thousand miles away. When she heard it, she thrust her Rachel from her, and never loved her again.

A year later there came to her from abroad, from somewhere in the South Americas, a small parcel addressed in her lover's hand. When she opened it, with fear and hope and strange trembling of her weakened body, she found a crucifix in it that she knew had been his. It was very old and made of ivory that had grown yellow during centuries; the Christ upon it was worn and chipped and broken, but very mournful, the work of a fourteenth century master of carving. But beyond this crucifix there was no word, not a line. He had renounced her, had given her back to God.

With this crucifix she lived; it became part of her life; it represented less the passion of Christ than the passion of him who sent it. She lived believing in God with an ecstasy of doubt; her heart was full of prayer and wild resentment. Only her belief in the future life restrained her from awful blasphemy. It was impossible to believe that her lover might not be given back to her beyond the grave. She treated God as if He were placable by lip service, which her passion converted into prayer that begat hope. She slept with the crucifix upon her bosom.

“While he lives, I shall live!”

She awaited his sanction to die: she awaited his call to the life beyond. With an infinite passion of desire for redemption, she suffocated all her nature and asked for no more than his spirit's recognition of her purified from the flesh.

But if she had known that he had died unrepentant, unregenerate, a child of the pit, she would have sought her own damnation as eagerly as she sought for life everlasting in Paradise.

And Rachel was her daughter, a child of her own flesh; the inheritor of her passion, and of this crucifix. From her sunless room she heard the girl singing in the garden.

“God help her whom I cannot love,” she cried.

V

MARTHA had once been sweet-voiced, but she never sang in the shadow of the house. She had known her tragedies too; simple ones and straightforward as all tragedies are to the simpler natures. The complexity, the fury and terror of disaster lie in the heart, not in the causes. She had shed her tears and had dried them, and then had taken Mary Tregilgas, before she married George Marr, into her very heart.

“I nursed her,” she said. She envied the woman who had given Mary the breast.

As a childless woman she renewed her youth in Rachel and was anxious. These two were strangely, even aw-

fully alike. They looked at each other without sympathy; the girl suspected her mother was the picture of herself after years yet to come: the mother ran back over the years and sipped bitter dew from flowers long since perished when she saw the red blood in the girl's round cheek. And Martha loving both, and sorrowing in vain for one, feared for the other.

"If there were no men, Rachel, 'twould be a fine world," she said with a half twinkle in an anxious eye.

"How silly!" cried Rachel. "Who'd do the hard work?"

But Martha threw up her head.

"Who does it now? What's fishing or ploughing but games to the men? They love the foam of the sea, and the smell of turned land, and the use of their hands. They growl over it to make us content, my dear, but they sneak away winking, saying to themselves what fools we women are. Some of 'em believe they fool us, and some of us are fooled, but the house and the children—that's the work, and they know it. And the men are children, my dear; you never know what fire they'll play with, and the woman has to bide till the roof's aflame, often, often. She knows and can't speak, for if she does they bang out like a big boy when his father's dead and he can't be handled, and then it's beer and talking to some other woman over a fence. And they'll climb any fence after a strange woman. I know them."

"But you never married, Martha," said Rachel.

Martha's face twitched; she turned away and for a while was silent.

"No," she said at last, "but I might have done. And I could tell you things, only I won't. Only now you're growing, Rachel, and I've seen the men cast eyes upon you. Keep them off, my dear, and never let any two-legged thing in breeches persuade you there's no harm in a kiss. Don't trust any of 'em, not one, and the one you think you can, beware of him most, for it's to them we give ourselves mostly, and marriage is the least of two evils. Keep yourself your own till you're sure the right man comes along."

And Rachel laughed, and yet when she spoke there was an inward hidden thought at her heart.

"Oh, aye, but how do you know him, Martha?"

She was standing in the doorway, half in sun and half in shade, while Martha washed her dishes. The old woman did not answer for a while.

"Well, how?" repeated Rachel. She saw the moonlit cove at midnight in her happier mind.

"I spoke foolishness," said Martha with a sigh, "but we all do. There's no way of knowing, Rachel, not that I know of, or that I ever heard of. You may be as sure in your mind as that the sun's shining, but you are not sure. For what you are now, you may not be next year. And what he is next year mayn't be what he is now. Oh, 'tis lucky dipping in the bag if you catch the right one, and luckier if he stays so, and luckier still if you don't change yourself. And its unluckier than all to stay yourself always. Hold them cheap, Rachel, don't get set on any man. I could tell you later of them that has, and woe has lived in their house for ever."

And though the sun shone it seemed to shine less brightly, and what Martha cleaned she did not see for tears.

"Then what's the use of trembling?" asked Rachel.

"It's as God wills," said Martha presently, "and if He is good I'll see you a happy woman yet. But go out, girl, go out. Don't come talking and worrying me here when you see I'm so busy."

And still the inward thought beat like a lap of a quiet sea on Rachel's heart. She went down through her woodland towards the village.

"When I have children of my own," she said softly; "when I have them of my own!"

Now she loved none but Life itself, the perpetual miracle of increase and resurgence and sweet renewal. Man, who sailed the sea and ploughed the lands, and was the father of little children, was hardly less than Life itself in human form. And yet she remembered the cool cove at midnight, and the sound of a galloping horse, and Sigurd, the great Dane, and the fine strong face

of Anthony Perran as the light fell upon it. She lay down among her pines, and breathed the scented air of summer and listened to the sound of the world about her. And far away the great sea beat upon the headlands. She heard the purring of the Lion as the tide went past it to the westward.

It was strange to hear Martha talk so about men, though for that matter Rachel remembered her breaking out long before in bitter abuse of them. Now it seemed that the old woman's rage against them had softened into a sad and bitter knowledge, which was equally a knowledge of women and of life and all human kind. For some reason—a reason that Rachel could hardly have penetrated to, even if she had sought for causes in her mind—this talk of Martha's came home to her and made her think a little, made her wonder what it was that men did, or could do, that made women so bitter.

For her own part it seemed to the warm waking maternity of the girl that the possession of children, the gift of marriage by some abstruse miracle, would turn all cause of offence to running water. The father would be nothing, the limbs and body and the little hands of the God-given would be all, an infinite satisfaction, a rounded completion, a promise and compact of immortality. Her face flushed even now at the possibility of such incredible joy, her instincts flowered on her lips. She touched the unborn with her very soul. She crooned soft melody in her singing heart in foreseen adoration.

She was ignorant and most innocent: she divided the animals from man. There was, she had been taught, the most infinite distance between them; and the human soul, that hidden flower, that inner spirit, miraculous and wonder working, was, as she vaguely believed, the true father of God's little children when marriage endowed a passion that she only guessed at. But the wonder of the flesh of babes was still a greater wonder in her own rounded limbs.

As she lay on her wild couch of pine needles and heard the infinite speech of her own heart, waking then to

realities and touching them with a fond terror, she heard the speech of the wind and the trees and the tides and the voices of men and women in the hidden village by the sea. Some called musically and two sang by a boat. A woman scolded, a cock crew; she heard the cluck of hens, the call of woodland birds, the clink of harness, the roll of cartwheels. The meadow beneath her whispered; she saw the sailing geese, a proud fleet and not without a gallant admiral. They went in silence on the water. Only on the land they lost their grace and raised strange clamour. With cool water to their breasts the world was well.

Among the subdued chorus of the meads and woods there was not a sound she did not know. The cry of any insect was familiar, and the song of every bird. She knew the voices of all the villagers. That was the voice of Sam Burt, that the sturdy, stubborn bass of Jose the blacksmith, a hard man and a heavy. But all these sounds belonged by nature to the chorus of Morna. A stranger's voice raised her eyes, if ever a stranger came by. And presently she raised herself upon her elbow, for a sound came to her ears that was not in accord with the harmony of the morning. It struck her hard for a moment; it came as an alarm, a note of tragedy as mournful as the sound of a far-off storm.

"What is it?" she asked herself. And then, "Who is it?"

For another woman, who was yet a girl, was sobbing in the bracken at the edge of the pinewood, not many yards below her. A girl, not two years older than Rachel, who was yet a woman by the addition of knowledge and the bitter-sweet proof of it that lay at her heart.

"It's someone crying," said Rachel. She rose softly and peered downward from her shadows.

Softly as he moved a dry branch cracked beneath her feet, and she saw a frond of bracken stir.

"Who's there?" she asked, but there was no answer. Doubtless it was some child of the village in trouble, or in revolt against it knew not what. And Rachel had the

gift of consolation, as all those have who, when bitter need comes, cannot console themselves. Her heart, that called for children, ached at any pain in others.

"Oh, my dear, what's the matter?"

She sprang from her pines into the bracken, and found one that was no stranger, yet one whom she had not seen for months. She saw a pale and tear-stained face, and knew that this was an old playfellow of hers, Mary, the daughter of the blacksmith, who was, she thought till then, at Plymouth, the great town of Devon.

"Oh, Mary, is it you?"

The girl buried her face in a bundle on her knees.

"Yes, miss, it's—it's me." And she sobbed without lifting her eyes.

But Rachel came down to her, wondering.

"I thought you were at Plymouth, Mary?"

She saw the bowed back shake, but the girl said nothing. And the bundle on her knees spoke for her in an inarticulate and wonderful gurgle that made Rachel forget this visible grief and all the outside world.

"What—what have you got there?" she cried.

She dropped on her knees and touched the gift of sorrow that Mary held in her arms.

"Oh, oh," cried Rachel in a strange soft voice that carried a fine reproach in it, "it's a baby, and you're crying!"

She pushed her hands under Mary's and seized the child triumphantly in quivering excitement.

"How did you get it—oh, it's so little; how old is it, Mary, and whose is it?"

Now she had the child upon her own knees and looked into its face as it stared up at the sky and at her. One tiny hand grasped her little finger. Strange thrills ran through her. She kissed its cheeks.

"Whose is it, and why have you got it, and what are you crying about?"

She cast these questions at the feet of the girl, and then made sweet and foolish noises to the baby.

Desolation and bitter knowledge answered her desolately, "It's—it's mine!"

Then the mother burst into tears and cast herself upon her face in the bracken and sobbed as if her heart would break.

“Yours, and you’re crying!”

It was foolish, it was incredible, monstrous. This was not Rachel’s child, and yet to hold it gave her such bliss that she felt herself quiver with joy.

“Yours, yours! Oh, I wish it was mine, I wish it was mine!” said Rachel with passion. “You little darling, how I love you! But why didn’t you tell me you were married, Mary?”

The girl started as if she had been struck, and Rachel stared at her and put out her hand.

“Why didn’t you?”

“Oh, miss, you’ll hate me and say I’m wicked.”

Rachel burst in on the broken speech.

“Wicked! what for? You can’t be wicked when God’s given you a little baby.”

She hugged it to her own bosom.

“I’m not married at all,” said Mary. She sat up suddenly and stared at Rachel with a sullen brow and a quivering mouth. “I’m not married at all; no, I’m not. And father——”

But Rachel looked at her in amazement.

“Mary, you are mad. You *can’t* have a baby unless you are married! Why, everyone says that!”

She was a child, and in her wonderment she looked even younger than she was. Surely this was truth that she uttered. She knew it with strange certainty. It had been explained to her a hundred times when she wanted babies instead of dolls.

“You must wait till you are married.” That’s what they all said. And nothing had ever told her that this was not so. It became a law of nature to her that to the mystic union of spirit in marriage God gave marriage gifts of children.

And here and now Mary denied this! And even in the sad drawn face of the girl-mother there came something like a bitter smile. For she knew better.

“I’m not married and ’tis mine. Give him to me.”

But Rachel stared at her and the baby and then looked round upon the woodland and the strange world.

“Is this true, quite true, Mary?”

And Mary nodded sullenly.

“Then,” said Rachel quickly, and as though she had received some inspiration, “then—if you can have a baby without being married, what’s the good of being married at all?”

And Mary’s mouth looked as if she laughed. But she made no sound, and threw herself down again upon the grass and bracken, sobbing as if her heart would break, while Rachel stroked the baby’s cheeks, and considered this strange new thing that a child should be born and be received with tears.

For she had seen the joy of the birds in their nestlings, the mares in their foals, and of all living creatures in those who should replace them when death claimed its own at last. And even her own mother had loved her at first; for Martha said so.

As she sat thinking, stricken into silence, trying to reconcile the inconceivable opposites of fresh knowledge with what had been given her as truth, she recalled the miracle on which her religion was founded. For a moment that seemed to help her, and then that faint light of help died. Could there be a new miracle and Mary be its handmaiden? It was impossible, for Mary had no joy in the child.

And yet if this girl had no husband——. A sudden rage of impatience came into her. She pushed Mary almost roughly.

“Do you mean to say he hasn’t *any* father, Mary?”

And Mary hid her face in her hands.

“Do you mean that?”

And Mary sat up.

“Give me the baby, miss, I shouldn’t be talking to you.”

Even then she smiled wanly.

“I’ll give him you when you tell me. Do you mean that?”

But the girl-mother looked away from her and her lips

trembled, remembering kisses and lies that were sweet, and one warm evening on the cliff over the sea where the Lion purred in the tide-way.

"Oh, no, I don't mean that," she cried in sudden anguish. "I thought he loved me and was true."

Then both of them heard old Jose's voice in the village below them rating Steve Penrose, who had once been a local preacher, and was now a drunken reprobate.

"You preached the word of God, you drunken devil, and now you're the shame of the whole country-side."

And Mary fell a-trembling.

"'Tis my father, 'tis my father, and it's I am the shame, the shame!"

VI

"It's I am the shame; it's I."

She breathed it mournfully with full belief, and for a moment Rachel was shocked almost to tears, so great seemed the girl's agony and abasement and fear. Then she grew doubtful, a little disdainful.

"Oh, you are afraid of your father?"

"He'll kill me."

"He won't—oh, you've a baby! Would he kill that too?"

The mother stretched out her arms for the forsaken and the nameless, now crowing on Rachel's knees.

"Give him to me, give him to me!"

And Rachel surrendered him and sat closer. She put her arm about Mary's shoulder, hugging her.

"Oh, you great silly, if he was mine——"

She looked at him with hungry eyes; she was a virgin and her mother instincts flamed.

"If he was mine, I'd laugh. Who cares for your father? I'll come with you, and go first and explain it——"

Again the ghost of an ironical smile rose to the mother's white lips and Rachel looked at her doubtfully.

"He ought never to have been born," said Mary.

"God sent him," cried Rachel, and then she stared at the child—"but I don't understand!"

"Oh, but you'll understand by and by," said Mary desolately, "when a man walks out with you and tells you he loves you, and he's strong and you're weak and a poor fool, as I was. And Steve may drink that used to preach, and what of that; for the drink is all he cares for. But I held my head up and said things when I was proud, and though the baby is all I love, he's no shield against shame as the drink is."

Rachel walked in night, as in some woodland, unknown, untrodden. This was the spot where dreamland marched with a sad land of warning. The spiritual birth of children had seemed as true to her as any truth of the Church. She never set the Virgin so far apart from humanity as the interpreted creeds set her. All women were the Virgin's sisters, all births as miraculous as Christ's, or rather just as simple.

But here was shame with a child and weeping and fear unspeakable. What could it mean but that she had believed folly, had been deceived? A thousand hints of nature, once as mysterious and illegible as moss-grown runes on a weathered pillar, showed themselves to her in a clearer script, though even yet their full meaning mocked her acutest apprehensions.

As she considered, Mary looked at her strangely, being overcome with the desire to banish Rachel's pity by clear telling of the physical truth. Here was ignorance to which the torch might be put. That lurking desire to tell all things, inherent in the mind, and for ever a motive, pushed Mary on in spite of shame. But the desire to tell the truth seemed evil to her, and she struggled with herself for a little while.

Then Rachel caught her eye again. The girl's eyes were reddish-brown, large-pupilled, lustrous, tender and sorrowful. Now there danced in them a desire for frankness, an appeal for permission to speak.

"And the baby's eyes are blue," said Rachel.

"And so are his," said Mary, holding Rachel hard

with her fixed eyes. "Oh, but you used to kiss me sometimes, miss——"

"I'll kiss you now, poor thing."

There was something in Mary's eyes that made her flush.

"Look, I'll tell you," said Mary, "and then you'll not kiss me again, perhaps."

She was a weak vessel, prone to confession. For some she would have been evil; she had known desire before passion; she had mocked young men with knowledge in her eyes.

"You know nothing, Miss Rachel. And I know you love babies. Take mine again."

They sat twined together, for Rachel had loved her once. The baby lay on both their knees. He kicked himself free of half his clothes.

"He'll be a man and do as others do," said Mary. She whispered things into Rachel's ear, hints that widened, half-truths that grew whole truths of the flesh, until of a sudden Rachel thrust her away and stared at her with fear.

"Oh," wailed Mary, "'tis true, 'tis true, and now you hate me. Give me the baby and I'll go."

And now Rachel understood. Her old beliefs fell into fragments; she saw the flesh unveiled. For a moment she perceived nothing but the horror of it, born of the knowledge of her own strong instincts, till then a mystery. And then, then she saw the child again, and caught it up and cried over it; the very fountains of physical maternity broke up in her, and she shook with fear.

But whatever the path was, that path must be God's. However the fruit came the orchard was God's too. She sat in a dream perceiving things beyond the dream. She was naked and ashamed, and she thought of Anthony Perran as she had talked to him from the sea, when its crystalline cool water held her, and cooled her fevered thoughts. Now in a strange and dreadful bath that stained her deep as blood, she perceived that he was a man. The mystery of her own birth seemed still as great

as it had been, for here she was, warm, living, breathing, fearful of life. One swift gleam of the truth of all miracles comforted her. If all this was true, what was greater than the miracle of the flesh? In the desire of the flesh was the voice of God Himself. Through that He spoke and wrought. The child made all things beautiful. And yet she recalled certain words of those who preached distrusting it. That was folly.

"You hate me," said Mary weakly, and in a passion of tears.

"I don't," cried Rachel; "I'll go to your father for you."

But Mary clutched her dress.

She whispered—

"I'm afraid of him. Oh, but mother's dead."

"Why should you be afraid?"

There was high courage in Rachel, courage founded on fierce personal pride and the strength of those desires that make and break the proud. She feared nothing but death, for death was cold and had no passion, and could bring forth nothing but corruption.

"He's a man and old," said Rachel. Therefore, said her mind, he understands. How could any man be hard upon those who had failed to hold to a human law when man himself broke it? And then there was the child, his daughter's child. Her overflow of maternity was wonderful, and she saw all things through it. He would be pitiful. For after all, what did marriage matter if the miracle of birth did not need marriage?

She had lived with her mother, who had taught her nothing but the aspect of despair, against which her red blood revolted, and with Martha, who for the first time this very day had opened her mouth about men, moved thereto by seeing how the girl ripened. What the priests said she accepted without complaint and without comprehension. Their words were for those who lay a-dying. Something in her assured her beating heart of that.

"Come," she said, and the trembling girl went with her a little way down the path.

"Go first," said Mary, "and I'll wait. Oh, I'm cold."

She clutched the baby to her, and in her very disdain Rachel smiled at both of them. She stroked the infant's cheek and went to old Jose's house. She found him in the shop where he wrought horseshoes. The fire sparkled and the iron was hot.

VII

AN hour ago Rachel would have run to old William Jose and have told her news in innocence. Had Mary been cheerful she would have screamed at him joyfully—

“Oh, Mary has a baby, Mr. Jose!”

But now, though her innocence remained, her ignorance was mitigated, she was smirched by false shame, and her native modesty, seeing things in new lights, revolted. Then her courage returned, for she had the courage that might go to death hand in hand with terror.

“And she's crying!”

She went the few yards down the slope in a maze. Her world was a broken kaleidoscope; it had tumbled into inharmonious fragments. She saw that a newer harmony must return; she even saw through what it must come. That was the flesh; it was the body. To her ardent maternal spirit so much was sure, and not unbeautiful, if—oh, if others thought so too.

But ten thousand words that had meant nothing returned now with stings. Certain vilenesses, immodesties, and ridiculous metaphors and similes floated at her like motes in a sunbeam. Now she half understood them. They were outrages. She was like one who stares at an adorned Hermes pillar and has it explained brutally.

Yet the result was the same; the baby crowed and clutched the mother's finger or her bosom just the same. She flushed with proleptic joy and got furious against men at the same time. Who invented the terror that stood in Mary's path and decked her child in robes of shame?

“Oh, if it was so bad, Mary would not have come back to him.”

Just then, as she had seen the child so brave and fat, she did not understand that the mother would have him so at any price of pride.

She marched across the road to the blacksmith's shop, and found old Jose at his horseshoes with a boy at the bellows.

"Aye, 'tis Miss Rachel," said Jose.

He was as grey and grim as the north sea when a northeaster blows; grey foam his eyebrows, grey and grizzled his beard. The man was big and gaunt, and though over sixty still the strongest man in the Cove. He had married late, and had been widowed soon. His wife left him Mary and a son, now at sea. He had, it seemed, loved them both almost overmuch, till he took to religion as some take to drink.

Rachel leant against the doorpost and watched the sparks fly. Her heart was hot but her hands cold. She trembled a little both at her errand and this old man who knew so much and had lived so long. He had always liked her, though she was a "papist." It was not in any male heart to feel anything but pleasure before her.

"Well, missy," he said as an extra greeting as he plunged the hot shoe into water.

"I want to speak to you, Mr. Jose," she said. He caught the catch in her voice, the tremble of it, and looked hard at her.

"Is there trouble at your house?"

There was death there no doubt, or death coming. But this trouble was life.

"No, no, it's not about me, it's about——"

She looked at him appealingly and then at the boy by the bellows.

"Go out, Billy," said Jose. "Shall we go over to the house, miss?"

But Rachel shook her head.

"Oh, Mr. Jose, there are many things I don't understand——"

"No doubt, my dear, no doubt, for you haven't the true faith."

"Is the true faith love and forgiveness and mercy?"

"Aye, on God's side," said Jose.

"And on man's, Mr. Jose?"

"'Tisn't for man to take God's place, even for them."

"Nor to take God's place to condemn?" she urged aptly. He had sought to free her from Rome a score of times. It pleased him to see her serious.

"Oh, no," said Jose. "But what's your trouble?"

"It isn't mine," said Rachel pitifully. She was sorry for the fierce old man, seeing him as rugged as the cliffs and only tender as the sea is when calm reigns on the deep. "Oh, but I'm afraid to tell you."

She could not see his eyes now, for he bent his brows and held his hands together.

"Is there aught in the papers about—about my Tom?"

"No, no—it's about—oh, Mr. Jose, it's about Mary!"

Fire grew in his eyes now, as fire grew out of black coals in the forge fire when the blast of driven air went through it.

"What of her? She's over to Plymouth."

She saw apprehension and fear grow in him.

"She's at our house," said Rachel.

"And well?"

"She's very well——"

"And you come with tears to tell me so?"

There was a tragic dignity about him that scored her mind deeply. Was he taking the fear of the truth into him? Was it then so tragic a thing? She grew confused, for her body swore it was not.

"Has my girl done aught that she—should not?"

She perceived the sea of his mind grow tumultuous.

"She thinks so," said Rachel, and Jose's heart beat freer.

Could any speak so if it had been the worst that he had feared; could any girl speak so?

"What is it, then, what is it?"

He smiled a hard smile, and breathed heavily, as if a danger had been passed, some leeward rock of shame.

"Most girls are fools, you know, begging your pardon, missy, and all women take notions, so what's hers?"

The father's heart spoke in him, the heart unspoiled, a heart that was pitiful within the law. And Rachel's heart leapt within her to hear the altered voice of the man, and, not knowing the law, she answered, looking at him with a flutter of her eyelids (since she had learnt things this hour)—

“Oh, Mr. Jose, she has the dearest little baby!”

In her voice were many elements of human music, pleasure and hope and joyous envy, even at the very time she took strange knowledge into her and revolted against the flesh. But this was an old man, a husband and a father of children, who understood the strength and weakness of the heart. He was the first man she had seen since she had beheld the fruit of the orchard of knowledge shining in terrible light from the underworld of passion; he seemed almost awful to her, at once a man and a fierce kind of animal.

But when she spoke the sun went out of the day for him, and he grew as dark as the chilled forge.

“You lie! you lie!” he said.

He put his knotted hands upon her shoulders and shook her to and fro like a reed.

“You lie, girl, you lie!”

To her fierce pride the insult was a blow, and sudden rage, rage in the throat, choked her.

“She's married, if it's true; she's married,” said old Jose in a very lamentable voice, and Rachel, who looked for something to strike him with, found the deadliest weapon in her tongue.

“She's not, she's not; she says she's not,” she cried in a rage of anger.

And the old man groaned, and hid his face behind his hands. Rachel turned to pity swiftly.

“Oh, don't you love her?”

She pleaded with other music in her voice. And then she sobbed, and with a strange wail of astonishment, cried out—

“Oh, it's so little, and so sweet, and Mary's crying in the wood!”

But Jose thrust her aside, and marching out of the

forge, took the steep path to Morna House. She heard him speak.

"She's only left me six months. 'Tis some man of Morna."

She ran past him as he walked muttering.

VIII

FOR all the sun it was a dark world overhead, and Rachel ran weeping, with anger in her heart and wonder. It seemed natural enough for tragedy to dwell in Morna House and in a dark room where a white woman sat waiting for death. But here was day, and here the warm summer, and a red-cheeked mother of a child. Behind her trod the father of the girl; she heard him come like tragedy itself. Was this the world of God, then, this His pleasure in the ripe increase of His worshippers? There was some strange madness in the nature of things; something cruel, something bestial. Her head whirled at this dark storm, so incomprehensible, so vague in origin, so blind, so vast. How could the absence of marriage, if marriage was not needed, make this difference? Whatever was said, there was the rosy child, crowing amid the bracken, or clutching at the round and rosy breasts of its dear mother. Whatever was thought, there was the baby, the gift of God, and as she now knew, the gift of the body. What did anything matter but that? She turned for a moment as though to ask the man behind her what his visible passion of anger meant, and what Mary meant by fearing him. And then she knew it was vain to ask, for she came to Mary seated crying in the wood. She had turned back again in terror to its warm covert and shelter. In some such wood mothers of long ago had brought forth with woe and unspeakable love.

"Oh, Mary, he's coming!"

The mother whimpered—

"Is he very——"

"Oh, he's mad," said Rachel; "he's mad!"

She faced this inexplicable wrath with such feelings as those who come suddenly face to face with the insane. That she herself had been shocked by knowledge was nothing. That was explicable; she saw she had dreamed, had been deceived by idle words, by the encouraged metaphors of spirit. But this old man knew these things. Was all the world mad then, mad to manage itself, ordaining ritual as to the processes of life? It seemed so at that moment, and then Jose came where his daughter crouched and cowered in the bracken. Rachel did not think she would have cowered thus. She stood over the girl and faced the father with her fists clenched, with her eyes blazing. If he was so mad he might wish to kill his child.

Jose's head was bare; he wore his leather apron and his hands, gnarled and knotted by fifty years of labour, were black as coal. His face, large-featured, fire-worn, wrinkled, was now a mask of passion: it twitched oddly. He was a handsome man even yet, but Rachel thought him hideous as she watched his uncontrolled mind working in the flesh.

"A daughter o' mine, a daughter o' mine!" he said. And Mary groaned in the travail of disgrace and shame.

"Show us your bastard, girl, let's look at the thing to know it's true; to know that you'll not carry your head high in the Cove, and that mine's to fall low before them that hate me."

He spurned the weeping woman with his foot.

"Don't, don't," said Rachel. She choked and beat her own bosom as a thousand passions rose up in her; passions unsuspected, unknown; passions of her ancestry, lying like strange things under a stone on grass. For the worser passions spring from the grave; in their flowering the dead may have awful satisfaction.

"Don't, don't," she said.

"Show me the young flesh of shame," cried the old man. And as he stooped Rachel caught the baby from under Mary's shawl and held him to her bosom. Oh, the beautiful warm darling, to think that such should be the

cause of tears! Now he shed some of his own, and wailed, and Rachel rocked him at her beating heart in this wild dream of human folly.

"Give it me," said Jose; "let's hold it in these hands and know by the feel of it that my daughter's no better than those who are as a pestilence by night. When was't born, girl? Let me think how you kissed me months back when some man of Morna had mouthed you before me."

And Mary said nothing; she bit her lips and shook like one in a fever.

"Silence, you old devil," said Rachel.

"Tell me the father's name," cried Jose; "tell me, or I'll choke it out of you."

He went upon his knees and laid hands upon the shrinking girl. She cried out in fear.

"He shall marry his shame, or I'll heave him over the cliff," said Jose. He shook her to and fro. The likeness of humanity went out of him.

And once more, in a dark midnight of passion, with strange and bitter waters to her lips, Rachel heard the sound of a man riding on the road. She sprang to her feet and shrieked, for she knew the sound.

"Mr. Perran, Mr. Perran!"

Even as she called she caught the eyes of Mary, and in them was something more than mere shame and terror.

"Anthony, Anthony!"

Her voice was keen and shrill; it cut the very air and stopped man and horse like a sudden set barrier.

"Here, here," she cried, and Anthony Perran leapt the low bank, topped with tamarisk, and rode into the wood. And Mary's eyes lost something that Rachel had seen there. She hid her face from the world once more.

"Tell me his name," said Jose. He fumbled for her throat. "I'll choke it out; I'll have it if I kill you!"

And as Rachel dropped the baby and fell upon her knees and caught his wrists, Anthony leapt from his horse and ran in upon them. He almost trod upon the child, and saw it with wonder.

"What's this, Rachel?"

"He'll kill her, Anthony," she cried, for now Jose had the girl by the throat.

"Let go," said Rachel. "Strike him, Anthony, strike him!"

She spoke breathlessly, in a rage that made her words hiss. She bent down and set her teeth into old Jose's wrist. The man struck her back-handed and made her mouth bleed, and before Anthony could do aught, Rachel had his loaded riding-whip from him, and struck the madman with the butt of it. He made a noise in his throat, threw up his hands, and fell back into a hollow of the bracken.

"You've killed him," said Anthony.

And Rachel answered whitely—

"He—he struck me!"

Red blood dropped from her mouth. There was none in her cheeks. But her eyes were dreadful to see, as Anthony dragged Jose from the little hollow into which he had fallen and set his head high.

"What is it?"

Then the blood came back to Rachel's face. She turned from Anthony and caught up the child.

"Oh, 'tis Mary's baby, that's it!"

And Mary sobbed again and Anthony understood.

"Is he dead?" asked Rachel.

But she had struck him upon the strong arch of his skull. A like blow on the temple and he would have never raged again.

"No," said Anthony, "no; take the girl to your house, Rachel."

As she dragged Mary to her feet the old man opened his eyes.

And Rachel went away quickly. For she had seen some things of the world, and some stranger things within herself.

"You shall live with me, Mary. Let me carry the child."

IX

A QUARTER of an hour later Anthony Perran came back by the same path and found Rachel and Mary still in the wood. He walked through the trees to the hedge where his loosed horse was standing and led it towards them. Mary had the baby in her arms and was crying; the child wailed too. Rachel was very white, but when she saw Anthony she flushed a little, and to hide her face bent down and picked up the whip. When she gave it back to him she kept her eyes to the ground.

"Is he much hurt?"

"No," said Anthony, "not with the whip."

That which had hurt him wailed.

"I'm taking her to our house."

The man frowned a little and then bit his lip.

"Is it right?"

"You always ask that. You did—last night."

He saw the clear picture of this virgin of the waters; saw the moon, the sharp rocks, heard the lap of the waves on the shingle.

"It was beautiful last night——"

But now here was tragedy.

"What can I do, Mr. Perran? I've no one to ask."

They had known each other seven years and over, and he understood. The woman who owned the farm he worked was a dark shadow in a dark house.

"And Martha——"

The dominant nature in Rachel answered almost harshly.

"Oh, who's Martha? You say it's not right!"

"I didn't. I only asked if it was."

Rachel lifted her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Perran, when I think of you I always see you asking whether it's right."

She stamped on the soft, needle-covered ground.

"And she's wretched and there's the child."

She spoke with such odd passion that Anthony winced.

"Has *he* done harm?"

The child wailed again, and Rachel, stooping, took it from the mother with kindly roughness. The baby, shocked into silence, nestled against her and ceased to weep.

"Come up to our house, Mary. Till your father's come to himself you shall stay with me. Help her, Anthony."

And Anthony lifted Mary to her feet. She stared at him wanly and shrank from him.

"Oh, sir!" she said.

Those that preached, as he did, had promised her like the fires of hell. She had heard him speak of the wrath to come; of the sins of the flesh that brought wrath.

And he knew, knew well, the father of her child, though he knew not that he was its father. The little mean nature at the bottom of Mary's heart, as it is at the bottom of all hearts, chuckled with a grin, to think how he might be shocked and hurt.

"If I said 'twas Jack; oh, if I said 'twas Jack!"

They came out of the wood, and as they left the shadows, they saw Rachel enter the house.

"We'll bide here a bit," said Anthony, and Mary turned her eyes away from the staring windows in sudden sullenness. But Anthony glanced at her uneasily, and when he had thrown his horse's bridle over the gatepost, he walked away some yards and looked down upon the salt meadows.

These things happened; but this was the first time the fact had come right home to him at Morna. For his own part he had tamed and bitted his lower nature, as he named it with the other preachers; he had coerced his very soul into order, till his instincts, still untempted, seemed the slaves of his will. The Puritan in him throve and rejoiced. The instincts bided their time.

"But why can't I speak to this poor soul?"

It was his duty, but there were other instincts in him than those of passion, as they burrowed their way underground. How could he speak to a woman of these things? Some older man, a man married and a father,

might speak. So much he could say to her. And there was the child.

“Mary, is the baby baptised?”

And Mary shook her head.

“I’ll speak to Mr. Oliver myself,” said Anthony; “and if you have anything to tell him——”

But Mary said in her heart—

“I don’t wish to see ’un, I don’t wish to see ’un. What good’s a praicher to me now, what good’s he now?”

And Rachel was in the kitchen facing Martha with the baby in her arms.

“What have you there, miss?” asked the old woman; “is ’t another baby you’ve been borrowin’? I can’t think what’s your pleasure in anybody’s child. Time enough to wait for your own. Whose is it now?”

Just as Rachel an hour ago would have taken the news joyfully to this child’s grandfather, so would she have shown it to Martha joyfully. But now she was another creature. She had seen the shame of the flesh, incomprehensible and disastrous, and she was herself shamed at the very remembrance of innocent talk concerning the gifts of God to women. She needed time to clarify her soul, to see the threads of life run clearer, to seize hold of the arguments of the spirit and the body, to reconcile the opposition between them of which she for the first time was made plainly conscious by the acts of others, even if her natural heart revolted against such division.

But this child could wait for no message of peace, even if one were to be sent presently by God, or the great world of things. It cried a little, and then Martha saw big tears run down Rachel’s face.

“What’s wrong, girl, and whose is it?”

“It’s Mary Jose’s,” said Rachel.

The natural woman answered alertly—

“Eh, what? I never heard she was married.”

And Rachel soothed the baby with sweet maternal noises.

“No more she is, Martha!”

Martha stared at her and frowned.

“Then what do you bring it here for?”

And yet the girl to whom she spoke was the child of sin, the child of an accursed passion. But Martha had seen Mary Marr in her anguish, and in travail beyond the pains of child-birth and knew her heart. With this new proof of a woman's folly, she was on the terms of ancient prejudice. It needed such excuses as a woman might make for herself.

"The mother's outside, and she's coming in," said Rachel. "I've brought her."

"What for?"

"To stay—oh, Martha, come and look at him. Be kind."

"I'll not look at any odd trollop's bastard," said Martha; "and where am I to be if you bring her? And what will your mother say?"

There were danger signals burning in Rachel's cheeks.

"She'll say what she always says."

And that was: "Take your own way till God says 'no.'" She never spoke a word that was not dipped in her own past, that was not coloured with her own blood.

"Oh, Martha, he's crying, the poor little man."

"But what will *I* say?" asked Martha.

The girl put down the baby and ran to her, and kissed her cheek.

"You old dear, you'll say what you always say, and that's something bitter, and you'll do as you always do, and that's something sweet. And the poor girl's sad, and her father nearly killed her, and he would have done but for Mr. Perran and me. He had her by the throat."

"You should have let him choke her."

"I struck him with Anthony's whip."

"Must have broke it on Will Jose's skull," said Martha; "he always had the hardest skull in Morna."

"I knocked him senseless."

"God was beforehand with you, Rachel. He was a wild fool and then a praying fool, and that's the fault with all the breed, for there's a mad streak in every Jose. And one of 'em was Mr. Perran's mother, as if the Perran's weren't crazy enough already."

Her little storm was over; for she worshipped Rachel always.

"Oh, bring in your trollop," she said; "let's see if she's white or red. If she's red she'll have another; if she's white maybe it'll be two."

"I'll bring her. But you take the baby."

"Not me," said Martha. "I'll not handle him, I hate 'em."

She eyed the last proof of woman's folly with disfavour, and yet with a curiosity that Rachel played on, though she misunderstood its deep and natural roots.

"He's very pretty, Martha. Take him—do."

"Oh—pretty," said Martha with contempt.

"And such blue eyes!"

"Blue eyes, eh? And Mary's a brown slut. I knew she'd go wrong. Blue, you say?"

"Oh, blue as the sea; no, not the sea, like a forget-me-not."

"She'll not forget him. Let's look at his eyes."

Martha put her hands behind her back and advanced to look at the child.

"Oh, yes, he's a handsome baby. And his eyes are blue. Can't you see what blue they are?"

"Why, what blue?" asked Rachel, happy that Martha showed an interest in the live young male she held out to her.

"Why, Perran blue, you silly child!" said Martha with a snort.

And Rachel stared at her without comprehension of the innuendo.

"Did she say the father of 't?"

But Rachel blushed scarlet and then went white. She remembered one strange look in Mary's eyes as she had called to Anthony in that tragic wood.

"Oh, what do you mean?" she whispered. But Martha's intuition struck right home.

"Oh, this is Johnny Perran's, the young blackguard," she said to herself. "There 'tis again, what they say all over the country-side, there's always a good Perran and a bad one. Now John's the devil and Anthony's the

saint, just as their father was the saint and George Perran is the devil. I saw Mary with him one afternoon last autumn."

Then she looked up at Rachel with strange eyes.

"I'm glad you've picked the right Perran, you young hussy."

But this was unendurable and Rachel's face showed it.

"What do you mean? Don't dare to speak to me like that. Take the child."

And Martha, scared a little of the girl's raging eyes, did as she was told.

"Oh, yes, my little man," she said as Rachel ran out, "you're a Johnny Perran right enough. A fine house we're in; odd dogs and kittens and old horses, and now a home for little bastards, children of the moorland and the moon. Ah, me, but my child died and none knew of it, and I was as sad a fool as most and my man died at sea. Oh, baby, baby, but your eyes are blue and tell your mother's secret boldly!"

The baby crowed and clutched the bosom of her dress.

"I'm an old fool," said Martha, "and I wonder how Rachel learnt. A day ago I'd ha' sworn she thought children grew out o' the parsley bed or came by prayer and fasting, or were brought by Dr. Greer or an angel from the sky. My—but she was red and angry! I'll be nice to this child of the bracken, and the mother. The bad Perrans always had their way with the girls, always, always."

She stood at the window with the baby in her arms.

"So I might ha' looked out years ago—for him," she said. "And nobody knew. Sometimes I wish they did. She never says, 'Oh, but you never had a baby, Martha,' but I'm stabbed where he lay at my heart."

She saw Rachel and Mary and Anthony Perran.

"If Anthony Perran married my girl, I'd be restful," she said. "He's a good man, with the devil in him, but the devil undermost, and if she had children they'd anchor her to her home in any storm. For storms will come to her, they'll come. She'll be at hand-grips with her nature any hour."

Then Anthony Perran came in to her.

"'Tis a sad business," he said, as he stood by the fireplace.

"Sadder than you think," replied Martha, with a vicious snap in her voice. "But did Rachel hurt the old man, Mr. Perran?"

Anthony nodded.

"But he'll get over it sooner than he gets over what's in your arms."

"Who's the father of it?" asked Martha carelessly.

"She doesn't say. Perhaps——"

"The brat says," cried Martha; "see his eyes."

Anthony looked at the child's face carelessly.

"Oh, they're blue."

He turned away.

"Where's your devil of a brother now?" asked Martha.

"He's in California."

"This child's father is in California too," said Martha. But as he flushed Mary and Rachel came in.

"See, Martha's got him," said Rachel triumphantly; "don't cry, Mary, don't cry. You shall stay with us and help Martha and me, sha'n't she, Martha?"

"If you and your mother say so, she'll have to," grumbled Martha.

And Anthony walked out of the house. Rachel let him go, for the baby was in her arms again.

X

"YOU'LL speak to your mother about this now," said Martha presently.

And Rachel shrugged her shoulders.

"She'll not thank me for troubling her. And when did she stop me having my way?"

There was still the latent bitterness in the girl's voice. When did her mother take any interest in her, either bidding her do or refrain? The mother was a presence, sad and boding, but no active heart of love in the gloom;

no sweet herb even in her dark closet; no voice but the voice of self-centred prayer.

And here was Life, a child, a mother who became eager and jealous the moment that present fear left her.

"Leave's light, maybe, but she's my mistress," said Martha drily. "You or I must speak to her."

"I'll speak," cried Rachel, "but there's time enough."

"One meal for the mistress's charity, and one for mine and one for yours," said Martha, "and after that there's no time."

"Well, well, that's to-morrow," replied Rachel. "I'll show you where you shall sleep, Mary."

The girl went wondering at such charity of thought in any woman, for she knew her own little soul and would have taken sides at any time with those who damned the the fallen. She hugged her secret to her heart, the secret that was none, her knowledge of John Perran, whom she had called "sir" even after she had been his slave. "If they knew 'twas Jack," she said, but she never called him that. There was something in any Perran that forbade familiarity, even at the extreme of foolish passion. Anthony was grave, subdued, but masterful, even in prayer. John was bright intellect, keen as a sword, a son of the brain and the flesh, dominant, careless, esurient, and marvellously and cheerfully brutal in matters outside the law. There was not a soul but respected Anthony. John many men hated; their women smiled at him secretly. And this Mary knew. She triumphed in her heart about him; knowing nothing of him after all. She held his child in her arms. He would have said, "Oh, I give him to you. Didn't you want him? It seemed like it, you little fool."

And he was again in California. They knew him there for a man of rising power, spoilt only by the spirit of wandering. There were times when he took the shortest views, for he had the health of a brave wild beast.

"If he never comes back, his child is mine," said Mary. There were no other young blue eyes in Morna, it seemed, save in those who had the right to them. She

hugged the baby and followed Rachel to a little room on the top floor, as far from Mrs. Marr's as might be.

"He can cry here if he wants to," said Rachel.

"Oh, miss, he never cries."

"And don't you either," said Rachel shortly. She was in an odd frame of mind, and needed to be alone to lay hold of the world once more and see it round and round.

"Come down to dinner at once," she said. "Does the baby want any milk?"

"Oh, miss, I've plenty," said the mother. She flushed a rosy red, and Rachel's heart beat hard. She put her hand to her own heart with a strange passion that she knew not was envy. Her cheeks blazed too.

"Let me kiss him," she said imploringly.

Now she wished to stay, but could not. Yet she held the baby in her arms and looked down at him longingly and with a bodily delight of warmth. She kissed the crinkled dimpled thing, and touched his mouth with her finger. He sucked at it hard.

"Oh, he's like a lamb," she murmured to herself. "Lambs do that—young lambs."

She gave him back to Mary.

"He's hungry," she said.

And then she went to the door swiftly.

"Martha will be kind to you," she said as she went out.

"You are to be kind to her," she repeated, as she went through the kitchen.

"I'll be kind enough," said Martha, grumbling; "am I not kind to all the strays you fetch me? If it's a cat with kittens one day, 'tis such as this the next."

But Rachel did not hear her.

"Any day she may be the mistress," said Martha, "when my poor darling goes. And she'll have nought but me to look to her when her own woe comes. Such a soft-hearted fool was the one upstairs. But Rachel's fiercer. She makes my flesh cold at times. It will be cold enough, I hope, before she sees any such ghosts as walk up yonder."

She heard the pacing of a woman's feet overhead.

"She's out of her room and into the next," said Martha. "She's waiting again."

And Rachel went to look upon the healing sea. Now the day was bright and hot, for it was close on the noon; upon the surface of blue were silky smooths, ribbons of currents moving with light hot airs; the lap of the sea on rock and shingle and glaring sand was at its softest; the sea colour at its bravest, amethyst, sapphire, emerald, and topaz where a red rock gleamed like a jewel under water. But though the summer wrapped her round and round, and rained its tender influences upon her, she saw nothing of it with her soul, though she sat upon a point of lichened rocks and stared far out to seaward.

It was as if this was her first day of life. Yet this was a dream; she was in the midst of intangible things that threatened; she was on a stream that ran through dens and caverns; her body was a boat unsteerable, fragile, delicate, gross, delightful, abhorrent.

"Lambs do that—young lambs!"

She had known so much of old, but now things were different. She had been divided, disparted, alien from the mass of humanity, from womankind. Now she perceived her own sisterhood with nursing mothers; perceived it without a veil, without mystery, and no soft use of tender imagination, such as comes to most to create illusion, wove comfort about her. She had been waked with a shock and found it cold morning.

She had found violence in her soul too. But no shame hurt her at finding it. She had struck that fierce old man fiercely, and with a certain riotous pleasure, chilled into colder rage when he fell. In him at that moment she struck all males that were alive. A blind sense of injustice wrenched at her as she went among these incomprehensible passions. They all said that women were the weakest, and still they had no pity. The woman within her yearned for sympathy from the father that was in man; she perceived her right to it, and believed she saw Mary's right to it as well.

But (and here she groped at a fact like one drowning

in dreams) Anthony had been good, had been kind and sorrowful, and strong. But both he and Jose were religious. It was the first moment that her naturally pagan soul had thought of religion. What would Father Brant say, what the true Church? She saw that her very religion had so far been what her other beliefs had been, a tangled dream of form and colour. Without knowing it she felt blindly that it had been all emotion. If the root facts of human life had been a false growth in her, what of these facts too? How could she tell what the Church thought?

So her mind brooded, as she looked over the great channel, and all the while her body, exalted strangely to a great passion, brooded like some happier thing nesting over possibilities, known by instinct once and now half-apprehended by the intellect. Her sisterhood with mothers made her kin to the happy beasts. Strange thrills ran through her; she was delighted, afraid, curious, and alarmed. The sense of degradation that was over her as she had heard Mary speak faded and yet returned, and faded once more. Whatever the path was it was God's. That remained; it struck deep into her. She held it instinctively, was a fatalist without knowing it. Even her mother must be on a path of God's.

"Oh, poor mother!"

In her mind, as she grew warmer and more at ease, she nursed sweet children. She smiled at heaven, the giver of all good things. But she saw no father of the children yet. They still came from heaven straight when she dreamed.

She went back to the house after an hour which had been as long as a life and as short as any dream.

XI

THAT afternoon Rachel went up to her mother with her nerves ashake, and for a long while she stood outside the door listening rather to the sound of her own beating heart than to any sign of life that came from within. In

the sun and even at night, upon the beach and in the murmuring depths of the pinewood, her courage was high; and this fear of her mother, touched with a dreadful distaste, was dreadful to her even after all the long years in which she had endured or avoided the sad cause of it.

Now when mysteries opened to her, when she saw strange implications in all ripening things, she saw equal implications in the white woman of the inside room, who waited, as she knew, for death. To-day for the first time there came to Rachel some deeply felt sense that the cause of this pain and woe and insanity was in some way connected with herself. How she knew she could not tell, but so it seemed to her, and the thought introduced a new fear into her intercourse with her mother. She had seen a child bring bitter woe that bright morning. She had touched a tragedy with both hands, had seen fear and passion and rage rise and break into storm. For her mother the storm was perhaps over. But wreck strewed the shore.

What would she say of Mary and the baby? Yet it was not what she would say; it was what she would feel. Her mother's tongue never hurt her; but at times her eyes were piercing and terrible. But most dreadful of all was the blanched indifference with which she usually viewed all things but herself. If this was repentance it seemed an outrage on the God that Rachel had conceived; it was a kind of sacrifice to some Moloch lest worse should befall. The horror of its selfish unnaturalness never smote Rachel so hard as at this hour when she left Mary's baby smiling in his mother's arms.

"I must go in," said Rachel.

But she lingered until she hated herself for cowardice. Then she knocked lightly and was bidden to enter.

It was years since her mother had kissed her. Sometimes when the older woman slept the sleep of exhaustion her daughter had touched her drawn brow with sorrowful lips. When both were awake a subdued and impatient hostility oppressed them. Now Mrs. Marr did not turn her head as she sat at a plain wood table which had neither covering nor any adornment. She was clad in black

without any band of white. A book lay open before her. In her lap was a bundle of old letters. Near her thin right hand, as it lay upon the table, was the ancient crucifix of yellow worn ivory.

That cross had a curious and peculiar fascination for Rachel, an attraction not due to any religious feeling that hung about it. Though it was very old and worn, the features of the Christ were yet discernible; an expression upon them was still suggested. Whoever had wrought this in ivory had been a man of strong feeling and originality. The Christ that had grown under his graver was not the conventional figure of the Italian religious school; the head did not recline upon the shoulder, the attitude of the body indicated, not resignation, but rather revolt; the face was the face of one who belonged to the Church Militant. To Rachel there was something rather diabolic than divine in the cross; many superstitions in her had crystallised about it. And to her mother the crucifix had undoubtedly become a fetich; she clung to it with other thoughts than those which are said to come to such sad spirits as can climb to Calvary. Only thrice in her life had Rachel touched it, and on each occasion it had been snatched from her with violence; with such violence as made her weep and inflamed her curiosity about it to a strange degree.

Even as Rachel entered the room her mother's hand crept over to the cross and stayed there.

"Well, girl!" she said in a voice which had once been very beautiful. Now it was sharpened, fretted and worn, as the beautiful ivory was worn. But even yet there was grave music in its tones when she prayed to heaven in strange and sweet and rare hours of faith.

Behind her stood Youth, and something like her ancient self. This was her child, the destroyer of joy; the thing sent by God to bring her back to him. The sight of her child reminded her in a passion of pain of the dead past—the past on which her very soul was crucified.

This dead living creature of revolt and prayer and anguish had been majestic, human, joyous. From her

had fallen all majesty; humanity stayed weeping and joy had fled away. In her woman's heart lived a live ember of jealousy. She saw in her child something more beautiful than herself; something strong and naturally joyous, though the girl's joy in life was threaded darkly by the pain of her who had conceived her in mortal sin.

"She is my child and his, and but for her——"

She broke off and prayed. Might it not be that one evil thought more would fill her measure? She thought of eternity without the spirit of her lover.

"What is it, child?" she asked more mildly. But she did not turn her head.

"I want to have Mary Jose and her child in the house," said Rachel unsteadily.

"Ask Martha," replied her mother; "let her do as she will, and as you will."

So soon the trial might have been over. But there was stubbornness in Rachel. The mother was set on heaven, if he was to be there; or on hell—if he was there. Rachel was set upon what she desired equally, and here she was set upon truth that her mother should know.

"I ought to tell you that—that——"

"Speak out," said her mother, still without turning her head. "Am I never to have any time to my self, never any peace? What is it?"

Rachel flushed.

"She has no husband and her father tried to kill her."

"Fool!" said her mother. Whether that word was for the father or the daughter Rachel did not know. It might serve for either or for both. She knew, at any rate, that it was not meant for herself.

"Poor fool!"

Even that might serve for one or both. Even as Mrs. Marr spoke she settled herself in her wooden chair and sank into contemplation. For one long minute Rachel stood there, and then she crept to the door. In the passage she breathed heavily, as though she had come up from the valley of the shadow of death.

"The baby can stay!"

Her blood ran fast in her veins. There was such brave

life in her that her mother's state weighed on her not at all when she held the child in her arms again.

"What did your mother say?" asked Martha. Mary looked down.

"She asks what you say?"

The old woman threw up her head.

"Oh, it's amazin'! And what do I say?"

Rachel rocked to and fro over the baby.

"You say what I do," she replied carelessly. "Come, Mary, let's sit in the sun."

But Martha said as they went out—

"She never sees that the end is coming upstairs. Oh, my poor dear!"

XII

THE village hissed and cackled like a flock of geese on dry land when it was discovered that Mary Jose had come home, bringing that which God had given her without a licence from any priest or minister of man. For Morna was outwardly set upon the interpreted rigid law that black-gowns howled upon Sundays.

"Increase and multiply wer for the baists, but marriage wer for us."

They were sure of all things save the mercy of God. Neither doubt nor pity touched them, and where three were together no mercy was among them. Only Steve, the fallen preacher, had any sympathy with those who suffered, and even he was grim with satisfaction when he found the village had less need of him as an example.

"Old Jose said I was the shame, and when I'm sober I am, but the poor girl has put my nose out o' joint," said Steve. "I'm sorry for old Jose, though. I'm that sober I could preach about charity."

In such sobriety a dry wit returned to him. He spoke above the heads of the village. But he had two ways of thinking and two languages.

"And to think that Miss Rachel 'ed hev' Mary's bastard in the house."

They talked ancient scandal of old Tregilgas and his daughter; they hinted present slander. But they always came back to one thing.

"What can 'ee expect of Papishers?"

"Laave the poor woman be," said Steve; "don't 'ee know she's dyin'?"

Now he spoke as the rest did, not as the preacher he had once been.

"Bin dyin' these five years!" some said scornfully; "the bed-ridden and the lazy live long."

"Aye," said Steve, "'tis a notorious long-lived village this. You, Sam, got out o' bed this mornin' at eight. And you did'n' fish yesterday, nor was you married yesterday neither."

"Wet your tongue," said Sam, "when you're dry 'tis as rough as a file."

"Come and stand us a pint," said Steve, "and I'll tell thee how I know Mrs. Marr will go to heaven or the other place in a little while."

"D'ye know?"

"I know."

"Tell how, Steve?"

"'Tis by ratiocination," said Steve. "Will 'ee stan' us that pint, Sam? I know what a man you are to be talkin' when you should be workin', and you can come back here and tell what I tell 'ee."

"Go, Sam, go and stan' 'un a pint."

And Sam did as he was bid.

"How d'ye know she'll die soon?" asked Sam.

"'Tis by fair reasonin'," said Steve, as he put his pot down, "fair reasonin'. You know the nature of eternity, Sam?"

"Aye," replied Sam, "'tis well known 'tis for ever."

"And what's a year against eternity, Sam?"

"'Tis like a pilchard to all the pilchards in the say."

"That's a rare good sim'ly," said Steve. "I'll remember that if I reform and go to praichin' again. Why, the man that could argue that could hev bin a praicher himself."

"Hev' another pint," said Sam.

"I will; now, if a year to eternity is like that, 'tis like nothin'. What's one pilchard, Sam?"

"Not enough to eat."

"And if it's nothing, so is ten years to eternity. For eternity is bigger than the biggest catch of pilchards as ever come off the coast o' Cornwall. So ten years, or twenty, is nawthin', isn't it, Sam?"

"To be sure."

"And if it's nawthin' 'tis very little, isn't it, Sam?"

"To be sure," said Sam.

"Then if Mrs. Marr lives another twenty year, her'll die in a little while, in spite of it, won't 'un, Sam? Could you stan' another pint for this proof of 't?"

"Go to the devil," said Sam sulkily. "I knawed as much meself."

"Oh, aye," said Steve, "I've often thought we all knew everythin' if we could find it out. But it takes talk and many pints and much sittin' in the sun to learn that the biggest fool in Cornwall knows as much as the Bishop o' Truro. That's worth the quart, Sam. You're no bigger fool than a bishop, after all."

And while Sam went back to own that Steve had made a fool of him, Steve sat with his back to a rock on the beach and took the sun.

"'Tis my belief that breedin's all a matter of sunlight," said Steve. "And if God lights the lamp, 'tis long odds (all I could drink to what I do) that the men and the maids won't need lanterns to find each other. Miss Rachel's main fond of children, so she is—too fond. But her mother will die, and she'll own the farms, and she'll do as she likes, as any Tregilgas hereabouts does. Lord, what a cackling about Mary! And some of the worst cacklers I married in such a hurry that I clipped my words to save 'em shame."

And as he fell asleep, old Jose was working furiously at his forge.

"I'll find him. I'll find him," he said.

XIII

THE days of the summer drifted by, and Rachel found less delight in the sea-shore than in the blue eyes of Mary's child. Her nature flowered strangely; a look came in her own eyes as if she foresaw maternity, reached not by a path of passion, but by that same path of the spirit in which she had once believed. Perhaps she even saw that both ways might be one way, if they were made one. But the physical side of her grew in strength and beauty; there was something so fine about her, something at once so tender and so haughty, that the men looked at her again as though she were a stranger. Once a gipsy stopped her on the outskirts of the village. He said without insolence, but with fervour:

"You might be a queen, miss."

There was power in her, power growing, and the darkness that came upon her spirit at times, and made her eyes sullen, increased rather than diminished. For darkness was revolt with her, never humbleness or true, soft melancholy.

"She grows bigger than her mother was," said Martha. "And she walks so proudly. There's fire in her eye and in her soul. 'Tis a great spirit she has."

With many, Mary would have been a jealous creature. But Rachel dominated her utterly, as if she belonged to another race. She followed her protector about as if she had been a timid hound. She would have followed her husband so if she had been married. Rachel perceived her weakness, and, not knowing that there was a kindred weakness in herself, she laughed.

"She'd do what any man told her if she cared for him."

For a time her own heart was satisfied vicariously. The growing baby was a forecast which eased her mind. It was a promise of God to her. Yet she dreamed of her own children often.

It was a month before she learned where the blue eyes of Mary's boy came from, and the knowledge was a fear-

ful shock to her for days. For this month she had thought little of Anthony Perran. Yet she had had a childish passion for him; had been shy and timid with him; had waylaid him purposely and had then hidden. There was something grave and strong and tender and whole-souled about Anthony. He was handsome, so folks said, but that was nothing to the attraction of his steady eye. And underneath him lay fire. And now his brother, whom she had seen so little of, marking his joyous insolence with disfavour, came back to her as the giver of this child that she adored. With him for the father there could be no spiritual mystery. That she knew, and a strange realism came over her when Martha let out what Mary held a secret.

“His! John Perran’s!”

She flushed a painful scarlet, and stared at Martha.

“I never meant to say. ’Tis only my guess from the eyes of him.”

The blood raced in Rachel: she sickened at the whole world for a moment; the flesh was made manifest to her. And the undercurrent of her maiden fancy for Anthony came up in her again, so that her body seemed to hurt her and make her ashamed. For he had been of the spirit, and was now blood-brother to the man who laughed and eyed women with eyes of knowledge, and saw them as they were. His bright insolence unveiled them: they stood in the market-place.

As Martha spoke she had the baby in her arms. She had bathed him herself with sensuous sweet delight—the dimples of him and the round limbs and his mottled palms were an exquisite pleasure, and the senses danced in her as she had dried him while he kicked and crowed. Now she looked into his eyes, looked as a magician might into a pool of ink, into a crystal. Their blue took another colour for her: there was something more than the child here. She touched the deepest truth with her shrinking soul. This child was the father—was the race, and as ancient. She revolted against him suddenly, and walked upstairs to Mary.

“You must take care of him to-day,” she said.

And that day she spent upon the cliff over the purring Lion in the wash of the tides. Mary had led her there often. And there Mary had often cried. But sometimes she had smiled in so strange a way that Rachel hated her.

As she sat there she saw Anthony chiefly. First of all men he had presented to her the strange script of the enigma of the male. But in him it had been obscured by other script. He was a palimpsest and almost undecipherable as to the mere characters. But John Perran, now that she had the key of Hermes, was like characters fresh-chiselled on stone. He was ardent, savage, humorous, brave, brutal, and indiscriminate in affection. Without words, she saw him as he was, and saw in him desire both serious and smiling.

"I hate him," she said. Something in her approved him. Or was it that something not herself approved that which was only his equally with all his fellows? He was the father of this child. She would be a mother of children. She shivered a little and clenched her hands.

"I hate him."

Perhaps all women have hated men. Later in her life she saw that: she even saw that all men hate all women. Each is the enemy; they are divergent and diverging allies. They sacrifice themselves for the race and rarely forget the sacrifice.

It was only when hunger compelled her that Rachel went back home. She was more at peace with herself and with things as they are. But Anthony was different to her. He had become a man: even his religion and his gravity did not conceal the writing on the rock.

"I wonder what my father was like," she said. And she dismissed the thought from her mind hastily.

"Poor, poor mother!"

A knowledge of tragedy wrapped her round. When she got home she took the child from Mary without a word, and rocked him on her knee. She ate in silence, and shook her head when Mary offered to take the baby from her.

But after she had eaten Martha said to her:

"I'm afraid your mother's very ill, Rachel."

"What is wrong now?" asked Rachel absently. She had heard the same story a hundred times.

Martha told her when Mary took the baby to bed.

"She says I'm keeping a letter from her."

"That's new," said Rachel.

"'Tis new that I'm keeping it, but an old story that she looks for it."

"But who should write to her? No one writes to us."

It was Rachel's father that should write from some far settlement of Patagonia.

"Who should write?" she repeated.

But Martha, who knew, shook her head.

"I want to send for Dr. Greer."

"She locked her door against him last year."

"She'll lock it now."

"Send for Father Brant."

"I offered to, and she says 'No.' And she walks her room and cries out——"

"What does she cry out?"

What she cried out was "Antonio."

"And she holds that crucifix. Oh, 'tis hard, even now, on one as isn't a Catholic to see such."

But Rachel paid no heed to her when she spoke of religion. Her own religion went no deeper than her skin, but it still wrapped her up.

"What does she cry out?"

"Oh, listen," cried Martha irritably; "and what wiser will you be?"

"I'll go for Father Brant in the morning," said Rachel. And she went upstairs and stood at her mother's door. She heard the woman walking, walking, and each time she turned she cried out in a tone of agony:

"Antonio!"

And Rachel's face darkened. In the darkness she saw other undecipherable script, but she knew it was in the language she had learnt some strange characters of that very day. Half the night she sat upon the stairs, and still

she heard her mother walking, and still she heard that name.

So, perhaps, should the daughter call upon a like name in days yet to be begotten by Eternity.

XIV

It was two miles, by moorland, road, and the park itself, to Caerhays House. There dwelt Father Brant, doing his best for an ungrateful country and for the man he chaplained. In that part of the world true sons of the Church were rare. His congregation was usually composed of the family, though it sometimes included Rachel, her mother, and an old sailor from the church-town of Morna. But, though results were few, the Father sowed the seed by the wayside, and Methodists sprang up and choked them.

For the last year Mrs. Marr had never entered the little chapel, and Rachel's visits grew rarer. Her religion was her cloak, but when her life was warm it fell away from her, as she bathed her soul in sunlight and a vast instinctive Pantheism. She believed what she had been taught, believed it literally, but deep within her the creeds and doctrines that she heard carried no more with them than a moral doctrine would have done that depended upon some moral value imparted to the alphabet. Her religion was an algebra learnt by rote. But, nevertheless, she loved Father Brant, whose brain never touched hers, though his charity went hand in hand with her warm affections. He was a quiet and simple man, thoughtful and shallow, a lover of birds, a musician without power; he believed simply what he taught. And a great passion appalled him; he had shed tears over the woman at Morna, whom he trusted to Heaven as one to be dealt with tenderly, since she was truly distraught.

Of Rachel he had an instinctive dread, almost a physical horror, even though he loved her. She was a Mortal Sin in herself; her parentage was a blasphemy. Often Rachel wondered at the looks he cast at her.

But even now, with her awakened mind, she did not think of him as a man. She perceived that he was subdued to the Church, and of it utterly.

She left Morna early, and walked eagerly on the dewy grass. As she rose from the hollows and curves of the land dipping by the sea, her spirit lightened; her hours of vigil had not touched her strength or darkened her eyes. With a sense of shame she found herself almost singing when she trod the turf of the moorland.

"I'm a selfish beast," she said. She accommodated herself with strange swiftness to the world of change. The gentle beasts were her brothers; she whistled to the birds. Her mind bade her be dark since her mother was in a darkened house; but her blood sang bright and beautifully. The vein of sadness within her lay deep till some miner came to lay her waste.

She met Father Brant in the avenue of the house, and bade him good-morning submissively. For him alone such an attitude was natural to her.

"Good-morning, my daughter."

He was a man neither old nor young, for he had never known youth, and would not recognise age till he met death hand in hand with it. He stooped a little. But he had never stood upright. There was contemplation in his eye. He had never viewed the world save through himself and the glasses of the Church. He was thin, and, though human, utterly without humour. His lack of humour made him anxious. It was the fault of his faith that he could not trust God to do without him.

"If you can, I should like you to come and see my mother," said Rachel.

"How is she?"

The delight of the day was over for Rachel; a touch of self-consciousness was upon her.

"She is very much troubled, and does not sleep, and will not eat. And——"

"And what, Rachel?"

She had meant to tell him that her mother called aloud upon someone whose name she had never heard till then. But all at once it seemed a breach of confidence, an out-

rage, to give up what might be her mother's secret. She flushed a little and then added swiftly:

"And I'm very anxious about her."

It was a lame conclusion, as the priest knew. But he did not press her.

"I'll come with you now," he said. "It is a sweet day, Rachel, and the birds are singing. They sing in my heart. What a bright world it might be, after all! Tell me how you have been since I saw you."

They walked upon the moorland, and saw the sea shining in the south. The sky was soft and dappled with lofty clouds. Birds sang from every tree and every clump of gorse flowering with early gold. Once Rachel's tongue might have blossomed into childlike speech about bird and beast and man, but now she was paralysed into silence. There seemed at first no speech in her, though she wondered what Father Brant would say about Mary.

"I—I can't talk to-day," she murmured presently.

But the priest's mind had gone away from her. He repeated to himself:

So sweet, so cool, so calm, so bright.

And his own eyes brightened a little, too. Presently he repeated the whole poem aloud.

"It was written by a good Catholic," he said, smiling, "and most English poetry was not, you know."

She knew nothing of poetry, or very little. Books had never yet been her resource. She learnt rather where poets learn, and did not take the world at any sweet second-hand. And yet she knew now how much she had taken thus, or rather how much had been forced upon her by the slow processes of social lies.

"I think I ought to tell you something," she said suddenly.

"If you think you ought, I'm sure you ought," replied Father Brant. "We can always be sure what is right if we listen to our true selves."

She had heard so much a thousand times, and could not say why the thousand-and-first time of hearing irritated her.

"Oh, can we?" she asked. There was almost a touch of dryness in her speech. But the priest did not detect what he did not look for.

"Always," he said simply. "But what is it you want to tell me?"

She flushed again, thinking once more that a few days ago she would have imparted what she had in her mind with joyous innocence.

"It's—it's about Mary Jose," she said.

Though the Joses were of a truth black Protestants, yet the Father knew all the village by name. Few, even the most fervent against the Papacy, ever refused to answer him when he saluted them.

"Ah, what of her?"

"Her father nearly killed her, and I took her into our house," said Rachel. "She has a baby. And she isn't married."

"Ah," said Father Brant, "but how shall violence cure mortal sin? I am glad you had pity on her."

But Rachel said to herself: "Why is it a mortal sin?"

She broke out suddenly: "Oh, isn't a baby straight from God, Father?"

And the priest said: "Yes."

"Then how is it that God rewards a mortal sin by sending a baby from heaven?"

"Marriage is a sacrament of the Church, and was ordained by God and blessed by Christ," said the Father. "It is for you, and for all of us, Rachel, to accept what the Church says."

He spoke with a certain severity and with surprise. And yet, why should he be surprised, since she who spoke was the fruit of a deadly sin?

And the fruit of mortal sin that Rachel knew of was as bonny as could be. He had crowed and laughed upon her lap that morning. His eyes were heavenly blue.

"Is she to marry the father of her child?" asked the Father presently.

But Rachel answered, almost sullenly, that she did not know. She had hold of certain root facts that the theologians played with. If God knew what would hap-

pen how came it that the Church was severe and man was bitter? She spoke not a word till they came to Morna House.

XV

ANTHONY PERRAN came riding again to Morna House that very morning, and reached it a few minutes before Rachel and Father Brant returned. His heart was heavy, for he knew Martha had spoken the truth about his brother; instinct and knowledge of the man and remembrance of his talk the year before told him that it was so. His heart was very heavy, for he loved him.

"He's so bright," said Anthony, "and his eyes are as clear as Sigurd's, as clear as any dog's, and there's not even a dog's faith in him, for he believes in none. And as a little lad he did what he would and bore with any pain like a man. He'd sing then as he sang last year, and there's no God for him, and no hell. And as for me——"

As for him, he loved him even now, and was very sorrowful, though stern.

He called to Martha as she looked out of the kitchen-window: "I want to see Mary."

"Oh, Mr. Anthony, I doubt if you can. She'll not come down unless Miss Rachel asks her," said Martha.

"I want to speak about her child being baptised," said Anthony.

"'Tis you have the right," said Martha. And Anthony turned upon her angrily.

"What right had you to say what you did the other day?" he demanded as he dismounted by the door.

And Martha threw out her hands with a gesture learnt in Italy.

"Oh, sir, I daresay 'twas wrong of me, but the child's eyes spoke. And I saw Mr. John with her twice last September. I knew he was after no good. And who has the same blue eye but you and him? It's the blue eye of the Perrans."

Anthony turned away and stood with his back to her.

"Has the girl said aught?"

"She's as close as a limpet to a rock. But she's red or white when a Perran is spoken of."

"And does Miss Rachel know?"

"It slipped out o' me," said Martha apologetically, "it would out. My tongue will have its way at times, Mr. Anthony. And besides that, I've a mind this long while to set her against the Perrans."

She spoke with significance, and Anthony turned his face away from the woodland.

"Why, woman, why?"

And Martha shook her head.

"'Tis easy telling, sir, and you might guess."

She saved him the trouble of guessing, if there was any trouble in it.

"'Tis because I think you'll never marry a Papist, Mr. Anthony. Yours is a bad mind to change, and you're set on your own faith. And who can move her?"

"What folly are you talking?" asked the man.

"'Tis not folly, sir," said Martha, "and you know it, and you know her. Oh, sir, she's a beauty and fond of living and all living things, and at times 'tis you she speaks of just as innocently as a baby, and by and by I fear she might love you. For I know her nature; and oh, but there's the devil in your eye, too, sir, when you laugh so rarely. I'm doing her a wrong to speak, but who shall speak for her, since her mother sits with death? Don't get her fond of you till you can see 'tis all one with a Papist and a Baptist, sir. For what's her mother but a walking ghost callin' on ghosts? And I'm her mother now, Mr. Perran."

Her hands shook and a tear rolled down her withered cheek.

"Oh, sir, if Miss Rachel ever loves any one 'twill be terrible hard upon her, for her soul will be in it, and for him she'll rise up and lie down, and the day will be his, and the night also; and if her love isn't fortunate, 'twill be like as if her life—so strong as it is—was as the house

built upon sand. And if 'tis fortunate the man will have a crown and be a king. So, sir, don't get her set to look for you, as I sometimes fear she does. And as you know, sir, 'tisn't only the bad Perran of his generation as causes trouble, for your father was a good man, and 'tis well known there was a woman that drowned herself at the River the day he was married. Oh, that's well known."

Even as she spoke, Rachel and Father Brant came out of the upper wood, and when Rachel saw Anthony standing there her face brightened marvellously, and something stirred within the man's heart that made him quiver.

"Did you see how the sun rose for her?" said Martha. "Oh, I saw it. May it never set in tears. 'Tis liking now, but it might be more. Don't act to make it so, unless you mean it, sir."

But even now it might be too late. There was something changed in Rachel, Martha saw. And even if the change were due only to the sudden increase of fated knowledge, the old woman perceived that the child she had nursed had become a woman by holding another child against her heart.

"I wonder if I did wrong to speak," she said as she went into the house. "And Rachel, with her beauty, might look high. Only she won't; she will stoop, she will stoop. I'll tell her again that Mr. Anthony will never marry a Catholic, never in his life. And what is he but a farmer? And she will own his farm when my poor darling is gone. I'll go and see her now."

And Rachel and Anthony and Father Brant spoke together for a little, while Martha cried to a locked door and got no answer. She came out presently, and the priest went into the house with her.

"I came to see Mary," said Anthony. "Mr. Oliver will baptise the child on Sunday."

She knew who the father of the child was! That was the thought in his mind, though he spoke as if his mind was free. But under his calm the storm raged; for he was disgraced by one without grace, whom he yet loved.

"I'll tell her," said Rachel. There was something in her voice which was new to him. She did not look

him straight in the face. "Yes, I'll tell her," she repeated. "Have you seen her father again?"

"He speaks to none," said Anthony.

"Oh, it's hard to speak," said Rachel passionately; and Anthony understood her cry, for it was hard for him, for her, for the old man. Words were nothing but vague signals in a blind storm; and in agony the tongue failed till the heart broke.

"Oh, the world's a cruel place," said Rachel. "Why, why do things matter so?"

Her pagan heart cried out aloud in strange astonishment; for she saw how sweet it might be to live in the sun. Her religion dropped away from her in such an hour; she saw human nature crucified and man himself upon his own cross of no salvation. The natural path to Paradise lay in trust of self.

For the man beside her, that way lay damnation; he built against nature and feared it. For his God was outside of life and abhorred it; He only spoke out of fire or a bush of thorns. Anthony sought to live by argument and theory rather than by nature, the Logos of God, speaking in the green and red words of the woodland as in the heart of man.

But he did not answer her, and she spoke again suddenly:

"Why do you hate Father Brant?"

He flushed, but denied that he hated him, denied it almost angrily.

"I know you do," said Rachel, "and yet I'm a Catholic."

In truth she belonged to the Catholic Church of Humanity that all Churches are arrayed against.

"I hate no man but myself, no man at all, but only sins and errors," said Anthony.

She knew he was a man, a rider, a swimmer, one who could sail a boat with any fisherman of Morna Cove; and that he could speak as he did seemed wonderful. Why should such a man hate himself? And why should any one harry his soul about the sins and errors of the world? She even rebuked him.

"Oh, isn't that for God?"

"For God in us, too."

"So Father Brant thinks," said Rachel angrily. At that moment she almost forgave John Perran. It was not her business to say aught in this matter. If he were cruel, so was Anthony. And yet the elder brother was a man, and held her mind the more tenaciously the more he seemed inexplicable. Now she understood John, but Anthony strained her understanding to grasp. Till this day she had been content to look upon him. She tried to loose a Gordian knot with feeble fingers. Not yet should passion be the sword to cut it.

Both knew they talked round his brother's deed, his sin, his responsibility. Here was a pure and innocent girl defending him, said Anthony. But she made no defence. She simply formed no indictment. She stood beside the entanglements and intricacies of the Law in amazement, as all true women do.

"She does not understand; she surrenders her soul to a priest," said Anthony. He found himself without words, for his own emotions were not simple. He only spoke freely when God was with him, the same God that Rachel knew of; when his heart flowed freely and he forgot the Law in emotion born of Nature.

As they stood there the sun moved to the west, and the shadow of the house fell upon them. Rachel shivered and moved into the sun again. But Anthony leant against the wall, thinking, and she came back into the shadow.

"Oh, Anthony, I hope you're not angry with me! I wonder you like me at all, seeing I'm a Catholic."

She spoke mournfully; she apologised, almost with humbleness, for the faith which was not really hers. Then she smiled a little and humour played upon her lips.

"You see, I can't help it."

She was very beautiful, said Anthony. He remembered what Martha had said and smiled too. Her beauty was something which had not touched his heart. He was concerned for her soul only.

And then Father Brant came from the house. He went straight to Rachel and drew her apart.

"Your mother will not see me, child," he said. "I fear she is very ill. Send for the doctor and let me know how she is. For I will come again whenever you need me."

He laid his hand upon her head, and Anthony frowned.

There was a gulf set between him and her, and for him Love had not yet sought to build a bridge across it.

"I'll send the doctor," he said coldly as he mounted his horse again. "And tell Mary what I told you."

He rode up the same path on which Father Brant was walking, and overtook him at the verge of the wood. Rachel watched them from the shadow of the house. She grieved in her heart for many things, and did not know yet that if Anthony Perran had smiled as he went her heart would have been lighter even in heavier grief.

XVI

ANTHONY rode past the priest swiftly, and hardly returned his salutation. Such as Brant were the priests of an alien deity, Baal or Moloch. Prejudice deep as the sea, high as the cliffs over the sea, separated him from Rome. Now his love for his brother and his wrath made him bitter. He rode in a strange confusion of mind, for only awhile ago he had been calm and quiet, sure of himself and his own. Now disgrace touched his name once more. It had not been smirched in this generation, and his uncle's doings had mostly died out of the minds of men. And old Martha's words about Rachel touched him sharply, awaking him to the knowledge of certain depths of his own nature. He perceived that the girl came near to loving him, and though the knowledge of this woke no true passion in him, it woke that which made him abhorrent to himself.

"She's only a girl, a child," he said; "and then, she is a Roman Catholic."

There would be a conflict about the children in such a

marriage. The thought of children made him set his teeth hard; a red flush burnt in his cheek.

"Then there's Winnie," he said.

She was his cousin, the daughter of his uncle, the "bad Perran" of his time. Winnie, he knew, meant to marry him; it had been arranged when they were children, agreed on, accepted, settled even by the children themselves. There was a certain inevitability about it; inevitability that grew out of his weakness and the strength that was in Winifred. She had claimed Anthony, had woven herself about him by pretending his loss would destroy her. And yet, technically, he was free. And he had never desired her; his passions lay asleep when he was with her. He called her a good influence, because half of him lay drowsing when he was by her side.

The religious sense in him was strong; it was built on fear of himself. Some day the evil in all men might awake in him; he saw himself as he saw his brother with a self-control that might be less strong than he hoped. Now, this very day, the smiling aspect of Rachel as she came from the wood had pleased something in him dreadfully. He saw she was beautiful, saw that she was a woman, perceived that she could draw men to her.

And the other night she had been but a creature of the waves, a cold nymph of the sea. Now he saw the colour of her, the bronze and hidden gold of her hair, the bosom rounded and delightful, the strong, clean limbs, the mournful sweetness of her eyes, the almost majesty of her grave and peculiar aspect, the inherited tragedy of her soul.

"Oh, such a woman——" he said, and broke off. He could have forgiven himself a passion for her. But a sudden wild desire desecrated her and himself, and he was afraid. He used prayers against such lures of the flesh as if they were incantations, and was astounded at himself.

"The mother will die and she'll be alone!"

The thought of it fired his blood, and burnt in his cheek, and then the martyr and the saint awoke in him; the ascetic instincts of his soul renewed themselves. He

saw sufficient reason in desire to deny himself; he offered the flesh upon the altar, believing all flesh acceptable as a burnt offering to the deity.

"I'll speak to Winnie again," he said.

There was safety in such a pale woman; he would marry her as a duty, as a salvation, as a method of denial, as a safeguard. So strangely his imagination burnt suddenly about Rachel, for nature had him by the throat. He got nature down again, and rode praying, and became almost exultant, rejoicing in victory.

"I have my brother's nature in me," he said; and even as he said it he perceived a strange and awful beauty in wild passions, in desire let go, in the growth of self, the aspects of nature and sweet nudity. Meadows of asphodel flowered before him; he saw Rachel naked by the margin of the sea and heard his wild heart singing. That which he called his better nature cried out aloud to the God he worshipped: "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" and when he came to the open road upon the upland he galloped from himself. The cooler breezes that fanned him were like balm. He was a victor in this sudden battle before he reached the Church Town, where he left a message for the doctor.

As he rode back again he saw Father Brant standing at the cross-ways, whence the path led to the Great House. There was no simplicity in the world for Anthony Perran this morning. He could not accept this priest even as a phenomenon. How was it that God allowed false teachers in His world? Anguish and suffering and evil seemed simple indeed, but how was it that God's creatures, believing in creeds that were not true, believed they did His work? He hated the priest, and yet pitied him; hated the priest, and was sorry for the man. He pulled up as Father Brant signed to him.

"I've left word for Dr. Greer," said Anthony. And then he noticed that the priest was not alone. Old Steve was sitting on a big stone by the hedge.

"Good-morning, Mr. Perran," said the reprobate; "'tis a fine day, isn't it? Fine for all of us."

He was obviously advanced in liquor and most remarkably cheerful.

"It's over fine for you, you old vagabond," said Anthony sternly. "If I had my way I'd have you flogged."

"He certainly ought to know better," said Father Brant mildly, "and I've been telling him so."

"What's the use?" asked Anthony.

"Aye, what's the use when I know better than both of you?" nodded Steve. "For I'm so full of good liquor that I know best. 'Tis a remarkable thing to meet like this. Here's Father Brant, and he's a priest of Rome, and here's Mr. Perran, that preaches at times (and does it spirited, for I've heard him through a window while I smoked on a tombstone), and here's myself that used to preach to many that's under tombstones now. And what's the conclusion of it, sirs, what's the conclusion?"

He was authoritative and humorous; his grey beard wagged and his eye was merry.

"The conclusion for you should be a whipping," said Anthony.

"Bless your soul, sir," said Steve, "I've stopped whipping myself. But the whip's for you, sir; 'tis you uses it on yourself. And a lot you gain. There's more of the sad priest in you than in his reverence here. He doesn't whip himself much, but you'll be all scars before you learn wisdom and know there's as much learning in a pot of ale as in a pipe of preaching. I used to cry damnation too, and I had a fine name for a voice that can't sing so much as a drinking-song now. But I found out that I didn't know as much as God after all, and that seeing I'd done my work and brought up two children I might as well be myself as pretend different. I tell you, gentlemen-preachers both, that 'tis better to sit in the sun than the shade, and that beer's only barley converted, and that neither a black coat nor a voice for hymns proves God isn't wiser than men. And wisdom lies in letting the world go. Oh, Lord, but here I'm preaching again."

"You're an old blackguard," said Anthony.

"So I am," said Steve.

"And the name of God on your lips is blasphemy."

"'Tis better to take His name in vain than to take it for a conceited fool's purpose," said Steve. "D'ye know, Mr. Anthony, there's times I've felt I'd rather go to hell with your brother Jack than to heaven with you? Jack and I have laughed together many a time as we lay on the grass. I laughed because I was drunk or because I was sober, and he laughed because he couldn't help it, because the sun was in him and a careless heart and a spice of the poor abused devil (one of God's creatures, gentlemen). And all the maids smiled at him, and some that wasn't. Oh, it's a queer world and I'm the wisest man in Cornwall this day. And now I think I'll sleep awhile, so good-bye to both of you."

And so saying, he who was wiser than any bishop, lay down upon the grass and promptly slept like a child.

"It's a sad sight," said Anthony. "For once he was an eloquent man and did good that he's undone since."

"Can any good be undone, Mr. Perran?"

"God knows," said Anthony, "but he's a poor fool now."

Father Brant looked at him oddly.

"Well, I'm not so sure; the man has **charity in him**. And he doesn't hate me as you do."

Anthony frowned.

"I do not hate you as a man——"

"But only as a priest?"

Anthony was silent.

"As the servant of the Church which has infinite charity. Why should you narrow the way to heaven so much, Mr. Perran?"

"There is great authority for narrowing it," said Anthony, as he rode on.

"The path is, at any rate, as wide as God's grace," cried Father Brant. "And that is wide indeed."

He stood and watched Anthony ride down the road, and shook his head. Then he turned to old Steve and loosened the collar of his shirt.

"Which needs most charity?" asked the Father.

XVII

DR. GREER came riding to Morna about noon. He whistled cheerfully, and said, "Ha, ha, how are you?" to Rachel in the garden. He was the cheerfullest man in the countryside when John Perran left it, and was hard and rugged and four-square as a hewed pillar. He and the "bad Perran" were friends; they rode and drank together. And yet Greer went to church not wholly from a business point of view. He held a creed which pictured God as a clinical physician doing His best with an obstinate patient and poor drugs and bad nursing.

"As for John, he's damned beyond redemption, and a man who is damned and cheerful is a man without a soul to trouble for," said Greer; "he's just a fine animal. I don't trouble about Perran's dog, do I? I play with him."

Greer was as strong as proved steel and loved his work. He went easily, as easily as a stream or a tide. No man ever saw him angry.

"I pride myself on the fact that not even a fool of a woman doing her best to kill what she loves best, can ruffle me," said Greer. His pulse was sixty to the minute and he spoke with fine deliberation.

"Well, and how's your mother now?" he asked as Rachel came to meet him.

"I've not seen her for two days, Dr. Greer," she said anxiously; "you must ask Martha."

"Don't worry," said Greer, "we'll do our best. But it won't be much, my dear. Medicine won't cure her."

She looked at him intently.

"What will?"

"What does—in the end?" said Greer. He whistled unconsciously as he dismounted, whistled cheerfully at death.

"Well, I'll see Mistress Martha," he cried, and he marched into the stone-flagged kitchen.

"How's the patient now?" he asked. "Last time you

sent for me she stared me out of the room, and I did not smile for an hour, I give you my word it was so."

"When did she smile?" asked Martha. She told him how the woman spent her hours. "She hasn't slept for days."

Greer scratched his chin and sat upon the table,

"And talks to herself?"

"She calls out."

"For what?"

"For someone," said Martha. Whatever Greer might suspect he knew nothing.

"Is it the same old story?" he asked. "Oh, some man."

And Martha turned away.

"I'll try to get her to see you."

"And I'll go up with you," said Greer.

When they came to the landing of the first floor Martha bade him walk softly. She tapped at the door and received no answer.

"Listen," she said, and Greer heard the ceaseless motion of bare feet upon boards and the light rustle of a gown. He looked at Martha.

"Day and night?"

"Day and night—now," said Martha.

"Knock louder," said Greer.

And then Mrs. Marr answered.

"I need nothing," she said. "Leave me."

"Open, ma'am—oh, Mary darling, open," cried Martha, and the steps ceased.

"Who's with you?" asked the woman; her senses were of morbid keenness.

"The doctor," said Martha feebly; "oh, see him, see him."

"I'll see no one. Send him away."

She resumed her pacing to and fro, and Martha wrung her hands.

"What shall we do?"

And Greer shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't break into the room and examine her tongue by force, can I?" he demanded. "And a stethoscope on

the door won't tell us much. It's what I said last time; she's crazy, my dear woman, clean crazy, mad. It's about some man, of course."

Martha pulled him from the door.

"She'll hear you," she whispered angrily.

"Nonsense," he said and then he nodded. "Well—she might; I knew one woman who said she smelt any stranger in the house though she lay in an upper room. She didn't live long."

As they stood by the head of the stairs they heard her call out.

"What name was that?" asked Greer.

"Antonio," said Martha shivering.

"You'd better fetch him," said Greer; "on a guess I'll prescribe Antonio—quantum suff! Or is he dead?"

"She said last night that he was."

"And isn't he?"

"God knows," said Martha, "but dead or alive he's far away."

Greer touched her arm. There was a queer look in his eyes.

"How do you know that—if he's dead?"

Martha caught hold of him.

"She said those words last night to me; 'twas much the same she said. And she cried out that he was trying to tell her something, trying dreadfully."

"I didn't mean anything," said Greer; "and she's mad, mad as a March hare. Did she say anything else?"

Martha nodded.

"She said a deal; and 'twas dreadful."

"Tell me!"

"I can't; I couldn't; 'twas blasphemy, sir, and made my blood run cold."

Greer considered.

"And she's religious. Look here, my poor old girl, this mistress of yours is likely to be dangerous——"

He stared at her.

"To me, sir?"

"To herself," said Greer; "I'll certify her and get Dr. Pratt to come over and do it too."

"What's that?" asked Martha, "will it hurt?"

"She'll have to be taken care of," said Greer.

"It can't be done," cried Martha. "I'll not permit it. I was her maid when she was a girl, I was with her when she married, and after and after till now. She shall die with me."

"Poor old girl," said Greer again, "it's damned hard lines. But if she cuts her throat you'll be partly responsible."

"Oh, I'd rather she did and died in my arms than go elsewhere."

She cried as she spoke.

"Well, what of trained nurses?"

"Not inside the door," said Martha fiercely, "I'm her nurse."

"You are devilish obstinate," said Greer; "but as a matter of fact you're right. It's no good doing anything. Here or there, now or a month hence, what does it matter? Nature's doing her best to put her into her coffin. I'll look in every now and again when I pass by. And I'll send you something to put in her drink and give her a little rest."

They went downstairs again, and in the kitchen Greer whistled and lighted his pipe.

"Feed her if you can," he said; "stuff her if she'll eat. I'll talk to Miss Rachel."

He found the girl among her flowers, her wilderness of tangled sweet peas, sweet williams, roses, hollyhocks.

"It's fine to see you among them," said Greer, waving his hand over the garden. "You give them their way."

"They're happier so," said Rachel. "Did you see mother?"

Greer shook his head.

"Though I'm strong, the door is mahogany."

"And can't you do anything, Dr. Greer?"

"Little enough," said Greer; "she wants or needs what she won't take—air, sun, food, and a sense of humour, and a healthy intention of doing without what she can't get. That's the way to be healthy, my dear

young lady. Get what you can, but never, never try to get what you can't. And sometimes the greatest strain comes from getting what you want with difficulty. Try the easy; there's lots to be said for the poor abused primrose path. Live as you want; eat and drink and be merry, and don't think that to-morrow you die, for you won't, and it will give you a bad night. God's a great deal better than some of you think; he relies on a generous dietary and understands. God's not a narrow-minded fool, my dear, and doesn't mind if you over-eat yourself a little. That's better than starving or picking out one thing and swallowing nothing else. I hope you understand, for that's your mother's trouble."

He straddled with his legs and puffed at his pipe.

"Give me a rose, my dear. I like to smell things. Use your senses, all of 'em, and your mind, all of it, and trust yourself to God. God's a good physician but not a general practitioner. He'll only consult with yourself. However, I'm obscure."

He went to his horse at the fence.

"We've all got to die," he said cheerfully, "and I daresay your mother will live as long as some. And if she doesn't she'll be happier. Send for me when you want me, my dear. I'm set on being an old bachelor, for I've most outrageous habits, so you won't mind if I call you that."

He mounted his horse.

"I think you're kind," said Rachel. "But it seems a hard world, Dr. Greer."

She spoke with sorrowful passion.

"We can make it so," replied Greer. "Go easy, don't be too good or too bad. Don't expect to reach heaven to-morrow or hell the day after. Take things quietly. God bless you, as he did me, with a pulse that wouldn't beat over sixty if the sky fell. I'm going to write an article advocating the painless extinction of all pulses over sixty. But I'm obscure again. Good-bye."

He rode off whistling. They called him the whistling doctor for twenty miles round Morna Church Town. He whistled many into the world and many out. He was not

over cheerful or over gloomy at either ceremony. He whistled a jig slow and the Dead March quickly.

"There's tragedy in that girl's face," he said. "She's a fine creature, but her mother's mad now. And no one knows the truth about her but the old woman and Brant."

He filled another pipe as his horse walked up the hill.

"It'll be a coroner's quest job," he said.

He urged his horse to a slow trot and whistled happy discords.

XVIII

RACHEL would have fought with death to save anyone she loved, but since love only lives by love, she saw her mother on the dark path with no more than sorrow and the uneasiness that comes to all mortals when they behold mortality proved once more. To give that tortured soul ease she would have done much. But only death could ease it. She now saw the truth, under a veil, but still the truth. She perceived in her mother's voice (had she not heard her call "Antonio"?) something of infinite and strained passion which made a painful echo in her own heart. The likeness between mother and daughter bred hostility; the child, unproved of life and yet on its verge unlaunched, saw with something akin to contempt the wreck upon hidden rocks. And even so she shivered, perceiving in her flesh hints of possible disaster. The calm sea she had once viewed, serene to far horizons, embosoming the light reflections of splendid clouds, was now touched by rising winds, forerunners of storms. The colour that it took on was less glorious, and more awful. The sky reddened and glowed with the signs of a great gale still below the round of the curved ocean.

She felt infinitely alone, coldly solitary, and as she knew not that safety (if safety was anywhere in the storm-belt of the world's great passions) lay in solitude, her nature now urged her more and more to communion with all living things.

The aspect of Death urged her even more to the pursuit of her fate. Death spoke to her of Life; tokens of it were

brought her by a baby's delicate hands; she now feared solitude for a time and deserted her pinewood for the cliffs, and the village, and the farms. She went out with Mary and the child no further than their own meadows, for on being urged further Mary grew sullen. Boys had shouted to her, she said. Some of her own sex had jeered her from the road. She grew a little jealous of Rachel, and said—

“Some day I might hate her. 'Tis my child, mine.”

But Rachel saw nothing of that, and saved herself from any present jealousy by her wandering, by her absorption, by her sense of the outward world which fought with herself.

“I'll go alone,” she said. But she kissed the baby hungrily. “He's a dear, and as fat as butter.”

She went to Martha.

“Can I do anything, anything for you or mother?”

Martha knew nothing was to be done. She opened her palms—that southern negative was her chiefest gesture.

“Nothing, nothing, my dear.”

“If you want me, send to the Headland. I'll be there.”

At the back of Pentowan Headland lay Pentowan Farm that Anthony worked.

“Shall you see Mr. Anthony?”

“Not likely,” said Rachel.

Martha was at her kitchen table. She put her hands flat on it and looked at Rachel cunningly.

“D'ye know, Rachel, I was wondering how long it would be before he married that cousin of his? She's growing up, she's two years ahead of you.”

Rachel looked at her calmly.

“Oh, Winnie Perran. I don't think he'll marry her.”

“They always say so. Why shouldn't he?”

“She's nothing,” said Rachel; “she's a white bladder, and Anthony Perran——”

“Well, what's he but a farmer, on your land, too?”

Rachel shook her head without any irritation.

“Oh, mother's land—what of that? We've little enough, and Mr. Perran is more than a farmer.”

“Aye, he preaches,” said Martha contemptuously, “and

hates your religion fiercely, worse than Father Brant hates his by far."

"He's more than a preacher."

"Well, what more is he? I see nought in him but a grave face (though he has reason for that, seeing there's John) and hatred of Catholics. I wonder he speaks to you, Rachel, I fair wonder at it. Oh, yes, he'll marry that Winifred; she's a Methodist, too, and will have a bit of money, though not much, seeing what a man her father is. Old George is a devil still. He sat drinking with John a whole night before John went, so they say. And they came out at eight in the morning singing about a flowing bowl, and George more drunk than John. 'Tis a queer family. And cousins are to marry—well, well!"

Rachel shrugged her shoulders and went out.

"She knows what I say as well as I do," said Martha. "But I hope she'll think more of it now, and less of Anthony. Oh, but he *is* a fine chap, too, and any woman might be made a fool of by the like of him. But if he was to marry Rachel, I'd be easier, much easier."

Yet Rachel walked on the path to the western cliff thinking nothing of marriage. Passion for life was awake in her, but no desire of strong desire. Not yet was she in accord with the world as she saw it. Though the path was God's she feared the path her feet were on.

"She thinks I'm in love with Anthony," she said. The thought was absurd and yet it warmed her heart. In the darkness that overshadowed her any thought of love was like a bird singing suddenly on a high branch of her pine-wood. Many thoughts she gave to Anthony; he pleased her very soul. But not yet did she love him; she even thought of him as the husband of Winifred Perran with nothing but a little tinge of sorrow.

"Whey-Face isn't good enough for him," she said mournfully.

So fine Anthony was, so strong and grave, that his high merits and his nature deserved fine and grave perfection in his mating opposite. In the dark flood of Rachel's mind, for ever in its sub-conscious tide like a sunless river, she hungered to be even as the woman fit

to stand beside him. That figure was her ideal, and, without her knowing it, such an imagined aspect of full womanhood inspired her heart. If ever (ah, and when!) she perceived in this shadowy ideal its true likeness and relation to herself she would bear strange children of the spirit, while passion begot within her adorations, and despairs, and all delights.

She walked upon the grass, bearing within her these things conceived that shadowed her virginal face with sadness, and only the wind, that played sweet music by the cliffs, charmed her at last back to herself, back to the sky, back from the sunless stream within her.

Then she knew that this hour had grown in all its beauty out of the thought of Winifred. Her dream had brought her close to the house that Anthony's cousin lived in with her father, in his generation the equal of the worst springing from the stock which bore evil and good unhappily divided.

"She'll see me from the window. I'll go and speak to her," said Rachel. She drove her thoughts away down the wind, and was happy. After all the sun shone and the wind piped to one who could dance in the light of heaven. What did Anthony matter; and did Winnie herself matter more, or even as much as Anthony's dog Sigurd? The life beat in her heart; she forgot that at their last meeting she and Winnie had quarrelled.

"What did we quarrel about?" asked Rachel grandly; "it was not about God's world."

So she came to the house walking like a queen and saw Winnie at her window.

"Come out," said Rachel, and even as she spoke she saw that she parleyed with one who was not a girl, but a woman. So deep had the new revelation of the flesh sunk in her mind.

And Winifred Perran spread herself upon the window-sill and looked out with flame-coloured pale eyes at her. She spoke lazily; she was large, bloodless, enigmatic, sexual.

"I thought we quarrelled," she yawned. Greer was for ever prescribing for her.

"Quarrelled! About what?"

Rachel opened her hands and flung the forgotten cause of difference to the winds.

"I don't know what about," said Winnie, "but you said you hated me."

Rachel laughed.

"If I did——"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Come out of your house; you're like a cat."

Winnie's eyes dilated.

"You said so; that was it. And I scratched, didn't I? Well, I'll come out. I want to talk to you."

Rachel remembered. She had denounced her as a yellow-eyed cat, a lapping, purring, rolling cat; a scratching, intriguing devil; a giggling, mincing mouse-trap. For when Rachel raged she had a strange vocabulary and invented phrases, even words.

"I'll talk to her," said Winnie. If she had no phrases she had an instinct for sore spots that Rachel lacked. It half pleased Winnie to be called a cat. She would have purred had any called her "tigress." Blood might have made her one.

While she got ready, Rachel lay upon the brown turf and watched some ants; she helped one with a dead beetle.

"He seems to want it very badly, poor dear," said Rachel. "Things would be much happier if we didn't want so much, and want it so badly."

She was roused by Winnie's parasol, thrust at her unceremoniously.

"I hope I didn't hurt you," said Winnie languidly; "why don't you wear stays? And it's time you wore longer dresses."

Rachel looked up sombrely.

"You don't mind if you hurt or not, Winnie. And you never did."

"Take me out of the wind," said Winnie, "and don't be spiteful. I have a lot to say to you."

Rachel rose and led the way towards the cliff.

"She's going to talk about poor Mary."

That was her thought, and her colour deepened till she glowed. They came to a sheltered cleft in the high cliff. About them grey mosses waved; a narrow chimney ran down to the hot edge of sand on which the sea lapped.

They sat down.

"Say what you have to," said Rachel, with her arms about her knees. Though the sunlight was so splendid, and though the sense of life ran within her gloriously, she felt anger in her heart already. But she knew now that Winnie had knowledge of old that was new to her. She remembered certain enigmatic sayings produced with languor and a subtle smile.

"Practically you have no mother," began Winnie, but she was cut short by Rachel's laugh which turned to scorn.

"Oh, you——" she said. "But go on, go on!"

And Winnie flushed palely.

"It's that Jose girl," she cried; "'t isn't right to have her in your house, she's bad."

"Poor Mary," said Rachel, sighing. She stared Winnie in the face. "What's bad, Winnie?"

She asked more than Winifred that; she asked the wind and sea and sky, and dropping her chin upon her knees, she mused.

"Why, she is," said Winnie; "she is, you know it."

Rachel stared at the sea.

"Do I? Oh, it's such a little dear, Winnie. Come and see him!"

"It's the result of sin," said Winnie. Once more a faint flush coloured her cheeks, and her eyes were curious to see—there was a kind of glaze over them. Rachel looked at her, and frowned, and drew away from her a little.

What was this sin that Winnie and the good folks talked of? Even Anthony was one of their company. And yet his attitude was sweetness itself compared with the malice that now spoke.

"I always hated the little beast."

"I found her crying in the pinewood," said Rachel.

"She went about with all the men."

“And the little baby cried,” said Rachel. “And mother was kind.”

“Oh, your mother——”

She said nothing that she meant to say, for Rachel looked up.

“And so was Martha.”

“An old fool,” said Winnie. “If you’re not careful no man will want to marry you, Rachel.”

She sucked at her pale lips.

And Rachel went scarlet. For a moment she could not speak. When she did she raged.

“You little, little thing!” she cried; “what a mean heart you have! Oh, but you have no heart. And men are always in your mind. You used to say such things, sneaking about things that I didn’t know of with your yellow eyes and your white lips. And because poor Mary was a fool and has to pay for it, you can grin over her, and say she’s bad. Oh, she’s not, she’s not—she’s no worse than you!”

In her sudden rage she caught Winnie by the arm and spoke right into her face.

“She’s no worse than you!”

And Winnie went as white as sea-foam.

“What do you mean?”

But Rachel meant nothing, for she knew nothing. And yet what was it that made her remember that the child’s eyes were Perran blue and that John Perran had often drunk much at George Perran’s house? She went pale with the thought in her heart and then she cried:

“Forgive me, I meant nothing.”

For Winnie was to marry Anthony! She threw herself down again upon the verge of the cliff, and half drifted from the quietened woman at her side who stared at her in doubt and anger.

And beneath them the purple tides raced; the clothed rocks were red-brown with weed, outside them lay wonderful bands of colour. But the far horizon was still and dark with rising clouds; the sun was wonderful but the wind died down.

Again Rachel spoke.

"Anthony thinks I did right," she said.

"How do you know what he thinks?" asked Winnie. "When we are married he will have to think as I do about such things."

And Rachel knew they were to marry. She looked at her curiously, with contempt, but without jealousy.

"I don't think a white thing like you could have a baby," she said.

She spoke contemplatively, but Winnie gasped.

"Oh, but you are horrible; you shouldn't speak of such things."

"You've often said horrid things to me," replied Rachel. "And if Anthony marries you he'll hate you. He likes strong and healthy people."

Winnie sprang to her feet and deliberately tried to hurt the girl who hurt her half unconsciously. For Rachel was in a dream and only spoke with half her mind. The rest was with God's world of grass and sea and sky.

"I believe you're in love with him yourself."

That Rachel turned like any damask rose confirmed her in what she meant as insult.

"That's not true," said Rachel, "that's not true."

"You're a liar," cried Winnie, "and like bad people, and you're lying now. You do love him, and he's mine."

"Oh, you miserable thing," cried Rachel, getting on her knees; "go home, White-Face, or I'll roll you on the grass."

She rose to her feet and shook Winnie by the shoulders. She had the strength of three such women.

"You milk, I'll shake you into butter," she said. And Winnie, suddenly terrified, burst into tears.

In her fear there was something pitiful and Rachel let go of her.

"You poor thing, why did you make me angry?" she asked, as she turned away from her whom she had made afraid, and looked down upon the sea. In her attitude there was strength and freedom, and even a certain dignity strange in one so young. It made her look older, much older. For the first time Winifred Perran saw

that she was really beautiful and no longer a child, and what she had despised she hated. Without a word she turned and went back home. Did Rachel know much? Or anything?

And Rachel sat on the cliff above the roaring tide-beset Lion until she grew calm and smiled.

"Poor Whey-Face," she said, "she can have her Anthony if she likes."

But if Winnie could have *her* Anthony, Rachel reserved her own. For if she was no longer a child she was not yet a woman.

XIX

MANY days passed and for a while Rachel's mother showed less sign of insanity and strange delusion. Such freedom from abnormal tension left her weaker and gentler, for when she walked hand in hand with death and vain desire, there was a false strength in her like the strength of delirium. Now she lay for long hours upon her bed, clutching the crucifix to her bosom, and beneath her pillow lay the bundle of old letters. She even permitted Greer to visit her, though she gazed at him with far-off eyes and answered at random what he asked.

"She is dying because she does not wish to live," he told Martha. "But she's as sane now as I've ever known her to be, though that's saying little. Feed her, feed her. I don't know why she should live, but it's our business to keep folks alive. Nature grew her coffin long ago, if she's to lie in seasoned wood!"

She saw Father Brant, but remembered (so she said) nothing of the strange blasphemies which had made Martha shiver. She was given absolution and peace stayed with her for an hour.

And so the days passed, and Rachel, grown bitterly used to the tragedy of the dark house, lived her own life of preparation while a life ebbed away, and a life grew. Mary's baby and the animals and birds filled up her hours, and left her less time for brooding in the pine-

wood. She went rarely into the village, for it pained her that old Jose, who had been her friend, should now glare angrily at her as she passed. She saw no more of Winnie since they parted in anger, and though she saw Anthony every day as he passed riding towards another farm upon the eastern uplands, she spoke to him less often. She lived very fully for the time in a vicarious motherhood. The growing baby was much to her; she made Mary jealous but saved herself by her dreaming. The mother of the child saw dimly in her foolish little mind that this child was a substitute.

"She'll be a better mother than me," said Mary. But Mary longed for the cliffs and laughter under the moon.

"'Twas little enough, and to be saddled with the boy!" she said. Nature was strong in her, and as the strain went off and she found food and lodging were secure and Martha's tongue none too bitter, she got back a certain effrontery supported by a new defensive insolence. She even threatened to go into the village.

"There's lots no better, but only luckier," she said, repining. But as the summer grew to its height, she lived more for the day.

Yet the power of the sun that was new life to her brought no strength to the mother of her protector. Mrs. Marr felt the heat greatly and withered like a cut flower. Nature strove within her both to live and die, and the conflict wrought her up once more to insanity. Her eyes glittered as her body weakened. As her body died, her brain-life renewed itself in strange passion. She walked again, but this time did not call out loud.

"She's getting better again for a bit," said Martha, as she watched the dying lamp of life flicker in its fragile earthen vessel.

"Your mother's better to-night," she told Rachel, "but she's uneasy, I think, at the weather. There's thunder working up, I do believe."

They said so in the village.

"There be a thunder-planet knocking about somewhere," said the wise men of weather, "there'll be sour milk to-night, and sour beer."

But what a "thunder-planet" might be, none knew. There was a great calm upon the land and the sea was oil. Heat brooded over the earth and men's nerves were relaxed. Work was a weariness; the horses sweated as they stood. And above the calm of the earth was a strange turmoil of the heavens; clouds worked up from the south and west and north, and thin ghost-like wisps of cloud were born in the zenith and danced a devil's dance like wild shuttles weaving the sombre fabric of a storm. A golden gloom lighted the hot land; haze gathered in the valleys, the distances grew opaque; but in them were avenues that were clear. Huge ramparts of storm rose out of the horizon; bastions grew in them and great towers. And still no lightning flashed. Men sweated and were oppressed in their minds; horses ceased feeding; the cows lowed mournfully from closed byres.

And the sun was very low in the west; it sank like a globe of blood, shooting level rays of light through hot gloom. And overhead in the zenith the moving clouds closed up and opened, approached each other and were thrust away. A faint blue space showed and was hidden, and from open windows lamps gleamed early; candles burnt in the open as in any closed room; the trees moved not their lightest leaf.

The woman of the gaunt white house in the pinewood felt the storm outside and welcomed it, felt the storm within and feared it. For the first time for months she drew up her window blind as the darkness fell and stared out into the night. The wasted muscles of her frail body strung themselves to a new strain; her nerves thrilled like taut wires in a wind; her eyes gleamed; her lips were cracked and dry.

"Oh, God, but I wait long," she said; "I wait very long."

Underneath her humble and imploring speech to God was a mocking devil of hatred which was yet untouched by any disbelief. She was split in pieces, fissured, broken. Whatever she spoke with her tongue her soul blasphemed.

"There's a God and I hate Him," said the inward voice. Her lips of cracked flesh prayed aloud.

Rachel, moving uneasily in the passage outside, heard her. She ran down to Martha. Mary was sitting by the kitchen fire with her baby; she feared the storm and showed it.

"Mother's talking," whispered Rachel.

"I'll go up. But if she talks she'll not let me in."

"Go," said Rachel; "go and try."

Outside and inside the oppression was awful.

"Why doesn't it begin?" said Rachel. She was wrought up but did not fear the storm. There was nothing more glorious to her than thunder, and the battle and shouting of the sky. The lightning made her shrink, but only with the intensest pleasure that she yet knew. In the glory of the wind and rain and the roar of any gale there was something deeply and intimately in tune with the diapason of her mind. The outward tumult gave her a foretaste of strange immortal peace. Deep in her heart she knew that that peace need not be sleep or death; it might just as easily and as wonderfully (oh, far more wonderfully!) be a great organic harmony born of the very fury of speed. What difference was there between silence and the rending note of close and overwhelming thunder? What was the difference again betwixt darkness felt and grasped, and the awful glow of lightning? All these things were akin, but so were death and life. She too prayed to the God of thunder, and her eyes glittered with joy; even though a little part of her mind dwelt upon the anguish of her that bore her.

"Begin, begin!" she cried out as she stood at the open window.

"Oh, Miss, don't, don't," said the little coward at the fire.

And then heaven opened. Towards the south the dark firmament was split in twain by a forked flash that shot from the zenith to the sea. A blue glare lit up the landscape and the pines for one great instant, and then the house and very earth rocked with the blast of the thunder. In that crash Mary's childlike scream was no

more than a farthing dip against the lightning or against the sun. But Rachel clapped her hands, and shouted. And then Martha came stumbling down the stairs. She was as white as any ghost, and her lips trembled. She ran to Rachel.

"She's locked the door against me," she said. "And though I called she wouldn't answer. And she's got the blind up and is at the window. She never has it up. Go round outside and speak to her."

And again the lightning ripped the sky open. But not a drop of rain fell yet, and Rachel ran out into the garden and the darkness which was like the darkness of a sunless mine in eternal night.

The flash and roar that split the very world left a heavy silence behind them, a silence deep as the sea. No wind moved; many hearts stood still, beasts trembled in their stalls. For a long, long minute no other flash succeeded to that solitary signal gun of the heavens, and not a drop of rain fell upon dry dust and herbage. And as Rachel came round under her mother's window the mere rustle of her feet upon the unmoved grass seemed harsh and intrusive.

But when she stood under the window she heard nothing, and at first saw nothing. As the pupils of her eyes opened she discerned a dim white blot upon the dark space of the open window, and she knew her mother stood staring into the night. Rachel's heart failed her; she sighed, and then the lightning flashed again and she saw her mother standing straight up, with her hands upon her bosom. And in her right hand was the old crucifix. She was clad in black, and the black was dead. What Rachel saw was a white face and two white hands beneath and the bitter cross; body there seemed none.

And Rachel, smitten with a sudden terror, cried aloud before the thunder came. But when the crash of the thunder was over, her mother cried out, and the girl fell upon her knees, and hid her face.

"Antonio! Antonio!" cried the voice from above; a voice sharpened, eager, and triumphant.

And Rachel's heart told her this was an awful story of the past which yet lived; a story of passion and vain desire and sin, and happiness snatched from the reluctant hands of heaven. There was perhaps some human spirit in the storm speaking to the frail and broken flesh above her. Her own flesh crept; superstitions got hold of her; she could have screamed. But fear had her by the throat; her voice died in a wail. And now the roar of the rain upon the sea precluded the rain upon the land. Heavy drops fell upon her bare head by ones and twos. Then lightning spoke incessantly and the storm of rain, heavy and perpendicular, fell upon her in a drenching deluge. The lightning made ghastly patterns on the sky, the thunder was no roll, but one vast rhythmic explosion; the blue glare ceased not for any perceptible interval of time.

She saw her mother lift the crucifix and cast it into the garden. She crawled to it, caught it up and ran back into the kitchen. Something in the storm, in this action, in her heart, told her that this was the casting out of God. She was afraid, and trembled, and ran in upon Martha to find Mary lying on the floor.

"Speak to the fool," cried Martha, but when she saw Rachel streaming with the flood, she ran to her.

Then she saw the crucifix.

"How did you get that?"

The girl laid her mouth to the old woman's ear.

"She threw it out!"

And Martha went as white as any ghost, and said something that was inexplicable.

"She believes he is in hell."

Then the old woman turned and went upstairs with the crucifix and beat upon the door of the locked room.

"Mary, Mary, let me in, let me in."

And Rachel crouched upon the landing listening to that shrill voice in the storm. She saw the door open at last and saw her mother catch Martha to her heart and kiss her.

"Oh, take it back, take it back," said Martha. And she who had cast it forth took it and laughed and closed

the door again and locked it. How she got there Rachel did not know, but she found herself outside the door holding Martha in her arms.

"Oh, but she took it back," said Martha, "she took it back!"

She went down upon her knees and wailed through the keyhole.

"Mary, Mary!"

But Mary did not answer.

"She's lighting the candles," said Martha. "One, two, three!"

"What shall we do?" said Rachel.

"Oh, what?"

Both knew that nothing could be done. What use in worldly or in ghostly healing? Could either priest or physician cure this soul?

"What's that?" asked Rachel in a moment's lull of the thunder. There was a sound of dragging within the closed room.

"I can't see," said Martha. She kept her eye to the narrow keyhole. "Oh, what's she doing?"

And presently she spoke in strange astonishment and in terror.

"She's in scarlet," she said, "she's in scarlet! Oh, what years since!"

She clutched Rachel by the arm and knew not what she said.

"Last time she wore it 'twas nine months before you were born, my girl."

She cried out strange things.

"And she might have been so happy!"

But Rachel writhed up against her and thrust her away.

"No, no, you mustn't," said Martha. "No, not you. What do you know of my darling? Mary, Mary!"

Then she fell back and caught Rachel in her arms, and said the strangest thing of all.

"When did you hear her sing? Oh, the sweet voice she had! She'll sing now. She always sang in scarlet

and so bright she looked and her pale lips were red as yours, and her sunk cheeks were round as yours, and her bosom was as white as new ivory. Oh, listen!"

And then Rachel herself crouched upon the floor as she heard her mother's voice after all these long years.

She screamed out now.

"Oh, mother, don't, don't!"

And so the voice of the sky said, and still that strange and dreadful voice sang, a voice now no longer sweet but marred by anguish and despair, and the revolt of bitter foolish years of hateful vain repentance. But what she sang they knew not.

"I never heard it," said Martha, "never!"

And then the storm ceased a little and her song ceased, and she cried out once more—

"Antonio!"

And again Martha looked inside the room.

"She has put the candles at the head of her bed."

Then Martha said—

"Oh, and at the foot!"

And the old woman shrieked.

"There's scarlet on her arms, scarlet! Run, Rachel, run and get someone to break in the door. Quick, quick!"

And Rachel herself broke in the door with an old maul that lay by the wood pile. But they came too late to save her who did not wish to be saved. For she had opened the veins of her arms with some sharp instrument, and she died quickly, quietly, and with a white smile upon her lips, a few minutes after Martha and her child came to her. And on the crucifix that lay beside her there was blood.

When Rachel left her, something made her pick up the crucifix. She hid it in her bosom and took it to her room. And there she found that the old artificer who had wrought it had worked upon it with more thoughts than one, for it was in two pieces and drew apart; the upper part being the handle and the lower the sheath of a fine steel dagger.

And on the blade Rachel read engraved—

“Non venio pacem mittere sed gladium.”

Which being interpreted means—

“I come not to bring peace, but a sword.”

BOOK II

I

STEVE PENROSE, being a year older, and, according to his own account, a year wiser, summed up things to Morna Village in a public sermon twelve months after the great storm. The fallen preacher's gown was the raggedest coat on the south-west coast, and his pulpit was a flat rock opposite the beer-house, and he lay down as he talked.

"I lie down because I'm wise," said Steve. "If I stood up, I'd fall, thanks to the noble beer with which certain charitable souls have regaled me. These things are the gift of God, my hearties, and if I abuse them 'tis no reason for me to blame the giver. Beer gives me a fair, thick and easy mind, and I flow comfortable in my soul and don't get proud of my wisdom, which is notorious from Morna to Plymouth, to say nought of the dark places betwixt us and Land's End. I'm not one to stan' up stiff and defy beer. 'Tis foolishness, and leads to a fall. There was our Miss Rachel's mother; she drank some strong waters—waters of Marah, likely, and she stood up to God and a thunderstorm, and the result you know. And there's the papist priest, he's full of church pride, and priestlike cuts off his nose to spite his face. And there's you, you silly men, strugglin' mightily to get what God won't give you, and never will, and you use his gifts of wind and rain and sea, not for what they are, but for something else. And I'm wise, I am, and know it, and take things as they come; a pint, or a pot, or a dry throat and horrid cold water, or a warm bed

or straw, or the time when five pots or ten (which is it, for I get beyond counting?) make wet moss as fine as feathers in a four-poster. That's the way, my children, and here's our young lady, our Miss Rachel; she's foredoomed, as I can see, to have a fall with God, just as Jacob did with the angel of God. Oh, she's fine, and wonderful eyed, and has a heart for others' sorrows that will be full of her own. I've heard of some as can see things to come in a pool of ink; give me beer! And there's Mr. Anthony Perran; oh, but he's stiff with the grace of the elect of God, and whenever he sees me his words are most suitable and severe, and make me laugh. If he'd drink a little and let himself go a bit, there'd be a fine man in him."

"'Tisn't drink makes a fine man, so it seems," said the village.

"Oh, but you are fools and nought else," cried Steve; "'tis a wonder a man like me wastes his good time trying to teach such anything. I cry in a wilderness, surely. 'Tis the mind and the ease of the drink that's the gift, and some of us are properly drunk without it, and take things easy, and see the nature of things and the value of things without so much as a smell of the malt (if there's any malt in Billy's beer). 'Tis going easy and smooth, and accepting things as they march from the workshop of the Almighty that makes a man or a woman. But this world (there's a world in Morna Cove) is after tomorrow instead of to-day, and after dinner when it eats breakfast, and yet I've patience with it; because if I hadn't, I'd worry, and that I never do, except when cold water goes down my throat three times in a day. For all of you, the poorest and the weakest, have a full pot of happiness right at your elbows if you'd take it. And none of you do, my poor fools, but instead you go a-brewing something that sours before you get it to your lips. You're all of a piece, and I'm sorriest for the best of you in Morna, and she's Miss Rachel, as I've said a thousand times."

His audience thinned as the sun went down, for his abused world had many things to do. Yet some (and

they the poorest and the wisest, it might be) stayed with him in the shadows and egged him on to talk.

"Oh, Miss Rachel, she's a beauty and will marry."

"Aye, no doubt," said Steve, "but she'll want more than her farms and her house, and when I see her walk, she makes me shiver for all her beauty and her smiling. There's something right onward about the march of her. And what she wants, she'll have. As for a man, I see no mate for her here, unless it be Anthony Perran, and they'd be flint and steel, for fire is in her for all her softness to children and the beasts of the field. But Mr. Preacher Anthony's to marry that yellow cat of a cousin of his, and that's a match, isn't it? If I've an eye for the heart of a woman, and I reckon to know a little of their hearts, she's as poor a specimen for a wife as ever bid for a family, and as wicked. But for the Romish faith of Miss Rachel, I think he'd have wanted her. And with a woman of her kind the faith wouldn't hurt if he was only man enough to see that all faiths are one. But that's beyond you chaps, so home you go, and I'll sleep in dry fern this warm night and consider under the stars how fine and foolish a thing man is."

He had talked himself dry and staggered over to Billy's.

"Couldn't I owe you for half a pint, Billy?" he suggested mildly.

"No," said Billy Drew, "no, you can't."

"I kept a dozen here when they were for going home," urged the old preacher; "and haven't I preached a true doctrine by which you falsely profit? If they understood I don't mean beer when I say beer, but a spirit which you never sold and never will, they wouldn't stay to listen and drink what isn't malt. Come, Billy, give me that half-pint, and I'll away to my bed of fern and pray for you to discover that there's something fine in selling beer, something finer than you ever dreamed of."

"Drink, you old fool," said Drew.

And Steve drank and smiled, and went away rolling to his upland bed of dry fern by the rocks above the sea.

"If I could only drink all the drink that was ever

brewed, if I could pour it all down my gigantic throat," said Steve, "I'd understand myself and a woman, and the secret of the universe which at present beats me, as I own."

Though he never reached his fern that night, the grass was dry and the stars were clear, and the tides ran musically, and God's earth and man's was sweet as any draught of a celestial vintage.

II

THE year that had made old Steve wiser or less wise according as one looks upon the sacred or accursed brew of his words, wrought due growth in Rachel Marr, but no great change. The passion of her mother and the storm in which she passed away self-slain illuminated strange places in her soul, and yet she finally returned to peace and her delight in the world in which she lived. Her life was still a dream, her own passions lay slumbering, and she lived chiefly with such thoughts as flourished by the stainless verge of the immaculate sea or in the shadowed sanctuary of her pines. Now these warm woods and fertile meadows and swarth uplands were her own; sheep and cattle were hers; and she drew rent from three farms, taking money from Anthony Perran and two others who pastured their flocks and tilled the soil of land that now descended to her from her old pagan grandfather. Folks called her rich; young men came to view her from afar. There was that about her straight brows which made them timid even though she was so young. The over-bold lacked courage when they faced her, for, by inherited passion and her nature tuned to the silences of the night, she was no such creature as they viewed daily among the ranks of their own women.

And even yet she was a child, and those who loved her in the village were half amazed, though more than proud, to see how the dark aspect of her unaffected pride, which

was tender to them, affected stranger and the outside world beyond the bounds of Morna.

"'Tis a fair wonder how Miss Rachel affrights 'em," said Sam Burt, who had paid in pints to learn that Mrs. Marr was not immortal and must die. "There was that young soldier officer from Plymouth——"

He roared with laughter.

"Him as offered to kiss her?"

"'Tis him I'm laughing at," said Sam. "Oh, but he was as drunk as Steve when Steve be praichin'."

"He wor sober."

"Aye, when he went. Missy just eyed him, they do say, and he wor the meanest lookin' soldier officer for hours after that ever rode out of Plymouth. There's somethin' about her—there's somethin'——"

He pondered for words, found none, and drank in silence at the bar of their beer house. But many others found no words for Rachel, and only the old reprobate of a Steve touched the secret.

"She's nought but natural, you fools," said Steve. "She and I be the only natural folks in Morna. 'Tis a sad lookout for the pair of us."

Yet Rachel feared nothing, not even her own nature, and sat in the woods as of old when there was no work to be done. For the strength within her as she grew demanded work, and her distaste for strangers, which old Martha fostered, made her averse from taking any help. The old lawyer at Liskeard who was her guardian urged her to have an alien in the house.

"You are too young to live alone," he said.

"I live with Martha."

He ignored Martha.

"And, if I may say so, too beautiful, my dear young lady."

She understood no danger in beauty, and feared none. She saw almost clearly that any danger lay within, in strength that might become rage, in weakness that might yield.

He offered to find her a duenna, and she laughed.

"Martha would poison her," she said lightly. But

there was then no real gaiety in her heart, and she refused to entertain any stranger even when the lawyer suggested mildly that he had the right to insist. Her answer he read in her eyes.

"I shall be glad when you are twenty-one," he said hastily.

Little as Rachel had understood her mother when she lived, not an hour passed now which did not make her vision clearer. The sad and tragic aspect of her who had been insane seemed appalling now that death had removed the ancient landmarks of the past. The girl had grown up to her inheritance under a shadow. The bloody passing of this domestic night which had been her childhood, revealed to her much of the true meaning of the tragedy which had been rendered less terrible by daily usage and perpetual repetition. And Martha, growing older now that the end of her duty seemed at hand, talked more freely, and sowed seed hinting, where Rachel harvested strange truths after a season.

She perceived her mother stripped of the dusty garments of daily life. She was elemental, at hand-grips with destiny, essentially tragic. She had lived, and Rachel knew she had not loved the man whose name she bore. The knowledge served its purpose in the education of the girl's soul. If the truth that Mary Jose had taught her was one that made all old childish theories impossible, and in the end made the flesh the co-equal of the spirit and no less beautiful, this new light upon the passions of the human heart was infinitely more fruitful in the debate that raged in the girl's mind about the old rules that had been taught her. They said her mother was mad because she had taken her own life.

"Why should one live if one has nothing to live for?" she asked.

Answering that question herself, she perceived there was no sound answer.

"They call a woman mad, then, if she has nothing to live for, and knows it," said Rachel.

There was no help for her in Father Brant. The poor man did his best, which was to fall back upon the doc-

trines of the eternal Church. He delivered sounding synthetic judgments to an analytic soul, which dissolved them into incoherencies by a natural logic based on elemental truths. She did not reason; she saw.

She made the Father translate "*non venio pacem mittere sed gladium,*" and listened to his glosses on the militant text. But she never showed him the crucifix. None knew its secret but herself, for the weapon with which her mother had opened her veins had never been found.

"They all say that Christ came not to bring peace but a sword, and they hate each other."

She sighed to think that Anthony hated the religion which she still believed in. It made him cold to her, when she desired his affection.

"He carries the sword," said Rachel sadly, and then she gave up argument, and listened to Father Brant with apparent docility. But the confessors to whom she yielded her soul were the spirits of the woods and streams, and from the sea she obtained an absolution which freed her spirit. In the end her natural balance returned to her, and she believed her mother was in paradise. She confessed then to the Father that she could not believe in hell, and argued with him subtly. If she yielded in the end, her yielding was only a grace to his distress, and her acquiescence in his doctrine was the true beginning of her disbelief in all he taught. Yet she still trusted to a God after her own heart, even as she wondered what it was that lay within her heart to make her fear.

III

It was more than high summer when Rachel came towards the dividing ways of faith and unfaith without knowing it, and sat rather at the feet of Pan of the pine-woods than the priest of the church. Harvest was over; the autumn mellowed leaf and fruit and brooded over the land in peace. Yet peace there was not in Morna, or in her heart, for many called her, and there was much

labour for her hands and for her mind. Days passed outworn without any gift for her; she saw the calendar of time decay in unrewarded service of herself and others. True reward seemed an inward gift. Her fine pleasure still was solitude; beach and woods and upland made one day a splendid year.

But folks called, and her heart, never selfish though aloof, helped many. And all the tragic implications of life wove themselves about her. Hours that were beautiful begat strange offspring for days to come; out of her kindness and her charity came rods for her back and burdens, which seemed less unfair for her than they would have done for many. For she was strong, and all who knew her took advantage of her strength. Only Martha, who had the best right, leaned lightly upon her. Out of her desire for justice and her revolt against the law which Mary Jose had broken there grew much trouble, which later still threatened disaster and perhaps bred it.

It was a full year and more after Mrs. Marr's death and burial that old William Jose learnt something that many knew. Though Mary ventured into the village, being supported there by two girls whose public characters were stainless, for reasons that Mary could have told, her father never spoke to her. She might have been a stranger; an alien, a wandering gipsy, detested by the adscript children of an ancient glebe. Her boy he saw but saw it not, and what the child's eyes told he never looked to see, though all the village now was as wise as Martha or Anthony. His ignorance might have lasted long, as such ignorance does, by the charity of his neighbours, had he not quarrelled at his forge with a fool over the price of a key.

"Tenpence!" said the man, who was of the uplands and was drunk; "tenpence! why, keys must be a fine branch of smith's work and scarce in Morna. Here's your tenpence. Make another and lock your girl up before John Perran comes again to England!"

Had he not been on horseback he would not have risked such words, drunk or sober, and the old blacksmith's

movement of rage sent the startled horse clear of his hands. He stood frowning.

“What mean you about John Perran?”

But he knew even as he spoke. A thousand things confirmed the man; he remembered meeting John and Mary together; he recalled a look of trouble visible in Anthony of late.

“Ask your daughter,” said the drunken man, “and ask the moon, and all the coming together of things, and don’t ask me.”

He spurred his horse and clattered up the road and left Jose rooted to the earth, where his black ash and cinder melted into the ruddy dust of the road.

“’Tis true,” said Jose, “and Mr. Anthony knows it. I saw it in his eye. There was trouble in his eye this year back, and he looks at me sorrowfully. And his sorrow’s for himself too. Oh, who would have daughters and not put their faces in the forge and burn their beauty out of them!”

A man came by and asked for a new bolt like one he carried.

“Work? I’m not working to-day,” said Jose calmly. “Am I here to be hammered and wrought? There’s such a thing as too much fire.”

He locked the forge and marched bareheaded up the road to Anthony’s farm, and found him not.

“He’s over in the big field above Morna House,” said one of the labourers at the homestead.

So Jose went across the upland, still bareheaded in the sun.

“What do I seek, O Lord?” he asked as he went. “Do I seek repentance still? And what is it in me seeks vengeance, and will not be put down? Curse me this John Perran, this betrayer of my daughter, this debaucher of women, this light thief of honesty beneath the moon. Bray him in a mortar, O God!”

And all the time his God spake to him upon the uplands and said, “Vengeance is mine,” and he wrestled with the Angel of God.

He came to the little valley above Morna and crossed

the dwindling stream of the lower salt meadows that here were harsher sedges set between scrub on either side, and came to the big field. And at the end of the field he saw Anthony Perran leading his horse and walking with Rachel.

“How was it, O Lord, that this was ordained, that a man and a woman should come together?”

In his passion of anger the old relics of ancient and resistless passion lighted themselves in his hardened soul and in his knotted and tremendous body.

“The tides move, and who shall stay them? The fires burn and the iron is melted, and who shall assuage the fires? And the body burns, and evil is wrought into shapes as I work a shoe. O God, give me this man for my own!”

And as he came Rachel saw him.

“Oh, Anthony,” she said, “here’s William Jose!”

And Anthony paled a little and lifted his eyebrows, as if he said:

“Well, I knew the time would come.”

He spoke aloud.

“He must know at last.”

And Rachel looked upon the fertile earth, while a fine fire burnt in her brown cheeks.

“I’ll go and meet him. Good-bye, Rachel!”

“I’ll stay here at the gate,” said Rachel. “Come to me afterwards. Perhaps I could speak to him now. I always liked the old man, and if he struck me it was in passion.”

She leant upon the gate and looked into the darkened woodland beyond it.

“I should hate this brother of his,” she said. “Why don’t I?”

She remembered the bright audacious beauty of the man. He was joyous and his voice was music all day long. Anthony only sang in chapel, and then his voice was not sweet. His figure was lithe as Anthony’s, and less strong perhaps, but he could outleap and outrun his elder. No shadow ever lay over him; she had never known him aught than cheerful, reckless, a child of the

sun and of the hour. She marvelled to hear that he was successful, as the world calls success, and yet she knew that there was something in him which appealed infinitely to all men, even those who made business their god, and money their Almighty.

"If I were less myself I might be like him," said Rachel. "And Anthony loves him even now."

She turned and saw Anthony and Jose meet. They were almost beyond earshot and yet she heard Jose's voice like the sound of a hammer upon the anvil.

"The old man's mad," she said, "and Anthony is John's brother."

She stood alert, tense, watchful. At the sign of any violence she would have run to Anthony's help.

But he needed no help and hardly spoke.

"'Tis your brother, sir," said Jose lamentably. "They say 'tis your brother John, and when 'twas said I knew it for truth. For truth always comes the same way, like the truth of God, whether 'tis of God or the devil there is this in truth, that one sees it as at the moment of conversion, and a man's heart is changed and he knows it. Oh, you know, Mr. Anthony, you know it."

And Anthony Perran bowed his head.

"I fear it."

"Can aught be done?"

"I've written to him."

And Jose smiled bitterly.

"It's in my mind you've known this for a year, and you would have written when you knew and he has not answered."

And Anthony did not answer either.

"He has no mind to repair his fault, sir," cried the blacksmith. "I may make iron into steel, or turn fine steel into rust and dissolve it in water, but no man shall turn this brother of yours into anything that he is not. There's men in Morna I could tell of that has bitterer things against him, if they knew it, even than I. He's a lover of women, and they love him and put their souls under his feet. And he's a drinker of wine and wine hurts him not. Surely there will come a time for him,

even if I do not break him upon the anvil of my heart, that he will thirst for wine and find no water, and thirst for a woman and find her harder even than death. God send it who sits upon His throne and deals out justice even to me. Say that with me, sir!"

But Anthony shook his head and groaned.

"Oh, man, how can I? He's my brother, and I desire God's mercy for him, not God's justice, unless His justice leads to mercy."

And Jose said:

"Aye, you're his brother! Write to him and bid him repent. And for my sake, if not for his own, let him not return. For though I leave this in the hands of God and will not stir out of my path, yet if he comes upon it and finds me, it may not be well with him. Aye, even if God deals out justice to me, who sinned in his youth as any man may sin, write this to him, sir, write it!"

He walked past Anthony towards the gate, since that way was the nearest to Morna. He was about to pass Rachel when she spoke to him.

"Mr. Jose, Mr. Jose!"

He stopped and frowned heavily, and yet as he saw her standing with her hands held out to him the frown melted from his eyes, even if stayed about his mouth.

"Aye, Missy!"

So he used to call her when she had come to his forge when Mary was innocent.

"I want you to forgive me for last year," she said. Her voice was heavenly music and meek.

"Oh, you were good," said Jose; "'tweren't your sin as you did what you did. 'Twas the sin of mine own, and you did what you should, and if there's any to be forgiven (and there are many) I'm among them."

She wished to plead for others, but the very shape of the word "Mary" on her trembling lips hardened the old man's face again.

"I always loved you, Missy," he said harshly, and turning he went back to the village.

But tears ran down Rachel's face as she watched him, and she sighed. Then Anthony came to her.

"I never saw you weep, Rachel," he said sombrely.

"I'm not weeping," said Rachel almost angrily. But she resented more the strange weakness in her which led to tears, than his seeing them. "What did the old man say?"

Anthony rested his hands upon his horse's neck and stared down the valley to the sea.

"He spoke fiercely, for he's mad, and who shall blame him?"

"Did he threaten—anyone?"

"One that deserves it. One that's across the sea."

Rachel shivered.

"Tell him not to come back."

But Anthony laughed bitterly.

"If I begged him to come he would not. But if I begged him not to do anything, that he would do, if there was anything of danger in it, or damnation. Always from a child he was the same."

Rachel's tears fell no more. Though she could not say so, her memory of John filled itself with these fresh lights. There was something in him that rejoiced her heart, even though she condemned him. What she said was inexplicable to Anthony.

"You speak as if you knew the heart of God. Are you still the priest, as old Steve said?"

And when Anthony rode away across the brown hills and round the head of the valley, Rachel stood watching him for a long time. In her mind there was something which could not shape itself into a clearer thought. But if she had wrought it into words she would have known that what John lacked was what she raged against in his dearer brother.

IV

As Anthony rode off across the field he desired to turn in in his saddle and once more see Rachel standing by the gate. And he would not; for this was the warped nature of the man, that any natural desire seemed alien from

God, and even the affections of the heart were only less evil than the lusts of the flesh.

Things that he liked he put away from himself. This was a sacrifice that found favour with the deity he worshipped.

Now as he went his heart was warm with a pure and natural joy in the sweet and commanding aspect of Rachel. She was so fine, so calm, so grave, and yet so joyous, and her large and noble charity of mind, sprung he knew not whence, appealed to the soul that he strangled. How should she weep for the old man's sorrows since she belonged to a creed that was the devil's? It seemed strange and marvellous, only to be accounted for by the infinite mercy of God who, according to his own creed, had no mercy on the nature of man.

Things that he liked he put away from himself. The power and strength and beauty of this girl he put away, and riding from her woods and the shadow of them he went into the fierce sun, talking with himself and God and his erring brother. He prayed on horseback and could have preached from it, taking John's sin for his text. In his own heart he was proud to believe the flesh subdued. Yet there were hours when he wondered if it were not merely unawakened, a sleeping dragon that should presently be roused. Sometimes he desired temptation to prove himself by, and he knew this was a lure of Satan's.

"'Twas a cruel sin of John's! Oh, the poor girl, and the poor old man."

Mary would have looked him in the eye with something subtle in her own. On obtaining countenance and pleasant work the shame in her outwore itself quickly, for the boy was so precious and had Miss Rachel's patronage. Once when Anthony met her in the salt meadow and fell into a rage against John she smiled so that she seemed an enigma.

"I'm not a poor girl," she said to herself. "Oh, but if John was back!"

For Anthony there was something over and beyond all explanation in her face. He saw hidden passions run over it, and turned away from the sinner harshly, till he

repented of guessing what was the truth. She regretted her lover and the days gone by.

"God give me strength to deny myself always!" said Anthony.

He came nearer and nearer to an incapacity for distinguishing between God's desires and the devil's, both being expressed in himself. There seemed no safety, unless heaven spoke in clear tones, save in doing that which he did not desire. He left no human margin for those sweet thoughts which spring only from sweet human nature. The inclination that he felt to stay with Rachel after he had spoken to her of the old blacksmith was a thing to be crushed and trodden on.

He went to Winifred Perran instead, because he did not desire her, and because she was of no alien creed. The vice of his religion grew in him like a cancer, and he hugged his heavenly safety to himself, because he had as yet not known the might of the flesh, which he feared. And always, always, under the outward current of his mind, there were strange thoughts growing, and he dreamed of wild passion, sometimes waking with terrible and dear lips upon his own. And not yet were they Rachel's lips, but only the mouths of such women as might have tortured the saintly men of old.

He would not turn back to Rachel, and yet she was only a girl, he said, and it was wrong to dread her. There was safety with her after all, for she was of the Church of Rome, and he could not marry a Papist.

There were days when he turned back and talked to her of Winnie, while her great eyes were melancholy and she wondered how she could endure to hear of that pale, flame-eyed woman, whom she scorned and almost loathed without knowing that her jealous heart saw uncleanness in one who was not yet her rival. And sometimes Anthony broke away suddenly if Rachel softened a little and became quite natural when he ceased to talk of his cousin. For he remembered that Martha had begged him not to make the girl love him. He woke one night, and as he lay half unconscious, he said, "I could make her love me," before he knew what he was saying. And

this he said was the lust of the flesh, and he tortured himself for days, avoiding Rachel if he met her.

And it was through this saying of his in the early dawn that he went to Winnie and her father, old George Perran, the boon companion of clear-headed John.

"You know I want to marry Winnie, uncle," he said coldly, and George laughed.

"You can have her, my boy, I don't want her. As I get drinking 'tis she gets drunk, as it were, and we have rows at midnight when my heart is merry and I sing. Oh, take her, take her! She's been waiting this ten years for you!"

But Anthony's heart was cold then, and his finer instincts raged against him.

"I will speak to her," he said.

"Do, old sobersides," said George thickly, "do, and make her happy with a husband that's against the drink and the flesh and the devil. Though for the matter of that there's flesh to her and the devil, and she has a knack of wanting her way that's hard on a man that must have his own. But you like treading on yourself and will enjoy being trodden on. If you beat her a little, nephew, and make her cry, I'll never back her up."

Anthony was as black as a thunder-cloud, but held his peace.

"I'll go to her now."

"Do," said George, and when he had gone the old man chuckled.

"Oh, Lord, 'tis easy raising daughters, but getting rid of 'em's another thing. And if my poor old girl was not so bad, Winnie has been a thousand thorns to me, and I've been wondering these years past that she's never run to seed and made me a grandfather without leave or licence. And now Anthony makes up his mind and takes her! I thought my brave Johnny (oh, what a head he has, and the bowls we filled and emptied) had gone astray with her. Well, 'tis an odd world, and living's the strangest game ever played. And as for Winnie, I'd liever part with her than an old shoe, especially when the gout gets hold of me by the toe with red hot pincers as the saint got

the devil by the nose. Now I can sleep this afternoon."

He put a red handkerchief over his face of Silenus and snored in peace, before Anthony found the woman he was to marry. For the lover went slowly and stayed in the hall of the little house and stood silently torn by emotions and cursing himself at the moment of his triumph over the forces of evil within him.

This was the hour, this the moment, that he knew he adored Rachel Marr. Not a shadow of a doubt stayed upon his heart. She was the woman, though she was so young, whom destiny had wrought out for him from the old time before them. Considering in his soul the perfections of her erring spirit wedded to Rome, he anguished in the clear sight he had of that lump of human flesh to which he had to give himself. For if he saw Rachel fairly he now saw Winnie with no less clarity of astounded vision. She was amazing in her simple want of worth; having no gifts she could give none; she had qualities that were mere absences, and some that were offences. She was of the flesh, and her fleshly attraction failed her with Anthony most at this hour. He went to her as to a sacrifice, believing he did his duty doubly; once that he had allowed her to love him, once that by doing so he outraged the instinct in himself that he excited in her. So might some saint of old, some anchorite, believe he worked pleasing things in the eye of the Almighty by enduring and rendering fouler the filthiest rags that covered his nakedness.

And "Whey-face" with the pale eyes of flame fell into his arms and found his mouth with hers.

V

It was Martha who told Rachel first the definite news that Anthony Perran was to marry his cousin. Popular opinion in Morna, when the village learnt of the wedding to be, was acquiescent if curiously scornful. Since Mrs. Marr's death a sense of warm delight in

Rachel possessed Morna Cove, and no one but a fool would have chosen to court Winnie rather than this proud and humble beauty. There were whispers in Morna that Winifred Perran was no pearl of great price, neither was she, they said, as pure as any pearl. Some associated her name with John Perran's, even though it had been a tale of long years that she had set her heart upon the elder brother.

"Aye, aye," said the old gossips, "we know what we know. We have seen such things. Steve Penrose may be a drunken old fool, but he's out by moonlight at times over to Pentowan. He could tell things, that he could. He's no fool."

But Steve wagged his unvenerable beard and said nought of Winnie.

"To tell truth about God Almighty's ways with men is bad enough and makes enemies of more than the preachers," said Steve, "but to tell truth about folks is a shame, and 'twould lose me many a good drink when drink is scarce. And what I say in drink is nought, unless I'm on general principles, for drink is powerful with them, but it colours facts strangely, and to dip after a fact in the drink is to shoot at a fish in water without 'lowance for what Sam called the abstraction of the water."

But others spoke if he did not, and it was one of the scornful who carried the news to Martha first, saying things of Winifred that none knew.

"I believe nothing of it," said Martha, "and if 'twas true, what is it to me?"

When she was alone she shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, well, 'tis a good thing, and now Miss Rachel will get him out of her head. I'm glad I spoke to him. He's a fine good man, and it's a pity he's to marry that girl. Oh, she's an idle slut, and what little beauty she has is not to last. But when's the man to come along for my girl? If she were married I'd sing 'Now lettest Thou me' with all my heart, unless I was fool enough to live till I loved her children, as is likely enough. Love makes us loth to die, and heaven is hard to believe in while those we love are living."

Rachel came in from the chickens. She wore a big apron, her rounded arms were bare to the sweetly turned elbow, her eyes were happy.

"Have you heard the news of Mr. Perran and his cousin?" asked Martha.

Rachel's eyes lost their happiness and grew serious.

"What news?"

"'Tis settled they're to marry at last."

The sun was shining outside, and all the pleasant noises of the morning sang together in a sweet chorus, but for Rachel the sun lost its glory, and the song of the early day was but harsh dissonance. The organic harmony of autumn fell apart for her, and she shivered, as a musician might at some untrue interval.

"Oh, but it was to be," she said. In her voice there was a note of desolation. Death was to be; there was an end to summer. "I knew it long ago."

The stood together in the old dining-room of Morna House that had been furnished a hundred years before. The dark wood shone with faithful labour; deep shadows were on the oak panels; on an oak side-piece gleamed much pewter that her grandfather had owned. Martha rubbed a chair with a leather.

"Well, it's settled now," she said. And the nature in the woman raised a little lamentation. "He's a fine man, and it's a pity, for she's nought, and less than nought. I wonder when the wedding will be."

Rachel's face twitched a little.

"I wish I didn't hate her," she said simply; "oh, it's a shame, it's a shame!"

She understood nothing of herself as yet, but some of her instincts rebelled against this match, but which of them they were she knew not.

"She's a hateful thing," said Rachel. She stripped off her apron and went out into her wood without a word. Mary, as she passed, said:

"Will you take Johnny, Miss?" but Rachel did not answer her, if a frown was not an answer. The truth is she did not know what the girl had said till long minutes afterwards when she leant against her favourite pine.

And presently she slipped to the ground and lay with her face upon her hand staring down into the marsh and the meadow by the stream. But beauty did not pass into her from the loveliness of nature, since much loveliness had passed out of nature for the time.

There came over her a sudden sense of the unreality of all things which was appalling. The world dissolved into a horrible series of phenomena which mocked the apprehensive blinded senses. Something had interposed itself between her and the warm earth, or something had been withdrawn, a fine veil of spiritual joy. She perceived things nakedly, and found their nakedness curious and unreal. Anthony himself fell from his high estate; for the moment, aye, and for days, he was a mere man, brother to the children of the soil, a creature of such an aspect, of so many limbs. He was a catalogue of qualities, divorced from the informing spirit, and she sighed, not understanding that her own withdrawn soul covered him no longer with the dyes of her imperial heart.

She did not know she loved him.

For love was something that she aspired to even as she panted after the glory of God in her finer hours. She was not worthy of heaven, and not worthy of love. It was a gift that was the co-equal of God's grace; it came direct from God. The blind passion stirring within her, as the unborn child stirs, filled her with dread. She imagined love so sweet that she gave no such name to her own unborn passion. All her adoration of the flesh, made kin to the spirit by its destiny, failed her in this hour at least.

But it was a consolation now to know that she did not love him. She said that under her breath. And once more a wave of the essential unreality of things helped her.

Even this marriage was unreal. If Anthony married it would be a mere fantastic illusion of the senses. She had once said, "Poor Whey-face can have her Anthony if she liked!" She would only take the unreal man; in Rachel's heart the true man lived.

These illusions covered her at last with a false peace, and gave her back something of her own world. But even by day they drifted apart like swirling fog or smoke in a wind, and she suffered dumbly. At night she dreamed beautiful dreams or sad ones. Some made her scarlet to remember, but they were incomplete, exasperating. It was in such dreams that she learnt to fear herself, for they showed her something within her own soul that she had never seen; the set strength of her desires, the inherited passion that refused to let go, and would refuse always.

She was unhappy till she met Anthony again, and perhaps no less unhappy after, though the sight of him gave her joy that she found inexplicable. For seeing that love was so great a thing and not yet hers, she wondered at the joy his face gave and his words increased.

They met upon the high road to the east of Morna a week later, for to the east the cliffs were nearer her woodland and there was a path down to her bathing place, and she had been swimming. She saw Anthony come riding, and in front of him ran Sigurd. Instinct in her, and her pleasure in the big dog who so often came to Morna House from Pentowan, set her lips in a shrill, keen whistle, and Sigurd ran swiftly to the sound that his master did not hear. For Anthony rode thinking; his face was set; there was rebellion in his soul against the decrees of his God. He was a sad lover.

Sigurd in this last year had grown a giant of his kind, and all strangers who did not understand his nature and calm tolerance feared him mightily. There was no man in Cornwall, they said, could hold him in a leash when Anthony whistled. But Sigurd had great doubts as to which creature among mankind had the greatest claim upon him. Custom held him to Pentowan Farm but love sent him to Morna. When Rachel hooked her little finger in his collar Anthony might whistle till his cheeks cracked, and though Sigurd whined and whimpered and implored her to let him do his duty, he never broke from her. She held him now as he lay down in a little hollow of the bracken while Sigurd spoke to her joyfully in a

running pleasant whimper till he heard his master's horse in the road.

Anthony saw the dog, but Rachel was behind and below him. He whistled a little and Sigurd made no move.

"Come, Sigurd," said his master. And Sigurd begged his pardon very sadly, but could not come, for Rachel's finger lay in the brass ring of his collar. So then Anthony knew and he flushed a little.

"Is that you, Rachel?" he called, and Rachel rose from the grass and the bracken, and came to the hedge leading Sigurd with her.

"You're still the only one can keep him from me!" said Anthony.

"By-and-by your wife may," answered Rachel. There was that in her tone which made Anthony flinch. It was bad enough to see her and to know he loved her, but to have earned her scorn was a bitter whip.

"So you've heard," he said.

Rachel had a sense of what would sting him.

"Martha told me. She heard it from an old gossip in the village."

Her tone said:

"Why didn't you come and tell me? But I know you are ashamed of Whey-face before you are married."

And Anthony flushed again.

"It was to be," he said. "You'll come to the wedding?"

There was anguish in his heart that she could not fathom as he spoke. She answered sullenly and twisted the towel she carried till it knotted itself.

"Oh, how do I know? She and I were never friends, and we have hardly spoken for a year."

Whey-face had said, "You want him yourself." Now Rachel answered her, "I don't want you to have him, but what I feel for him is not love." There was something in her heart which made her desire to strike him.

"You must be friends now," said Anthony.

And Rachel laughed.

"Because she takes the one friend I have? 'Tis a good reason, Mr. Anthony Perran!"

She bowed to him and then made a mocking courtesy.

"Why she'll chain up Sigurd if she hears he comes to Morna, and she'll chain you up too!"

His controlled spirit and the long control of years never deserted him, but as he sat his horse clouds passed across his face, and his spirit was very dark. Rachel saw she hurt him, but never guessed how deep she cut, or what raw spots lay open to her lash.

"Your Church should teach you charity," was all that Anthony said. For her faith was in his mind the whole while. Only her faith had stood between him and her; long years in which he had seen that he and no Catholic could mate and bring up children had made him fancy he thought of her as a sister. Now he could have cursed the Church of Rome before her, not for any of its creeds or doctrines, but for this only, that it had led him into so desolate a place of desire.

"I've charity enough," said Rachel; "and as for my Church, why, you have no charity for it, and you could burn Father Brant for a beacon light when some prince is born, or a king is crowned. Now I have charity for your Church or Chapel, and as for love—when I love I shall sing and go about in scarlet instead of this black stuff."

He sat mute upon his horse and viewed her as she stood upon the high bank beyond the dusty hedge. Had he ever seen her before? he asked himself. Now his soul perceived her beauty, her dark straight brows, her eyes that were like gleaming pools upon a moorland when day dies in a clear and solemn splendour; the infinite loveliness of her body, that was rounded like a carven goddess of old Greece and yet as strong and lithe as a youth's. Her Southern blood shone through her olive skin, which was clear, and bloomed like a sunny peach. But above and beyond her physical beauty glowed a wonderful fire of passion that she was not conscious of. There was a touch of sullen strength about her that was not of the body; a bigness of the heart, a power that now lay sleeping. All great colours became her. She could subdue scarlet and gold even as the sun subdued them. But in

black she was less a child of the earth, more the child of her dead mother, more aloof from the sweeter spirits of the common day.

His eyes sank before hers and he sighed.

"You're a strange creature, Rachel," he said presently.

Rachel smiled.

"Oh, Anthony, and so are you. I'm easy to understand, I think, for what I want, I want, you know. And I love the sea and the earth and the sky, and all living things, and flowers are just as much alive as dear old Sigurd here."

She bent and brushed her cheek against the dog's great head.

"But you want what you don't want. That's Puritanism, isn't it? And if the sun makes you happy, you'll away to the shadow, and 'tis an offence to God for you to smell His flowers and rejoice."

Again she smiled, not knowing how she touched the heart of things for the man who wanted her and the sun, now that he stood where she was not and the sun did not shine.

"Do you love Sigurd, for instance?" she demanded.

"Why, yes, in a way," said Anthony. "I'd be sorry to lose him."

Rachel sniffed contemptuously.

"I don't think you'd be what I call sorry to lose anything, Anthony. Perhaps you don't think it right. I read the other day what would have made you shiver. It was that folks in chapel and church were mostly like stuffed birds with glass eyes and perches."

"Not everyone in church has the live spirit of God in his heart," said Anthony.

And though Rachel answered nothing, she asked herself again what was the spirit of God, and how it came that each poor heart worshipped or denied its own thin shadow. And Anthony said:

"I must go. Come, Sigurd!"

And a spirit of mischief possessed Rachel. She put her finger in the ring of the dog's collar.

"Call him," she said. And Anthony called and Si-

gurd whimpered in a low voice, but her finger lightly crooked held him fast.

"It's your love for him against mine," said Rachel mockingly.

And Anthony whistled with a certain dull anger in his heart against her and against the dog.

"Come, Sigurd, come!"

But Sigurd only pawed the ground and whimpered again.

Anthony's face darkened.

"There's the devil in you after all," said Rachel; "it pleases me to see you angry, Anthony. Oh, you could rage, couldn't you, and all because I love him better than you? Take him home and give him to Winnie and see if she can hold him. But I don't need my finger."

She cried:

"Lie down, Sigurd."

And she loosed him, and when Anthony spoke to him again the poor brute crawled upon his belly towards his master, and then, whimpering like a child, turned back to Rachel.

And Anthony choked back something that now was not anger, though she thought it such.

"No, he loves you best," he said quickly; "and yet I've fed him from a puppy, and have never laid a whip to him, or used a harsh word. And no man can hold him when I call, and no woman but you, and he lies outside my door at nights."

He turned his horse homeward once again.

"I give him to you," he said; "if he loves you best I've no right to him."

"Oh, no, Anthony."

"I say 'yes,'" cried Anthony. And when she loosed the dog his master waved him back. And Sigurd went to Rachel and put his head upon her lap, and big tears ran down his face, for though he loved her better than any other he was not sure in his faithful heart that this was right.

But Anthony being a greater creature than his dog, and standing in God's place to him, knew even then that

love outweighed all things, save with himself alone. Himself he could torture, and please God thereby, for this is the piacular sacrifice of the savage creeds.

VI

IT was by the madness of the passion of self-denial that Anthony gave away his dog, for the desire of self-denial was crescent in him, threatening the reserves of his harmless senses, breaking down the delight of his eyes and his hands. He had taken pleasure in the big dog, even as he did in the horse he rode. But Sigurd was something not in essence useful; he drove neither cattle nor sheep, and as for the guarding of the farm, that was nothing. His strength was great and his faith strong and kind, even if something in Rachel had subdued his animal heart in an unsought victory. And Anthony's face twitched as he rode away, leaving Sigurd whimpering on the ground by his new mistress' knee. For the man knew that his soul, master of him then, denied him Rachel, and without her nothing was lovely, nothing desirable. In the hour when she first heard of the marriage of Whey-face to him who cultivated Pentowan and sowed salt upon the sweet fertility of his own heart, Rachel's eyes had seen the world without illusion and had found it barren. And Anthony, for whom the world had ever seemed an earthly, godless Paradise, trampled down the flowers that yet lifted their heads upon the path which led to his God. The girl who stood upon the verge of womanhood felt her faith waver when Heaven proved unkind. But for Anthony there was no such proof of God as the agony of his own soul, and in his crucified heart he found Calvary.

But even yet, though he knew it not, he had not experienced any temptation, and only walked trembling because of the contending passions within him which were yet held in leash. He knew that he loved Rachel, but she knew not that he loved her. If she had known indeed! The very thought of her possible knowledge set him praying. And all the time there were evil voices that

cried out in him that all Churches were the same, and that to the one God all prayers were acceptable. Why should he not have taken Rachel and Rome? And even as these voices cried aloud he knew that it was less her religion than his own that had set them apart. All Churches were not the same, and could not be, for any Church was but the trodden path of those who were alike, and in him the spirit was a spirit of denial of the body. He himself denied his own love, because he dreaded it and the effects that would spring from it. He was of one order of celibates, of which there are many orders. If some could not serve God and Mammon, it seemed to him he could not love God and any woman. He offered himself and Winifred upon the altar.

But he knew now surely that he had never known how much he loved the girl Rachel until he was bound, with a bond of words that was as strong as steel, to her whom he verily loathed.

And he rode calmly upon his grey horse, though his face was pale and set, and once he whistled for Sigurd, forgetting whose the dog was. For this is true, that what he thought was not thought in words, and the play of his dark mind was like the whirling of a pent river in sunless caves or the monstrous cañons of a mountain barrier. He rode in a desert where strange and formless shadows threatened him, and at times God's guiding star was very dim. Only once he put a thought in words, and the sound of his words, though they were unspoken, seemed like thunder.

“Oh, if she loved me!”

He remembered with a deep pleasure which was pain, words that she had spoken before her mother died, when she swam at cool midnights in Morna Cove. Now this senses and his memory were acute; he saw the cliffs and the moonlight, and the water lapping on the beach. But he saw more than he had seen then. For though the shadow was heavy he perceived her strong and delicate body in the translucent wave, and a shiver ran over his skin like a ripple over water, and his eyes closed in a trance that lasted no longer than one quick beat of his

disturbed heart. And her voice was clear though far off.

“Would you do anything for me if I asked you?”

And he had answered:

“All that I could.”

Oh, God, all that God allowed him!

“Aye, anything that was right!”

The far-off spirit laughed.

“How mean of you, and how little! Oh, if I loved you, and I don't this night, I'd do anything you wanted.”

And “anything you wanted” floated like a strange clear echo in his heart, and he saw Rachel lift her hands to her brow, and perceived the delicate, childlike, yet full contours of her bosom before the vision faded. But “anything you wanted, Anthony,” floated after and with him as he put spurs to his grey horse and rode fast, and faster still.

“Anything you wanted, Anthony, anything you wanted!”

VII

Now Rachel, whether she swam at midnight, as she still did, or whether she walked in the full sunlight, showed no longer any of the contours of a child. She ripened swiftly, came to a swift Southern growth, and was a woman in her body while her spirit lingered a little forlornly upon the verge of childhood's Eden, turning backward glances of regret upon its sinless orchards. Whatever she knew by teaching, by rude contact with such simple children of the flesh as Mary, or by intuition, was still something that concerned humanity but not herself. Between man and woman and the typical child that renewed them, and the animals, she perceived there was a likeness. But when it came to this man or that, the individual differences they showed lifted them, she believed, from the mere tide of life. And these things in herself, whether they were revolts or acquiescences,

prayers and appeals, or psalms sung when the sun shone, made her even less than mankind as she saw it, flesh and flesh only.

But still, as the world altered, swiftly or slowly, according to the beating of her heart and the tide of her blood, the visionary aspect of things grew more material. Sometimes, and chiefly in dreams which were always less spiritual than her woodland self-communings, she saw nothing of the soul that priests would have demonstrated to her. What she did see was her maternal destiny, and its import, and in dreams she nursed sweet children that vanished at waking and left her heart a hollow and her arms stretched out vainly. And in these dreams Anthony Perran played a greater part; by the very materiality of them she was more satisfied with love which was not passion derived from the spirit. By daylight or moonlight, or in the close cool haunt of her pines, her flesh was still dominated by its ancient beliefs, its dread of experience, its natural coyness, its virginal reluctance. And over the flesh stood the spirit, still dominant though yielding. And her spirit still maintained the ideal aspect of Love as something great beyond all estimation, something delicate as the fine glow of early dawn, something sweeter and more heavenly than any other gift of God. In her dreams, dreams forecasting the inexorable and exact decrees of destiny, since such dreams are organically true and the well-spring of instinct, she walked hand in hand with something that was sweet but not delicate, something dear but terrible, something godlike but not heavenly.

She began to cease caring for other people's children. In the glory of her youth's morning clouds gathered; certain faint lines graved themselves upon her face; she was unsatisfied with the blossoms of the spring and hungered after fruit of which she knew not the savour. Her gravity was more often sullenness; her laughter oft-times ended in tears; she carried unborn desire beneath her girdle.

This was the time when Father Brant was most satisfied with her. He saw nothing but what she brought

him, and she brought strange fervour, and only such doubts as priests delight to solve.

“If I dreamed that I did not believe in God, Father, would it be a sin?”

“Not a sin, my daughter, for in dreams we are not ourselves, but it should be an occasion for prayer and a searching of the heart, and such devotions as are specially appointed for the strengthening of faith.”

Yet she had never dreamed that she did not believe in God. She had dreamed rather that she believed in man, and sought to know if any sin (or what seemed to her a sin) could be committed in those hours when the spirit slumbers and the flesh is all awake. She found comfort in the priest's words, and now twice every Sunday she went to the chapel at the Great House near Morna Church Town. And those who visited at the house asked who she was, and how so fine a creature belonged to small people, who were not of the sea or the soil or of the country. For nothing in her aspect, or her manner, or her face set her down as part of the world to which she belonged. And only Father Brant knew of her parentage, and now he was more cheerful about her, after the manner of man, when there was most reason for fear.

But just at this time when she gave reins to herself at night and was doubly devout by day, Rachel did not fear for herself. By night she walked with soemone who was Anthony and yet another, and by day she tasted that peace which heralds a storm. And though she feared such a tempest, and indeed foretold it partly, she did not dread it, since religion had come back to her, even though she was a different creature from what she had been before she heard that Anthony was to marry his cousin.

And this peace of hers lasted some time and might indeed have lasted longer, had it not been that she met Winnie Perran on the eastward cliff. For since she had heard of the marriage Rachel had rarely crossed the village and climbed to the western cliffs and the little valley where George Perran lived. She avoided Winnie of set purpose.

"I can't tell her lies," said Rachel, "and how can I say I am pleased?"

But part of Winnie's own pleasure lay in the instinct that Rachel's heart inclined to Anthony. Even she perceived that there was a natural fitness in these two for each other. And Anthony was so cold a lover that at times she hated him. For she knew that he was not cold by nature, and she felt the truth, though she hid it from herself, that he did not love her. She had won him by tears, by persistence, by the slow growth in his mind of the belief that a childish engagement must be binding on both if one held it binding at all. And deep within her she knew his dread of himself, and his admiration for Rachel, and his loathing for the priesthood of Rome by reason of the fanatic priest within him. Had it not been for Rachel's religion this old engagement might have been nought, and she knew it. But now, his word having been renewed, she was as sure of him as though they had been married. She sought out Rachel deliberately, for if she had a reason for triumph, she had also a reason for anger and a reason for jealousy. Anthony had given away Sigurd to Rachel. When she heard of this, she was furious, and but for a fear in her heart of the man she was to marry, in spite of the sure hold she had of him by his faith, she would have raged at him as she did at Rachel when they met. And the cause of her anger was with Rachel then, for Sigurd never left her side when she left her garden. But when Winnie came towards them, walking now without any languor since jealousy spurred her, there was something hostile in her approach and Sigurd growled.

"Be quiet, Sigurd," said his mistress, and as she too perceived the hostility in Winifred, she stayed and let the woman walk all the way to her.

"That's my dog you have," said Winnie. She was flushed with walking, but her lips were pale and set. Her dress was extravagant, not wholly tasteless, but richer than the country needed or her station justified. There was for ever this difference between her and her enemy, that she called attention to what she wore, while

Rachel made, not only men, but women, forget now she was clothed.

“That’s my dog!”

Rachel had not seen her since her engagement had been made the common gossip of the village. Ignoring what Whey-face said, she examined her with a cold curiosity which was not meant for insolence, but looked strangely like it.

“I wonder what Anthony can see in her?” asked Rachel. She asked it quite coldly. It was mid-day; she was not dreaming, and something about Winnie made her withdraw so much into herself that even Anthony for a moment was but one of all mankind. “I wonder what any man can see?”

For she saw nothing but white lips and a face now no longer flushed and two pale eyes of flame. Winnie’s body was large, but her soul was small, she said; there was no greatness in her, nothing of the spirit. Now, indeed, Rachel’s curiosity turned again to contempt, and Winnie saw it.

“Oh, your dog?” said Rachel, and she laughed.

“Yes, mine!”

“Did Anthony give him to you?”

“He meant to, I know,” said Winnie, “but you went sneaking to him and begged for what should have been mine.”

Rachel flushed scarlet.

“That’s a lie, Winifred Perran, and you know it. But you always were a liar. What lies have you told Anthony?”

“I’ve told him the truth—about you!” said Winnie.

“What truth?”

Rachel’s eyes blazed so that for a moment Winnie was afraid to stab her. But when she hesitated and Rachel laughed scornfully, her anger swallowed up all discretion.

“I said you were sick with love for him and owned it to me,” she cried.

There were cousins of Rachel on her unhappy exiled father’s side who, on hearing such words, would have run

in upon Winnie and killed her. And now Rachel saw things within her own heart which appalled her. She stepped towards the woman who was henceforth her true enemy, and as she came Winnie retreated, and her jaw fell, and her limbs trembled. For Rachel was no girl in that moment, but something terrible, and her mouth showed her strong white teeth, and above her pupils was the pure and gleaming white of her eye. And Winnie went backward still, and then she cried out and Sigurd leapt forward barking, and she fell upon the ground and hid her face trembling.

And perhaps if it had not been for Sigurd Rachel might have knelt beside her and taken her by the throat as old Jose had taken his daughter for a less reason. But Sigurd's bark broke in upon her set mind, and cold and bitter contempt came back and mingled with the hot flood of her anger, and she paused.

"You mean thing," said Rachel, "you mean thing!"

Her voice was low and hoarse. There was no music in her soul. The sound of her voice made Winnie quiver again, for she was truly afraid for her life.

"There are some," said Rachel, "oh, and I know it, who would have set Sigurd on you to tear you."

And Sigurd growled. What was wrong he knew not, but this he knew, that his mistress was wroth with the woman on the ground. And to do her pleasure he would have given his life, or taken any life but Anthony's.

"Get up," said Rachel; "get up and take yourself away."

And Winnie rose. She shook like a leaf; upon her face were smudges of powder channelled by cowardly tears; her lips were whiter than powder. She walked away tottering. Her anger and spite had cost her dear, and might cost her dearer yet. Rachel walked behind her.

"If Sigurd will go with you, you can have him," she said. But Winnie only shook her head; now she loathed the dog, and this dark creature behind her, and Anthony and herself. Again and again her nature had made her dare battle with Rachel, and again and again she had

been humiliated. Yet in this hour she could have turned on Anthony himself and bid him go, if it had not been that she believed not hell nor all the power of his fanaticism could keep him away from Rachel.

And they came down upon the road and to the gate which led to the upper wood of Morna House. Within a few yards two men worked, breaking stone, and there Winnie's courage returned to her.

"Keep the dog, keep him," she said bitterly; "but what I told him was the truth, and if you've taken the dog from me, I've taken Anthony away from you."

There was that in Rachel which could have made her cry out:

"I could take him even now!"

But, then, as she told herself, she did not love him. If love was what she thought, so high a passion and so much the gift of God, could it be kin to the pain that wrenched her to conceive of his becoming the husband of so mean a thing as she who claimed him now? And as even a noble creature, fair to look on, gifted with charity and true love and a spirit capable of all delights, is but a vessel limited and human, now so great a disdain filled Rachel's heart that nothing else could mingle with it. Her anger, instead of abasing her, lifted her at last to something that was not disdain, but a heavenly pity for all who were weak or cruel or evil.

And yet at night her body cried aloud, as one cries to those who will not hear:

"If I could only take him now!"

Her spirit answered, unanswering:

"O God, make him happy!"

And that night, for the first time, the flesh cried out to her that Love was not what she believed, but that it was terrible as famine, and as inexorable as death, and as cruel as the grave. And as she trembled and would not hear it, she felt that it was the flesh that knows, since it was the flesh that suffered.

VIII

ON the inland verge of the upper wood were the oldest pines and by them was a knotted scarred oak which had seen even the most aged of the other trees push its way through grass. For years the oak had threatened to fall and indeed only Rachel had saved it from the axe, since she loved it as she loved all living things. Her passion was for the inner aisles of the wood, for the cool red-scaled pines, since these were her church and grew more and more her sanctuary, but often and often she had left those shadowy depths to climb into the oak that grew upon the margin of the meadow land. Though the solitary tree stood in a little fold or dell, from its higher branches she could once more view the sea, and catch glimpses of a distant beach, while close at hand some of Morna's chimneys sent blue smoke into the air. For years she had not climbed the oak, but she loved it all the same, perceiving in her mind those fancies which in poet's hearts made dryads live and set them to guard each sacred tree.

Now, in a quiet autumn night, or a last night of summer, since this year the hot season ran to the verge of winter, the oak fell without any storm to cast it down. Huge overgrowth of a north-west branch, and perhaps its great crop of acorns, did what a thousand winds had failed to do, since the younger wood of pines had grown up between its age and the Atlantic blast. The end came in the hours after midnight, a week after Rachel had found Winnie Perran was her enemy, and had discovered other things concerning herself which were very strange, and even dreadful to think upon. And Rachel, sleeping very lightly, or not sleeping at all, was roused by a sound which was like a pistol shot, clear and distinct, for this was the first giving way of the old oak's strained sinews. As she started from her pillow, and rested upon her elbow, there was a duller and more muffled crack, and then the sound of powerful rending and the final crash of the branches on the ground.

"It's the oak," said Rachel sorrowfully, for she knew there was nothing else to fall, and she rose from her bed, and clad very lightly, stole out into the warm darkness, lamenting about the end of things. Little by little during this last year the hatred or disdain or fear (could she or any other say which it was?) that she had experienced for the aged had melted into a softer feeling that was pitiful. Her terror of the destined involution of things, since such terror always besets those who have not fulfilled themselves by work wrought out or by the bearing or begetting of children, still remained with her, but age itself seemed not so evil as she had considered it. These thoughts of hers, thoughts unthought, instincts murmuring in the dark of her mind, had often extended themselves to trees and plants, so that autumn, be it ever so fruitful, seemed pathetic, and a full wheat-field but a grave. Yet in the growth of trees and the wonder of their renewal, and their might, and their crown of leaves and fresh splendour even when decay worked at their vitals, there was always something so defiant of the laws of death, that she clung to them and was proud of their courageous show of immortality. The greater then was her grief when this brave oak at last ripened to its end and fell sublimely in so serene a midnight; and like a hamadryad led away by love from the shrine at once herself and her charge, she came to it almost weeping, and embraced its huge rough trunk, now cast flatling on the burst turf of its ancient hollow. And with her came Sigurd the hound.

This death was the second in her life, but as she sat in the lucid night and considered her loss, it seemed to her that here was greater ground for grief than when her mother's spirit fled upon the storm. In such a night the world is most alive, and all the pantheism latent in her soul streamed about her wonderfully, filling her horizons as the northern lights may fill the firmament. The oak was alive, conscious, personal, and so the faint fine chorus of the mournful pines asserted, for in the darkness they were as delicately sad as cypresses by a southern sea. And it had lived so strong, so full, so bravely

rooted a life that it seemed a reproach to unanchored fleeting frail humanity. Now her mother was but a ghost, a creature of past dream-hours, a dark spirit, a mere wraith, an apparition. Here in this solid, warm sap-bleeding wood was something to grasp, to hold. She wept a little, and Sigurd sighed and thrust his huge head into her lap, and her tears fell upon him warmly.

Oh, but to think of the swift death of man, and the secure hold that other living things had upon the world. She wished for an eternity of joy, an æon of life and love; she was aflame and athirst with the great desire of the immediate immortality which is instinct satisfied.

"Oh, but this tree lived when there was no Morna," she said. She thrust herself away from the trunk with her hand, and then relenting, touched its rude cortex with her tender lips.

And next morning she sent to the Church Town for Timothy Cragoe, who had been to America and was the best axeman in the country round, to cut the old tree into billets and logs and firewood, so that it might fulfil its destiny. And Timothy came to Morna House bringing his axe, and a maul and wedges, and he came singing and light-hearted, for work with the axe was what he liked best and little enough of it he found in Cornwall.

"'Tis a rare knotty old devil of a tree, so it is, Miss," said Timothy, as he dropped his bag of wedges and his maul and set the axe aquiver in the wood with a light one-handed swing, "'tis a rare knotty one, but I'll take it on. 'Twill be mostly firewood, Miss, for it died of old age and much that looks the finest is but a shell. A tree is like sheep, Miss, there's a time for it to die, and old age don't improve 'un."

He was a fine young fellow, grey-eyed, but with an olive skin, and had been married in the spring to a girl that Rachel knew.

"And how is your wife, Timothy?" she asked as she turned to leave him at his work.

"She's very well, Miss, and many thanks to you for asking and she'll be down here at noon to bring me my grub," said Timothy happily. "It's strange, Miss, how

I did think and think of going back to America, and now I don't think of it at all."

For Rachel there was nothing beautiful oversea but the lands of the South that grew dim and dimmer still in her memory.

"Oh, surely, it's better here," she said. To leave Morna would have broken her heart, and when she looked upon her woodlands and the sea, she thought that it was Morna held her.

"But the trees out west, Miss Rachel, they're fine," cried Timothy; "there's no timber in Cornwall. But for Susy I'd be there now."

The woman had him tight, clasped him, and held him for the time; and in him nature spoke.

"He's very happy," said Rachel; "Timothy loves work, and he's young and he loves Susy. She's a pretty little thing and he's so big and strong."

She went back to the house, and as she went she heard the rhythmic blows of his keen axe upon the fallen tree.

"How quickly things change," she said. Only a few hours ago she had lain under the shadows of the oak, and now a creature of an hour armed with steel stood upon its yet living branches and lopped its crown away. Rachel moved in a dream, but the sense of the rapid passing of time for her and all humanity lulled her into a melancholy that was not altogether bitter. If things passed as swiftly as they seemed to pass at that moment, what need to cry aloud for gifts that were but the solace of a fleeting instant of human time?

And yet, as she moved in that dream, thoughts which lay beneath her waking consciousness thrust themselves upon her mind, and gave her swift occasion for the agony that she saw was vain. Even Timothy's serene male sense of comfort in the possession of the woman he had chosen made her ache a little and feel cold and lonely. And every now and again the subdued passions under her heart stirred, and threatened her with something that she did not understand. For though she stood upon the verge of womanhood and was a woman in her dreams, as all dreaming virgins are, since their virginity

is but individual and their passions the common gift of humanity, she was not yet a woman when the sun shone and the day was with her.

But her full awakening was at hand, and it came very lightly and as it were without a great cause, for she was ready to awake, as ready as a full bud is to open at the touch of a warm wind. And when she woke she saw how it came that she had known all things, but had not put them together. For though a lesser creature of the flesh might have builded a temple for some crownless Aphrodite with them, she was not only made of flesh and blood, but also of that spirit which is the gift of those who are descended from such as desire more than God can give them. For this desire is the Spirit, and by the light of its lamp builds the soul in darkness, and the temples that even in ruins mark his path towards Eternity. And so perhaps Rachel built.

It was on the second day after the old oak felt the steel that she went down through the wood again, walking alone, for Sigurd had gone over to Pentowan Farm by himself. This he did every few days, for he had been bred there and could not divest his heart of desire for it and for his old master. And Anthony never reproached him, even when Sigurd went upon his belly and begged for some abuse to ease his soul.

"'Tis easy to make a dog think he's not doing right," said Anthony. And yet he did not see how easy it was to make a man think that. But the hour was coming when Rachel might tell him as much, if she had not told him so already. But the echo of her voice in his soul when she said "Anything you wanted, Anthony, anything you wanted," seemed the voice of something evil to him, as it tugged at his heart and made him quiver.

"What God wants," said Anthony. And what God wanted he was sure he knew.

And Rachel went down through the wood to learn what it was she wanted, and what nature wanted, and what God wanted too. If she saw the script and found it hard to read, what wonder, seeing that man finds the Word of God and writes his glosses on the text and

makes the glosses gospel and the text a dead creature of the letter?

Ah, but the day was fine, a day to read the Gospel of God, a day to see how God can write fairly in the woodland and the upland, and on the wrinkled face of the moving tides. The red and green Word of God was no rune that day, nor anything occult. His Word was no secret to the woods, or to the quiet beasts, or to the winds or waters, or any of His creatures who, trusting themselves, trusted Him within them.

And Rachel, perceiving within her heart, that there was much to be read in the green book of the world, moved pensively in her quiet forest, hearing the sound of the axe and the pleasant voices of her quiet village. And something lifted the veil that the priest in man draws over the pages, and she saw, very dimly at first, but the next moment clearly, that nothing she could desire was in itself evil. And the thought cheered her, even though it was an unformed thought, until she remembered how her affection turned towards Anthony, who was the set priest of man incarnate, the priest who demands sacrifices and finds blood from himself for the Altar. Yet even this thought about Anthony was something inchoate, unformed. But it chilled her, and she read less clearly by "the Spirit of man, the lamp of God, which searcheth out the inwardness of all things." And the coldness which for the moment fell upon her mind translated itself into a dulness of the body, so that she went towards the sunlight and lay down under a pine at the edge of the wood. And as it was noon the sound of the axe had ceased, and Susy Cragoe came down from the Church Town with her husband's dinner. And Timothy called to her joyfully. There was a sense of satisfied labour about him, and the sweat upon his brow and limbs was pleasant, so that no thought of the great woods of the west came to him. For the axe was keen and the old oak had an easy splitting grain, and Cornwall was a fine country, and his heart was easy and for him Susy was very fair and very desirable, and his thought was that she should bear him a child.

And Rachel saw them come together and saw Timothy lift her up and taste her rosy mouth, so that his little wife laughed when he let her laugh. And Rachel would have gone away then but that they came and sat close by the stump of the old tree where the pines made a pleasant shade and the turf was clean and clear. If she moved they might discern her, and for a moment she meant to call out to them. But she did not, and they sat down, and Susy opened the dinner that she had brought and watched her man eat. Sometimes she put a morsel in his mouth and he bit her finger lightly, so that Susy made little squeaks and pretended to be much hurt. And of course Timothy knew better, and laughed as he drank beer from his can. And as Rachel lay, moving quietly backward, she heard their voices, and the Cornish speech of Susy contrasted prettily with the talk of her man who had a little tinge of the west on his tongue. And it seemed to Rachel that they were children of the wood and of the field, and cousins to the happy beasts and birds. But presently their talk ceased for a while and though she could not see them Rachel knew that Susy was held close in her man's arms, happy in her little Paradise. And then she heard Timothy say:

"'Tis full time, Susy, you told me you were going to give me a child of my own, my girl."

And what Susy said, if she said aught, Rachel did not hear, for she went scarlet and was blind for a moment, and then she turned away and crept quickly through the wood for a little and then ran to the other side of the wood. There she sat down, and still her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes strange and full of tears and shame and knowledge. And the tears she had shed often, and the shame had sometimes come at dawn, and the knowledge had been hers from all eternity; but now she knew what she knew, and was aware that all knowledge was sweet to love, and that shame was the pure gift of the virgin on the path of God. For in one hour, in one moment, she had become a woman, and she found her womanhood a burden, but as sweet a burden as a child at the full ripe breast.

Not yet came the bitterness, though it was near at hand; so great a gift of knowledge was like attainment; in the moment of triumph she knew she loved Anthony, and in that love all anger and hatred and malice and fear were swallowed up. She forgot her enemy, forgot all other women, and for a little while was happy.

And she heard Sigurd bark in the garden. Although she did not call, he presently found her and came galloping joyfully. The dog knew he had a message to her from his old master, for Anthony had picked a rose in his garden and thrust its stem in the buckle of the dog's collar.

"Why not, why not?" he asked. "If she loved me——"

But of course she did not, and he was bound hand and foot for ever!

And Rachel took the rose and put it in her bosom, and then burst into a passion of tears.

"I love him, I love him," she said. And even yet bitterness was not hers, for love that was of the flesh and the spirit, which are truly one, seemed so strange and awful and wonderful a promise of God that no evil could canker the blood-red glory of such a heavenly flower.

IX

THEY talked wonderfully about their Miss Rachel in the village, and talked not a little sadly, even gloomily. That they loved her was certain, for she was even kinder now than she had ever been, and less given to the children than to those whose faces bore the marks of conflict. In her heart the adoration of youth was yet urgent; and a child was a portent and a wonder, but as shadows fell across her soul and she dreaded strife, there was a fine foreseeing sympathy in her for those who had fought and won and fought and lost. How the rumour came into being none could say, but now Morna Cove, speaking upon doorsteps and by boats upon the beach, touched not altogether with unsure fingers on things that were

yet almost a secret to Rachel's self. Perhaps the strength of passion within her cried aloud out of her controlled silence so that many heard. And they talked of Anthony too, and then of both together, and the swifter minds among them invented such notions as should fit this and that, hitting thereby on the truth.

"'Tis a melancholy lover this Mr. Anthony surely," said the Cove; "and as for Miss Winnie, she's no better than she should be. We know it, and Steve, he do know it, for all he's as close as an oyster. And as for Mr. Anthony loving her, 'tis folly sure, for there's that in his eye when we see him with her that isn't in a lover's. 'Tis she loves him, and she's what she is, and if Steve would but speak, he could tell."

"'Tis a pity he didn't go courting with Miss Rachel, isn't it?" said the women on the doorsteps. "They'd hev bin a pretty pair; oh, a handsome couple surely. And there's sorrow in her eye, and they do say that she and that Perran girl (d'ye think it true she's such a trollop as Steve winking and saying nought makes out?) had very high words one day about that outlandish foreign dog Mr. Anthony gave Miss Rachel."

They said "ah" and "oh" and "surelie" and nodded sagely.

"'Tis all the wicked religion as Miss Rachel holds by as 'as done it," said the women. "But for the Pope and her holdin' on to him, Mr. Anthony would have married her. And small blame to him seeing that he's set on preaching himself, and a preacher can't do as others might. And the priest up at Caerhays would be agin' it, no doubt. He'll be for making a nun of her, shuttin' the poor thing up between walls. Oh, well, and if he does, mebbe 'twould be better, for the handling of men and the rearing of chillern is tryin' work, and well we know it. But 'tis a sure thing Miss Rachel loves the ground he walks on, and as for him, if there was any telling aught about a Perran, 'tis the same with him."

And so the village perceived the truth, and talked of it at sea while fishing, and in their little gardens and on their doorsteps before Rachel knew and before Anthony

was certain. And the savour of the truth was pleasant to their lips, even before the bitter cup was at the lips of those who were to drink. Only Steve Penrose knew how bitter the cup must be, for he knew much of Rachel, and of her mother, and of her mother's father, old Tregilgas. He went up to Morna House when Rachel was not there, and in spite of Martha's tongue, persisted in talking and in proffering advice.

"You're a scandalous magnatum to the village," said Martha, "that's what you are, a scandalous magnatum, and don't come hunting here for a drink, because we've none in the house, and I wouldn't give it if we had. You stagger off down to the village, Steve; the less I see of you the more I like you, and you know it."

But Steve sat down outside her kitchen window on a bench and leant his arm upon the window sill.

"Well, if I know it, my dear woman, 'tis because you've told me so. But it's just the other way about with me, for I like you amazingly because you love Miss Rachel and I'm going to stay."

"Keep your drunken tongue off my young lady," said Martha. But she spoke with less asperity.

"Sad to say," retorted Steve, "I'm as sober as a salted pilchard this morning, and I've got a tongue like unto the tongue of Dives, and yet I'm full of fear and charity and have the dregs of wisdom about me. 'Tis only the dregs I own, for if I was a full hogshead of it, I'd be minding my own business in a sunny corner, and I'm up here to mind yours, Mrs. Martha."

And Martha put her arms akimbo and stared at him.

"If you know me, Steve Penrose, that sounds like no wisdom I ever heard of."

But Steve nodded and pulled at his beard.

"Oh, aye, I know you, and you're stubborn. But for all that you love your young lady and would help her to your own blood, to say nothing of mine, if you wanted to spill it. Now wouldn't you?"

Martha's hard eyes softened.

"Well, you old fool, what of it?"

Steve rose and put his dirty hands upon the sill.

"I am an old fool, and I own it. And yet I'll say little. You know that Mr. Anthony and his cousin are to marry?"

"Of course I know!"

Steve hesitated.

"I wish fervently I was very drunk," he said at last, sighing, "for then I'd interfere good or leave it. Send your Miss Rachel to London or anywhere away out of Morna for a year, Mrs. Martha, because she's going to take this wedding hard, seeing that she loves Mr. Anthony, and she hates that daughter of George Perran's as if she was poison, as she is. Send her away, do!"

He turned and ambled off a pace or two and then came back.

"Think it over, Mrs. Martha; I know the blood, and though I don't know what you know about her mother, didn't I know old Tregilgas better? Aye, many's the time I've sat in there with him, and 'twas him that lent me books and helped me to wisdom and a ragged jacket, and a reputation that's equal to his. He was no atheist any more than I am, but he was a terrible man for having his way. And it's in the blood. Send her out of this, Mrs. Martha."

He said no more and marched away to the village and sat upon a warm rock, considering the nature of things, as he was wont to say. And the nature of things was quite tolerable, said Steve. It was the nature of man that was wonderful and hard and cruel, and so much Martha knew, for Steve's words had left her wordless, since they served mightily to bring her face to face with the truth that she knew and yet would not know.

"Oh, but I'm getting old," she moaned, "old and tired, and weakness increases in me, and the day's too long and the night's too short. And I faced it out with the mother, with my poor Mary in the churchyard, and saw her go through it, and stood by her when she died. Oh, I saw her in scarlet before Rachel was born, and then in black, and again in scarlet with running scarlet on her arms. And now Rachel's blood runs scarlet, and I foresee mourning for her and for me. A month ago

she was a girl, though something warned me she was soon to be one no more, and this very morning when I saw her look upon little Johnny 'twas with a woman's eye; and oh, her look was sad, and when I caught her look she flushed hard then soft, and then went white, and was once more a rose among women. And now she's in the pines with her womanhood in her heart, and love of that man there too."

She fell into a chair and mourned bitterly.

"And old drunken Steve knows it! Oh, he has a bleared eye, but 't isn't for nought he claims wisdom. And what he said was true. There's that in the children of old Tregilgas which makes me quiver. There's much I've wanted in my life and some I took that I shouldn't, but if I'd had a drop of his blood in me I'd have been shameless, for I'm little and not over well-favoured, and the strength to take things against the law sits ill on such as me. But Mary was grand, oh, she was, even in her sin; and as for Rachel, I'm afraid. For what her mother is, she is also—aye, and more. And speaking to her would be vainer than vanity."

She cursed Anthony in words, and yet she liked him strangely. Now she knew even better than she knew before, that he would have been like a rock for Rachel, a strong tower of defence.

"'Tis her religion, that's it. And little she thinks of it, and if he spoke, he could have it beaten down. Oh, if I'd but told him so, and set him upon saving her!"

And yet it might have been in vain.

"They say he gave his word as a boy to Winifred Per-ran, and what Mr. Anthony gives, he gives for ever. But I'll speak to her if I can, and to the Father, maybe."

That day Martha raged in the house, seeing that Rachel stayed in the pinewood, and Mary Jose cried angrily to herself over the milk in the dairy.

"'Tis she would turn the milk sour," said Mary; "and what's got her, I wonder, that she rages so. 'Tis all very well being here, but I'd most as soon be back at father's. And but for the boy I'd go to service again. Here there's

none to marry me, and John he's set abroad and I'll never see Pentowan Headland with him again."

Still she held to him in her mind, and such love as she had for the father of her child kept her straight in act, though sometimes those who would not have wedded her invited her to walk where the golden gorse and the high bracken grew. She had her little dreams and her little passions, and no new dream mocked her.

And that whole livelong day Rachel spent in the inner sanctuary of her pinewood, near the spot where she had first found Mary weeping. Sometimes tears rolled down her cheeks, now tears that were not really sad, for she was in a dream that kept her wholly within herself. She took no note of any outside influence, though all the influences of shadow and bird-song and chequered dancing sunlight and the murmuring breeze, which bore the burden of Nature's hymn, melted into her soul. And she who had seen the visible world fall apart and be no more than shattered fragments, now beheld it made organic and harmonious once more. For the hour (that was an eternity) the aisles of her holy wood were enchanted, beyond its secluded confines she saw bright air—its avenues overarched romance, and every opening of the woodland revealed beauty and immortal love. This was her passionate and heavenly self, body and spirit, one and indivisible, spread abroad in the very flood and river of life, like colour in an opening rose.

This was peace, the ancient peace of human expectation, self-deluded, happy, melancholy. Her vision, which was ecstasy when the soul turned inward on itself, saw nothing sorrowful even in renunciation. The sense of time being numb within her, all things took their colour from eternity, and as she was lapped within the senses, and secluded from the appeal of their hungry brood, she put time and the senses under her feet. That apprehension of fine continued unity which gives mankind belief in immortality, whether the soul experiences or misses it, made her godlike and immortal. Loving neither with her body nor with her soul and spirit, but with them wedded and welded into one, she achieved the possession

of the spirit that she loved, and her body itself was as something dissipated in the vestal flame she tended.

For such joy as now whelmed her soul other virgins have striven, and have set their feet in flame. For such peace as hers hermits of rocky cells in Libyan deserts, or saints upon pillars of fallen temples, or nuns within cold walls, have given away the worthless world. By sacrifice or by full acceptance comes ecstasy. These virgins of the rocks, theopathic and mystic, choose one path, and achieving unity by the destruction of the body, lift themselves to the level of their spirit, and yet are less godlike than those who bury neither talents nor the flesh, but believing the god that is themselves, achieve the God that is all things.

But by renunciation heaven itself is easier. The ascetic travels light, having renounced God's burden to carry nothing but his atrophied spirit, and shall not his reward be meaner than that of those who wrought themselves out fully, trusting all things and themselves, by which truly they know God? The way of ascetics is a solitary path, none needs the other. For themselves they seek salvation, and if the weak fall they leave them.

There was an infinite and immortal capacity for joy in Rachel, and this path was not hers. Her great hour in the passion of the woodland gave her a foretaste of immortality, of Nirvana itself. Yet such an hour was a dream, and the struggle was yet to be. To renounce was to be overcome, and her heart perceived that God knew better than the preachers, and the body better than the spirit, unless both went hand in hand. And it is through the heart that God speaks, since there is unity and there only.

But unity again comes by the wedding of human hearts. Unless Anthony found true salvation, how should she find it? For beyond the bright blue air lay heavy clouds; under the archways of romance rode strange portents; even in the organic harmony of her dream were dissonances that threatened.

X

HER splendid and secluded day passed like a dream; it went as swift as running water and was as clear. When the evening light was golden on the white homes of Morna Rachel left her woodland and went to the house. She said nothing to Martha, but the old woman marvelled at the peacefulness of the girl's face. There was no time at which she did not fear for Rachel and pray to God concerning her, since she was her mother's daughter. But now the peace that shone in Rachel, which even for the girl who felt it was like the peace of God that passeth all understanding, shone upon Martha likewise, and it seemed to her that there was no more danger for the time, and that Rachel held her own soul, being glad within and mistress of her passions. For Martha knew that these passions were a marvellous heritage for her, and a danger, and the sight of Rachel's shining face and peaceful brooding eyes made the old woman rejoice in spite of what old Steve had said.

And when Rachel passed Martha in her kitchen, she laid her hand upon the old woman's head for a moment. But she said nothing, and Martha only answered in her heart, though tears rolled down her cheeks when she was alone.

At the evening meal which Rachel took in the kitchen with Martha and Mary and the little boy, she hardly spoke. But after a long time of neglect she took Johnny on her lap and was very sweet to him. And after the meal she walked out into her garden with Sigurd, and leaning against the fence saw the last faint after-glow fade in the star-shining sky. And once or twice as she leant over into the lucid darkness, a tear fell slowly, for she believed that she accepted destiny, and her peace she took for a final gift of God.

As the moon rose she went down into her woodland again and found the shadows comforting; for they lapped her in the warm fleece of darkness, and she lay down upon the brown bed of pine needles and fell into

a great mood of heavenly pity for all things that lived, and for those things which by the common creed had no life. In this hour the trees lived abundantly, and the tides had voices, and the rocks gushed forth in springs of living thoughts for her, and the earth had the thoughts that were flowers and fruit. The stars sang together in harmony audible to her soul, and when the moon rose over the curve of the eastern grassy headland, it was no apparition, or abstraction of the astronomers, but something near, gifted, powerful, and most magically alive. And yet all things were magical, and yet again nothing was magical, or nothing at least was more wonderful than she who felt the wonder and stood peacefully in reverence before miracles.

While the moon was low it peered under the foliage of her pines, and strode in a ghostly fashion among the aisles of her odorous sweet natural church. Every glimpse of light was like a spirit; she was haunted by quiet ghosts of moonlight. And then the moon itself swung out, a lightly flattened oblate sphere of silver touched with shadows, and burned bright silver before her. It was a mighty lamp; it was a grand goblet from which spirits, angels, high archangels took the sacrament. It poured wine of silver, as she knew, upon the unseen sea, whose tides murmured like a hive that shall soon sleep.

Beside her the great Dane lay resting; his muzzle upon the hem of her garment. At times she stroked his head; the warmth of his smooth hide kept her still upon the earth.

Presently the moon swung into the higher heavens and its lower limb starred itself under a heavy pine's foliage and died out. As Rachel's mind worked inwardly and only now and again looked out upon the objective world with wide wakened consciousness, it seemed to her that the moon moved with alternate rest and motion, in an irregular strange rhythm. Now it had swiftly disappeared; the light was on the green roof of her church, the shadows grew more profound, and yet the more lucid because they were profound. And the darkness was not

darkness, but fine pervading light, such a light as there might be in deep caves under the verge of the sea. The light and darkness mingled opened the pupils of her eyes, and as they opened her veins opened freely, and still a greater peace than she had known came upon her. And in that peace she fell asleep, and the life that was in her, and about her, and her freed desires came together and begot a strange dream.

And in her dream there was a curious order, and one imagination begat another. As her thoughts had been vague, formless, and only not void in that the spirit gave them spiritual reality, so now she dreamed first of happy ghosts, such as might haunt warm woodlands in the night of a fruitful autumn. And such ghosts as might have been sad for her if she had dreamed waking were now calm as her own heart, and not melancholy or distressed or wearied. Among them she saw her mother, not now in black or more terrible scarlet, but in something woven of moonlight and darkness. Her eyes were grave but tender, and she loved her child as she had not loved her in life. And when the sleeping maiden felt her mother's lips she smiled and stirred a little. And after her mother came people she had forgotten—children of the South, of Naples, and her childhood. And then the wood became alive with the more fantastic heritage of dreams of men, and of the happier childlike race. She saw fine pixies of the wood, and such creatures as dance in fairy rings, making the grass grow green. And little gnomes, fruit of the hollow fertile earth, played a goblin market close at hand and not one but smiled upon her. This was the hour for hamadryads and nymphs of streams, and such as goblins, gnomes, and pixies, and her woodland rang with their laughter, light as the sound of wind in hare-bells.

But as these creatures of her dream appeared more mortal, more material than the ghosts, now they passed and the pine avenues were deserted, and something in her brain mourning their departure, which left her colder, renewed the ancient faint weeping of Mary, and the light cry of her child. And this thought, fertile in her dear

heart, had strange offspring, and she saw a little naked child, pink and rosy, at her feet. Then her nerves thrilled and her very bosom moved and light fine pains went through her virgin body, and she perceived that she was no longer a virgin, but one of those who had followed the path of the flesh which was also the path of God. And the miracle of the flesh was no less than a miracle of the spirit, and the naked child was a promise of God fulfilled. So she leant forward in her dream and gathered the smiling infant to her naked bosom, and she foretasted the happier joys of maternity in which mother and child are yet one. And even in her dream she fell asleep and slept for strange years, so that when the dream of sleep that was within a dream ended, she perceived other children that were hers, and one was at her bosom and one at her knee, and one played silently in the pinewood and was happy as her own full soul. And she knew the father of her children, and as it seemed to her he was close at hand smiling. And his strong grave face was clear to her as the faces of her children, and her soul was as full as the warm and fertile earth.

And as she dreamed Sigurd still lay with his head upon the hem of her garment, for all the world was still and it grew late. And presently to his acute hearing there came a sound that he seemed to know, though it was far off and very faint. He lifted his head and listened, and breathed a little quicker, and then was sure. He rose and looked down upon his mistress and touched her hand. And then going lightly he ran towards the verge of the wood and leapt upon the bank over against the road, knowing that Anthony came riding late from his eastern farm.

Now the moon's censer swung high in the heavens, and faint clouds moved across the sky in a lofty wind that stooped not to earth. A faint green colour tinged the thin clouds about the moon, making a halo, and her light was softened and the world in its quietness was unreal, since full and very quiet beauty is so rare a thing. The white road gleamed very softly, and the pine shadows were soft. It was a night for happy lovers,

and Rachel was happy. But Anthony rode in unhappiness which he mistook for God's peace, thanking God for it, since the hollowness of his heart seemed due to his sacrifice of it to Heaven. By night God appeared closer to him, enabling him to live the life of the soul regardless of the starved heart and the flesh. And yet these awakened and cried out and he cried peace where no peace was. And he rode praying, and came where Sigurd lay in wait for him, for the dog hungered for the voice of his old master, and the familiar whiteness of the horse, and for the old kennel, even though he loved Rachel best. So Sigurd ran out upon the road and gambolled, and leapt, making excuses for himself with all the inarticulate obsequiousness of the hound who knows somehow that he has failed in his duty. But something (perhaps God) told him that his happiness was bound up in the happiness of Rachel and Anthony, and if they were one he would achieve it. And now he did his best, acting through his instinct, for being only a dog and not a man he could trust it. He made his obeisance to Anthony, and when his old master pulled up, he stood upon his hind legs and put his fore-paws on Anthony's thigh and the saddle and licked the man's hand. And he made little noises which showed how pleased he was, and he tried to tell Anthony that Rachel was at hand sleeping in the night wood.

"Old fellow, old fellow," said Anthony, "and so you've left me and are a little sorry."

He stroked Sigurd's head, and Sigurd dropped again upon the road and ran to the bank and looked back. What he said was, "Come, my master, my mistress is here," but Anthony did not at first understand and rode slowly on with his head low upon his breast. For he knew his heart was at Morna House, and he never passed it now without a struggle, renewing unspeakable grief.

And Sigurd came after him and whimpered. Again he leapt upon the bank, and stayed there for a moment, and when he saw Anthony pull up once more he barked, and his voice was glad.

"What is it, Sigurd?" said Anthony. And when he

dismounted and came to the side of the road, Sigurd showed his pleasure wildly, but in silence, and led the way into the wood again. And anxiety took hold of Anthony, and he wondered if anything had befallen Rachel, and he held to this anxiety as an excuse for seeing her, if indeed he was to see her. And since she knew nothing of his love and did not love him, what matter if he saw her in a woodland late at night, even though old Martha had said, "Don't get her set to look for you, as I fear she does"? There was no danger for him now, and as he said so the man deep within him cursed his own soul. But he tied his horse to a pine sapling and followed Sigurd into the heart of the wood and the shadows thereof.

And Sigurd was very happy, since his parted world should be together for a time. So, running on ahead, he came again to Rachel, and lay down at her feet, and Anthony found her.

XI

RACHEL'S slumber was deep, for in her dream all thoughts came together for good, and body and soul and spirit, being satisfied even in a vision, brought her peace profound and unutterable. The influences of her fair imaginings, since they were beautiful and seemly, mingled in harmony with the odour of the pine wood and the veiled light of heaven's moon and stars, and the rhythm of the far-off sentinel tides. Passion awakened and now sleeping gave her living gifts as they had brought her lover to her bosom. Earth was lovely and so was heaven; heaven had the fairer, warmer gifts of earth that barren doctrine denied to a barren paradise; she lay on heavenly earth and breathed air that might have breathed over Eden.

And the man she loved came through the shadows into deeper darkness, and stood near her bare-headed, for his heart was as reverent as his soul, even though he tortured it, and as his eyes opened to the heaviness of the

shadows, and he perceived her sweet body on the same earth he trod, a fine faint intuition, that he crushed even as it rose in his natural mind, told him the body might be spirit after all.

As he stood and watched in natural unnatural shame, the nature within him bade him kneel and worship her with thought and act. Fire lay beneath him, and he knew it; his heart cried aloud for her, and his ascetic soul denied itself and the body. Sharp pains got hold of him, and slow hot tears ran down his cheeks. He perceived that all other claims were trials, were repugnant, and in this hour horrible. The God within him and the kingdom of heaven in nature assured him of these things, and he flinched and wavered, trusting the word of others who were dead to life, rather than the living word of God written upon his red heart. He clenched his hands and bit his lips and suffered the tortures of hell as he strove for heaven by denying it.

In that quiet wood where nature, which is the radiant body of the universal spirit, had attuned itself to fine and delicate and tremendous harmony, such a tortured dissonance must break the music. Rachel's body was like a silent harp that breathes low mingled melodies above and below the hearing of the common world. To breathe any discord smites such harmony asunder, and her answering soul fell into dream anguish of loss and deprivation. Even the simpler soul of her dog was moved in his instincts and he lifted his head and moaned. And in her sleep Rachel too moaned a little, and then she woke and called out "Anthony." But she called this name to the lover of her dream, and it was the man in the shadows who answered her.

"Rachel!"

If his soul had answered hers, swift as a tuning-fork to pick up swift tones on the imparting musical air, he would have leapt to her and have caught her in his strong arms and given her instant sweet compensation. He himself, by entering into her woodland and into her dream, had robbed her of her sweetest dream. He who was an embodied discord that he thought sweet to God,

had indeed slain these children; he had widowed her and broken her heart, and now he only cried out "Rachel" to her when she wanted all the gifts that he asked God's help to waste.

But Rachel woke even as he answered her, and she trembled strangely. Not religion, nor any teaching, nor her virginal coyness could have saved her if he had taken her head in his hands and kissed her parted lips. The other woman for the moment was as nought; she was less than a dream. The children who had vanished now cried aloud to her as if they were souls that sought the garb of flesh. She was his to take and his to spare, and as he held back from her, a strange rage that shocked her swept through her thoughts. For one instant she hated him, and then she controlled herself and got upon her knees and said:

"Oh, Anthony! why are you here?"

And in a choked voice, that to him was like the voice of some other man, he told her how Sigurd had brought him from the road. His mind working for ever with religious thoughts, set him wondering whether Sigurd was not a creature of the devil sent to lead him into temptation. For a dog was of the beasts, and the instincts that he called lower, and that were lower since he had trampled them into the mire, were also beastlike, he said. And still he held back and his hands were clenched, since he yearned for her mouth and bosom.

But Rachel, being on her knees, clutched Sigurd by the neck, and her checked instincts poured themselves out upon the poor glad beast, who had done his part for her and for the man who would not be saved. She fondled Sigurd and kissed his great head, so that he lifted one forepaw and put it on her shoulder. And he whined joyfully, since her affection was a gift that even a dog's heart might thank life for.

Yet as she was checked and cooled, mourning in her heart for what she had seen in vision, Anthony, whose instincts told him vaguely what she had in mind, cooled too. His hands unclenched; his passions yielded to his will, as he believed, when truly they yielded to the colder

influence emanating from the wakened woman who stood before him. And now, instead of the passions which had shaken him furiously there came a calm of milder enchantment, and his inner mind contented itself with the knowledge, that had the whole man wished it, Rachel would have been his then. And Anthony kept these thoughts under, since they were evil to him, but nevertheless the knowledge of this truth was a secret, unlooked-at satisfaction, though he mourned to think it should be, and spoke to himself of the old Adam.

And now Rachel stood up and by her side was Sigurd, and she thanked God that the high moon above the matted pine branches could not show the blood in her face. Now indeed that tide ebbed, and her voice had no more the strange broken tones which mark the agitation of the passionate body, and are as keen an incitement to the pursuer as love veiled in darkness.

“It was Sigurd brought you!” she said.

“It was Sigurd,” answered Anthony. And now his tone were broken too, for the sudden stresses within him had tried his heart-strings. But Rachel’s voice became musical again. Her vision faded from her, and leaving her melancholy, left her sweet. It was sweet to be with him here in this enchanted woodland, since the night and the unseen moon and the grey diffused glory of the moon and the aisles and avenues of the scented pines made the earth like the spirit world. As the tide of blood and passion retreated in her and she found herself less the creature of circumstance, her body grew lighter, she was conscious of its claims no more, and all her calmer joy in her love for this man renewed itself. And so her soul walked with his, and between them walked Sigurd, and in her bosom was the crucifix instead of the warm heart of a dream.

Her calm spirit and the grandeur which in calmness returned to her played upon Anthony and soothed him, so that a great shame for his desire of her came over him, even though he had strangled it as something evil. And as the shame passed away, something of her ominous spiritual calm influenced him, so that for the first time

his knowledge that he loved her was a blessing rather than a curse. Here in this solitary hour in the quiet wood the world drifted from him and with it all labour and the tilling of the land and the renewal and death of the harvest, and even the sight and voice of the woman he was to marry. Here, here was heaven, and his body cried it aloud and his spirit for once bade not the body be silent. For still his soul hugged renunciation to its withered heart and esteemed itself pleasing to the Most High.

He spoke in a dream and she answered in dreams.

"How strange to be here!"

"Is anything strange, Anthony?"

"The wood that I know so well is another wood and the grey moonlight is a veil."

He saw beauty everywhere but in the red heart of man.

"I fell asleep early and dreamed——"

Her cheek flushed graciously, but he saw it not.

"What did you dream?"

She did not answer, and he struggled against the sense of dream that oppressed him once more. How could his soul yield to beauty?

"Do you remember how Sigurd found you swimming that night so long ago?"

"I remember."

"And you bade me go, Rachel, and cried out upon me."

"I said foolish things, and said you were a priest in your heart. I remember that."

He sacrificed dear desires each moment.

"It's late for you to be here."

"It's not midnight by the moon," she answered, "and I have slept there all night, oh, often, often, when the summer was here."

Now autumn came and harvest was over. He gathered tares and dock and darnel and rusted wheat for the altars of God. He brought his mutilated soul to the foot of the throne and yet holy men of old declared that the victim of the sacrifice should be without blemish.

"Don't you feel God nearer you by night?" she cried

softly. And he answered "aye" as softly, and yet he sighed, for the mellow voice of her played upon the stretched fibres of his senses, and even in the calm of his renunciation he felt his brain swim.

And now Rachel knew that she offered him much, for the tide rose in her again.

"God is in all things and in us," she said. In a tone of triumph she said, "Oh, even in me!"

In this hour she knew it, felt it, heard it, saw it. For all the creeds and faiths and doctrines she touched the truth. God was truly in her, and in her spirit and by the acceptance of her flesh this was the holiest marvel of all.

They stood upon the verge of the wood whence they saw the tall white house. In a lower window shone the lamp that Martha always left when Rachel went wandering at night. The moonlight made the gaunt dwelling almost magical, and the yellow lamplight was warm. This was her home, and at the thought of her and home Anthony quivered.

"So this is my home!" said Rachel, and in her voice grew a fire of temptation, and a thousand subtle harmonies that were twined enticements, and reproaches and appeals that she knew not of. For what called to him was the desire of the deep nature in her, the ancient maternity of those who had brought her forth, and the reflected passions of her sires. And yet she knew them, and a reckless joy filled her, and a sense of her own beauty and the rounded magic of her limbs, and her white bosom, so that she was filled with a passion for her own incompleteness, and for a moment she trusted it, and smiled wonderfully.

And she stepped backward from Anthony, leaving him in the shadow of the wood, so that her feet touched her smooth turf. He stood and stared at her, and his heart was a flame.

She stayed where the moonlight fell upon her, and she was clad in white save for the red scarf about her neck, so that she gleamed white against the shadowed side of the house. She was very tall, and now her bosom came near to its ultimate perfection, and the curves of

her body were such as a sculptor of ancient Greece might have carved in a dream, choosing her for the youthful queen of heaven. There was no breath of wind, but the moon, as if rejoicing in a daughter of her own earth, cast aside her filmy veil and shone in glory down upon her. Her head was uncovered, and the brown bronze of her hair shone in the moon-glow and overlapped in gracious curves the broad high forehead. Her brows were straight and fine, and her eyes most wonderful, and her mouth a little sad, as if she knew that which she knew not, and her neck was a pillar of living ivory.

And she looked straight into the shadow, and with a fine gesture raised her strong hand over her eyes as if to see the man of the dark wood clearer, and Anthony shook like a reed in a running stream.

And she turned about in the moonlight, and then she threw her hands into the air and the scarlet scarf slipped from her neck, and Anthony saw her bosom where it was bare, since in her dream she had bared it, and waking did not know it.

And he ran forward to her and cried:

“Rachel!”

And even as he cried out the ivory crucifix slipped from the deep fold of her bosom and fell upon the red scarf lying on the grass. And she bowed her head, waiting.

But Anthony's God, who abhorred graven images and the carved wonders of the body and the miracle of the flesh that He created, had set a sword between them. And when Rachel lifted her head she heard him running furiously in the shadows of the wood.

BOOK III

I

THE summer lasted long that year, over-long for the ploughing, since no rain fell before late October and the fields were as hard as iron till a great south-westerly storm shook the very earth and turned hot stubble into mud. But though there was no autumn, or a short one, since summer almost joined hands with winter, the loss was not felt overmuch by Morna, which drew its sustenance from the fields of ocean.

“What one loses another gains,” said fishing Morna cheerfully. For Morna gained; the seas were calm, the days upon the water were wonderful, the nights lucid and fruitful to such as used the long line in the great Channel.

“Some plough the land and some the sea,” said Steve Penrose, “and thus it was ordained to keep the world going. For it is a strange world, and it takes all sorts to make it. And if farmers cannot plough, it often happens that fishermen can’t put to sea. And I do notice then they say fishermen are an idle lot. Thus ’tis hard to see what other folks see. But the man that fishes is wise in two elements and the plougher is wise only in one, and those are wisest who see most. For the soil alone and the plough do stiffen a man worse than rheumatics, and worse than drink and a wet bed of fern.”

But as the night comes when no man can work, so the day came when none at Morna could put to sea. And the night before that dawn the summer died gloriously in all wonderful colours, in purple and living gold and fine faint green that looked like delicate seas in eternity be-

beyond the sea. Overhead to the very zenith a great blood pall, as of fine wool soaked in terrible dyes, glared upon the ruddy earth, and the sea itself was living crimson flecked with fire. The sun went down in the south-west barred at the last with black clouds, and the delicate colours of its glory changed to something that touched instinct and knowledge alike with fear. A crowd of Morna's men gathered upon the grassy headland, drawn there by knowledge and instinct.

"Aye, 'tis wonderful," they said, "and out of that smother of reds and yellows will come wind. 'Twas very fine colour a while ago, and soft as if it meant no more than rain. But now the red is purplish (there's such colours in dying fish) and the softness is gone out of it. 'Tis hard and oily. Oh, but there's a power of wind in the west this night and a gale's brewing under the sun. To-morrow there'll be a high dawn and fierce colour to the sunrise. Let's go down and draw the boats up, right upon the road."

In the hot murk of the dead evening they sweated till their boats were safe, even if it happened that the wind came in from the east of south. And those who farmed foresaw rain, or hoped for it, and praised God with a sense of a grudge in their hearts that rain was so late.

"There be some that do allege that God's no farmer if He send a drought," said Steve. "And it's a good fisherman who is dutiful to heaven when pilchards are scarce. 'Twas Miss Rachel's grandfather said that. 'Tisn't mine good or bad. But Mr. Tregilgas would say that God didn't drive a watering-cart or herd pilchards for a living. There's sense in that if you would but see it. There are times I see it myself as plain as that there are sad fools in Morna and a bigger fool at Pentowan Farm and that the summer's ended this wild night."

It was yet but a wild night to be, for wind there was not. Heavy silence rested on the land; a heavy sullen wash of sea broke that dead peace at irregular intervals. Overhead the sky moved from the south-east, marshalling clouds steadily. And at last the colour fled from the zenith, leaving nothing but a dull purple after-glow in the

east. Where the sun had been was no light; the sea was lead-coloured and almost motionless save where it lapped the outlying rocks beneath the dark cliffs. The sea-birds cried harshly; they took short and agitated flights to seaward and came shrieking inland. They feared something and cried aloud that they feared. But mankind gathered together and spoke in low voices, talking of other things than wind and sea and storm. They leant against the serried beaks of their boats edging upon the white ribbon of road.

"So the wedding is for to-morrow, eh?"

"That's so. 'Twill be a wet one."

"If John Perran had been here 'twould have been wetter. He was the lad to drink——"

"And to keep things going. Oh, surely he was."

The wives of some of them came out of their cottages and joined the talk; one of them was Sam Burt's wife. He had taken a woman to him since old Penrose had fooled him over the death of Mrs. Marr.

"There are some," said Tryphena Burt, "that will go to the wedding that won't wish well to the bride."

"Must be Steve Penrose you mean. 'Tis well known he has no love for her."

Tryphena shook her head.

"I mean no drunken old Steve——"

They called aloud to Steve, who stood prating two boats off.

"Steve, here's Sam's wife miscalling you——"

"Let her be," said Steve. "Perhaps Sam's choice was limited by his being a fool and the woman knowing it."

She called him an old devil and he laughed.

"My lass, call me what you like, but remember you're a stranger here yet. And what's it to you if some of us don't love Mrs. Perran that's to be?"

"They say Miss Rachel loves him," said Tryphena.

Steve raged at her instantly.

"Sam's not beaten you yet," he cried, "but if I know him he will if you set your tongue about Miss Rachel. You don't know her and we do, and if Sam don't beat you

there's women in this village that will duck you in the sea if you say aught against her."

The old man was fierce and Tryphena quailed, for she was new to Morna.

"I was saying nothin', Steve Penrose——"

"Then say it no more," roared Steve savagely, and Sam's wife fled into her house and wept because she was a stranger in Morna and knew it. And an old woman went to her door and spoke to her in such wise that she wept again. For the old woman said:

"You light-tongued fool, what are you in Morna that you should speak of those you do speak of? For if you were in sorrow there's one surely that would hear of it and comfort you; and that's not only God, you fool, but one of God's creatures. And if you bear children and they are sick she would help you. And there's those here whose children have died in her arms. And if she had sorrow in her heart would you make a mock of it, you?"

The old woman poured scorn upon her so that Sam found her still weeping. And when he heard what she wept about he frowned heavily and she wept again. For now there was no soul in Morna that did not love Rachel. They loved her none the less because they knew how things were with her. And that they knew it at all was the deed of Winifred Perran who on the morrow was to marry Anthony.

"'Tis an unhappy match," said Steve, "and there will be sorrow in it, oh, much woe in it. For though I say nothing about the bride, I don't conceal that I hate her, and think as little of her as a man may of a woman, having certain knowledge of her ways which makes my heart sore for a well-meaning fool like Mr. Anthony. The last time that a great feeling of charity in Morna made me all gloriously drunk within I had it in my enlarged mind to go up and talk seriously to him upon the subject of pale women with yellow eyes, and if I had not fallen by the way there's no knowing but what I might have achieved my object and have been beaten black and blue, which is lamentable to think of."

His hearers roared cheerfully.

"If we make you drunk again, Steve, will you go and do it now? We'll see you don't fall this time."

But Steve shook his trowsled head.

"With the marriage set for to-morrow 'tis too late, even though I proved to him that she was a harlot out of Babylon. And as I said, I don't cry out anything against her when I'm sober. All I hope is that when this storm breaks there'll be lightning with it, and that the lightning of the storm will avoid poor harmless fools like me and Mr. Anthony and Miss Rachel (whose pardon I humbly beg for mentioning myself with her) and choose out Winifred Perran and burn her to a cinder like the wrath of God."

He spoke with energy and such strange bitterness that the others drew back from him.

"Steve, 'tis blasphemy to speak like that and little like you. What have you against her?"

Then the sea to the south moaned and a blast of wind roared over the sea, the fore-runner of the storm.

"I have against her what I have against her," said Steve.

But in his heart he knew that why he hated her was because she hated Rachel.

"And if I hate her, I, whose charity towards myself and others is as capacious as thirst itself, it stands to reason I have a reason," he cried with laughter which was bitterer than any tears. "But what does it matter? These things are in the hand of God, and all we can do is nothing. To handle such a soul as God has put into Anthony Perran is to try to forge steel with one's hot breath. And as for other souls I can think of to-night—oh, 'tis to think of the storm that's coming over the sea this very hour."

He left the men in a knot by the boats and went into the darkness under the cliff.

"I've daughters doing well and sometimes thinking of me sadly," he said with lamentation, "and if one of them died 'twould set me going with an excuse for begging drink and with a pot or two I'd be cheered up and the men would be laughing when I said things. But what's

my daughters to me in their comfort with their good men and their little minds to Rachel Marr whose mother I knew and the father of her mother? I'm broken and worthless, and with nothing but a mind that sees too far to do aught, but if I were the King I'd throw my crown into the sea to make Miss Rachel happy. Why is it? why is it?"

And as he spoke another bitter squall roared over the cliffs and the sound of it was like deep organic music, and the sea awoke and with it the land. And all living things prayed for rain; the dry earth gaped.

"Give me to drink, O God!" said Steve; "give me to drink, and give the earth to drink. And give this dear child whom I love so, what she desires, even though it be death, or that which goes before it."

He knelt upon the rock that Rachel had so often used at midnight, and prayed with passion to the very spirit of the storm.

And even while he prayed Rachel herself with her dog passed unseen behind him, and went out to the great headland that fronted the rising gale.

II

SINCE Rachel and Anthony had spoken to each other in the midnight heart of her wood two months had passed, and for her they had the length of unnumbered years. During all that time any speech that they held together was as nought, as a dead leaf to a live tree. Although they spoke there was enduring silence between them. If agony that underlay words could speak it spoke in Anthony, and Rachel answered nothing, for she kept her heart secret in her own anguish. For within her was the biting fire of shame conscious-unconscious and yet living, which drove outward and scorched her very flesh.

Always and forever she remembered the strange delight and passion of the dream from which he had awakened her. But such delight was agony, enduring, and implacable. She recalled the sweet ghosts of those that were

at once spirit and flesh, and the bodily pledge of the bountiful grace of God, with such shade as sudden and mad shamelessness might bring to a virgin soul. This was the point, the rankling arrow-head of dishonour, that she had given herself in her dream to the spirit of him who loved and yet repulsed her. That he loved her she knew, it was bitten deep into her, engraved upon her heart; every instinct swore to it and brought deep corroboration. But that in the intense hour of silence, in the wood's warm heart, and on its moon-litten verge, she had offered her pure body once again, she hardly knew. All that she had done as she stood before him then might be capable of swift explanation; she had indeed done nothing; what acted and what spoke was the very fragrance of an instinct that had only wakened when she slept. But when he turned and ran instead of kneeling, as he might have done, to show in what anguish of spirit he renounced her, then her soul was living shame. Her dream and waking were one. It seemed as if he had taken her, made her his, and had then failed in every duty save his word to a creature of a day alien from the moonlight in which she stood shaking. And even if he failed to such a woman what was that to one great-hearted? How could it be anything to the true passion of a true man?

In this hour of her rejection the motions of her mind, continued from the happy ecstasy of her vision, had been such that she forgot all things but herself and him. His religion and hers were as nothing; she never knew that the crucifix that fell from her warm bosom was the last word of fate for him as true instinct fought with false in his natural unnatural heart. On seeing it he fled to his own Calvary and crucified his soul and body, while she stood in shamed solitude, dry-lipped, aghast, unweeping.

The dark wood, both by day and night, became for a time abhorrent to her, and this bitter destruction of her love for it was a loss that reacted upon her in a thousand ways. It was alive; she loved live things the less; it was a haunt of sweet magic; it became the haunt of evil

thought; it was the scene of her own growth; it showed her that she had no sweet growth within her. She deserted its warm and wonderful precincts for the verge of the barren and tremendous sea.

And as she quitted the woods and green pastures and the lanes, and wandered no more for a time on the ploughed and fruitful uplands, her soul was less tender. She deserted the sweet humanity within her, and was less gracious, less beautiful even to those she loved. Thus it was that Morna village knew she suffered, even before pale triumphing Winifred set it about with joy that the girl burnt with a hopeless passion for a man who did not love her.

But no one told her this. The one who suffered for it was Martha.

"Oh, the pale devil," said the old woman; "to say such things of my girl! May God requite her, and burn up her heart, if heart she has, and make her body barren and her bosom wither and the fruit of her body death!"

She cursed her in her prayers, since she knew that what Winnie said was not false. For Rachel was no longer a girl, but a woman, and looked years beyond her age, and her eyes were like deep pools hidden in the depths of anguished woods; and her words were few and she lived within herself.

"Oh, 'tis her mother again," said Martha, "and every day she's liker Mary, my own dear dead Mary."

She rocked herself to and fro in despair that looked forward to despair even darker yet. For she understood Rachel better than Rachel did, since she had clues to the girl's nature that none held but herself and the priest at Caerhays. And him Rachel avoided, confessing only once in three months and being then so fierce and sullen that Father Brant feared to press her for any truth. The old man prayed for her, and wrestled with the blind and deaf heavens for her soul. There were those about her who perceived she had a destiny beyond the common fate of the children of man. And yet all she knew was that she suffered and was shamed. For these were months of drought in the land and there was drought in her heart,

and it is only when rain falls or tears come at last that the soul of living things is aware of the death that walked by day and night.

She desired love with an immortal passion and sat by the barren sea.

And now at last the fierce and royal summer yielded up its crown to death and died in storm, and the land was beaten and the cliffs shook, and the rain fell with a roar that half-quieted the thunder of the wind. And that night Rachel and her dog Sigurd spent in a hollow cave of the high cliff beneath Pentowan Headland. Though Sigurd trembled to hear the turmoil of the driven sea, the passion of the elements brought something to his mistress that was liker peace than aught she had known since the dream-night of her deserted pinewoods.

Yet amid all the thunder and the shouting of the captains of the tempest in the battle and the anguish of the land and sea, there was this thought that was the burden of its music—

“To-morrow—to-morrow I shall have lost him for ever!”

These words she never spoke, and yet she heard them plainly. The roar of the wind as it beat against the cliff and shot howling upwards was like a mere background of silence for the words that her brain spoke. Even as she stared out into the smother of the seas, being in such a hollow spot that the wind pressure made a calm about her, and beheld the pale racing foam like ten thousand deaths upon ten thousand pale horses of the sea, she heard her own words still repeated.

“To-morrow—and for ever!”

The stress that lay upon her was such that the storm gave her broken peace, even before it reached its clamorous height. The shriek of the wind and the boom of the driven tumbling seas beneath her feet, while some pale ghosts of sea birds screamed like banshees on the wailing blast, dragged her out of herself before midnight. She hugged warm Sigurd to her heart, for he was but a beast and the tempest shook him so that he whined in fear and begged her to go home. To the good dog this was

strangest folly, and it was indeed Sigurd's dog-like fear of the elements and the white blind pit of rage beneath him that sent her homeward soon after midnight. Her contracted heart and sympathy centred upon Sigurd in that hour. If she had loved him less what was left? And yet loving the poor dog, who sat trembling at her feet in the cave and sometimes howled at the hostile pack of the hunting winds, saved her and brought her back to humanity. She knelt beside him and rubbed his ears and kissed him, and said:

"He gave you to me, Sigurd—God make him happy!"

And yet she knew, knew in her soul, in the deep sanctuary of her abiding love, and in those whispering places of the secret heart of man where instincts move, that neither God, nor man, nor woman, nor any human nepenthe should give him any peace.

"God give him——"

What God would not!

The storm that raged that night upon those iron coasts beat great ships to flinders upon anvils, and hammered iron ships to pieces, and drowned a thousand who go down to the sea in ships. But none that went down into raging waters and yet escaped came out of so great a storm as she who sat by the white pit of the passions that were her inheritance, and yet prayed to God, praying in her prayer that she might yet believe in Him, and that the man she loved might be His care for ever.

It was long past midnight when she reached home with Sigurd, who led the way for her over the open headland. For now the centre of the storm had passed inland to the north-east, and the wind came roaring with rain from the north-west, and in it she was blind. But she knew that this was now Anthony's wedding day, and in her mind she saw his face. And he smiled upon her as though he would smile no more.

And Rachel found Martha sitting in the shaking house waiting for her. But the old woman did not reproach her for her folly in staying out in the storm. She helped her to undress in silence and took away her soaked garments, kissing her when she went.

“Do you think I’m mad?” said Rachel as she lay back upon her pillow; “do you think I’m mad to have been out on such a night?”

And the rain and wind beat upon the house, and tears rained from Martha’s eyes. She stood by the door and answered with a strange fierceness which was joy of remembered passion:

“Oh, I’ve spent a night upon the cliffs myself, Rachel, and I’ve been mad, too, little as you may think it!”

Perhaps it might be that all women had their passion in the garden of barren desire.

“Oh, and she is old,” said Rachel, staring at the door which closed and left her in darkness. “What has she suffered? I don’t believe in a God; I don’t!”

And then she flung herself from her bed upon the floor and prayed to the God she did not believe in. And afterwards she slept for an hour, and then lay very quietly waiting for the dawn. The storm still howled, though its great strength was overpast. But still the rain was a flood.

And the dawn came out of the east like a little starved child.

III

THAT wedding-day was a great triumph for two folks in Morna, though it was the palest that lived its sad life in a few grey hours. Flame-eyed Winnie was not now so pale of fire, but took a sparkle into her, and colour grew upon her cheeks and with it energy. To be wedded to Anthony Perran, the finest-looking man that rode between the hills and the sea, one who could deal with all men strongly and make the worst farm in the country yield reluctant corn and gold, was the chief end of her desire. But though her desire was on the man she kissed, finding a wicked pleasure in his concealed reluctance, her hate was on Rachel, and to triumph over her was delightful, sapid, lasting. Her intuitions were not at fault; she knew that Rachel’s and Anthony’s souls were one twined passion.

This she read in Anthony's set face that he governed as he governed his bleeding heart, but could not wholly subdue. She played on him with an itching hatred that, yoked with her desire of him, ploughed his very heart. It ploughed her own too, for under her triumph lay failure. She would have his name and not his heart; his hand but not his passion, nor any true sweet thought of his. Sometimes that hurt her; she desired everything. To have him under her hand so that she could torture him, and please him and make him shout with natural laughter and joy would have given her something of what she wanted. And yet it would have lacked the intenser savour of her chief passion, which was to make things suffer, or to have the power to make them suffer. She was vain, weak, revengeful, cruel, and of a truth loved nothing so well as her old father, who this day triumphed with her and yet hated her.

The night that was her wedding-eve, the night of the fierce gale, old George Perran spent in a wicked roaring debauch, to which he invited Winnie with ugly chuckles.

"Come and drink a little, my timid, quaking bride," said Silenus; "drink and keep up your chaste and timid heart, my duck. What will you drink—shall it be rum or brandy, or what the poets call nepenthe, to make you forget things? Ho, ho, but we don't forget!"

He sat in his big chair with his legs stretched out upon a stool. By his side was a whiskey bottle; on the hearth a kettle; in his heart inextinguishable laughter. But Winnie sat with him and raged.

"What do you mean, father? No, I'll not drink."

"Oh, the little pretty," said Silenus; "and won't it drink with its old dad that I know it loves? Well, human nature is the strangest blend of devil's brew that God ever bottled, and 'tis different from other liquors, for the older it gets the worse it is. And as for me, I had a notion to spend this night drinking to your old flames that you never told me of, Winnie. Why, what a sweet, deceitful cat you are, and your eyes are like a cat's, my child, and have you claws too?"

"Oh, yes, I've claws too," said Winnie. She thought of Rachel and smiled.

"Let's drink to the bridegroom's brother," said her father; "let's drink to John Perran, who is the bonniest boy with the girls who ever climbed orchard walls or whistled up to windows. Will you drink to him?"

And Winnie looked at him like a devil.

"No, I won't," she said fiercely.

"Then I will for you," said Silenus, "oh, but 'tis a strange game this being alive. And loving is even stranger, and though I was a sad dog in my youth, Johnny is the equal of what I was, and I will drink to you, Johnny, my boy, and to moonlight and the girls, and to Winnie who marries your sad brother in the morning!"

He drank and lay back and shouted with laughter.

"Ha, ha, for my girl Winnie to marry Anthony! 'Tis within the degrees, my girl, within the prohibitions of the law!"

Winnie clutched at a glass and poured herself out some spirit.

"You're a liar, father, and you know it," she said savagely.

And George Perran rolled in his chair.

"Here's my daughter calls me a liar, and yet what I do know! Winnie, my duckling and green peas, my youthful innocence, sweet candour clad in white, don't forget that if you've enemies that there's one Steve Penrose is very wise about you. I know that."

But so did Winnie.

"He loves Rachel and hates you," said Perran. "It's a sad habit that of drinking early and sleeping out in fern on Pentowan Headland. For there's this in getting drunk early as Steve does, that a man wakes up early and gets up all athirst and may spy white rabbits in the fern. Look out for Steve, my dear, dear daughter, my pet rabbit, look out."

"If he says aught against me I'll kill him," cried Winnie. But she winced all the same at fresh truth.

"'Tis forbidden by the law for a woman to kill anyone but her husband," said Silenus; "but that's permitted

under the rose lest worse may befall. So go to bed, my sweet, and may you have such dreams as befit the occasion, and I'll stay here and consider how I'm going to get on all alone in future in the matter of drink. Good-night, my sweet poppet, good-night."

And Winnie went to bed ere the storm outside had reached its height, and her wicked old father, who had the strength of ten and no virtue but an astounding and universal charity become a vice, sat drinking and talking to himself for hours.

"Well, well," said the old man as he wallowed in his liquor, "well, well, but it's a queer world and we're a sad lot and half the Perrans are as bad as they can be and half are fools. If I hadn't taken to drink I might have worked too hard at foolishness to see that nought matters, and if Winnie has her way she'll die by-and-by, and so shall we all. 'Tis all one, 'tis all one. When she's gone I'll have old Steve Penrose up here to drink with me. He loved Johnny and so do I, and Steve has a philosophic mind, and we'll drink and have a free discussion as to why we worry to be good or bad. Here's to the bride and bridegroom, and the wedding I shan't attend, and long life to everyone, especially to myself. And here's to the storm outside that only fools are out in."

He staggered up to bed at three and stood outside Winnie's bedroom, laughing silently.

"I'm damn glad to be rid of her," said old Perran; "she's no child of my wife's, and yet she bore her. She's all mine own, and to get rid of her is to get rid of that which will do no man any good. Oh, but she's a sly and wicked piece, and I wish that poor devil joy of her!"

He knew Anthony could have married Rachel.

"Oh, but that's a woman," said Perran, "that's a woman. God bless the poor girl. I could have loved Rachel, so I could."

He wiped away a drunken tear and rolled to his room.

"'Tis a fine wedding-morning," said the father of the bride. "Who's for wedding white rabbits of the bracken?"

IV

WHEN the grey morning broke and the starved light of day crept out of the east, the wind which had destroyed the summer died down and the rain renewed itself in flood. Every fold of the hills held a raging torrent; brown streams spread fans of turbid water in the grey green sea of storm; the roads themselves were water-courses and the uplands expanses of mud that steamed. In low Morna many houses were flooded, for the big stream of the little valley spread itself at high water far across the flats and grey geese cried in triumph under the very verge of the woods. And still though the winds ceased, or only moaned in flying squalls, the rain descended and beat upon the world so that the drinking grass was made bare of soil, and some trees that the gale had spared had their foundations sucked from under them, and tumbled headlong. But after the hot summer and the drought which had burnt the very earth, and made strong trees bow their weary branches, the gift of water was so fair and fine a thing that every heart in the country rejoiced and the gaped earth grew fat again. For here was the very promise of the next spring of the year, and the ploughmen cleaned the shares of their ploughs and many forges were heated to point and temper them. For this was the true seed-time, since it made seed-time certain and the hearts of men of the soil happy in their work, which prepared for the fruit of the earth. For when the rain falls upon the land this is the marriage of heaven and earth for the service of man, who is himself the child of rain and the thirsty soil.

And this was the marriage day of Anthony Perran and Winifred his cousin, who in marrying him changed neither her name nor her nature. There was a smile upon her face as she woke and saw the day, but there was none upon Anthony's, for he did not wake. He sat in darkness the whole night through, and the only pleasure that touched his heart was the great sound of the rain which was good. For he had pity of the burnt fields and the

thin beasts, and the breaking of the season eased his heart a little even when no ease came nigh him. For there were now hours or swift moments when he doubted God, and saw things with such eyes as Rachel saw them. And then he said again that evil was evil, and yet he knew not which was good or evil now that a duty stood before him and his pledged word drew him on reluctantly to do a thing that his gorge rose against.

For he perceived that he loved Rachel Marr with an exceeding love, and his lips ached for her, and his dreaming hands clutched her dreaming, and the very muscles of his strong arms said to him, "Where is our beloved?" And he felt even as Cain might have felt when God spoke to him concerning Abel; for here Cain was his fierce soul's pride and Abel was the dear nature within him that was more pleasing to heaven than any creed.

And these things showed themselves to him as he sat in darkness. But his nature he struck down at the altar, and he said that this murder was pleasing to God. So he sought to bury his slain heart, and to hide it so that none should see it. He prayed much and found no answer, and therefore clung to the conditions of life that he had set up in the desert. And he mourned all the time and rebelled in his pride. For he saw Rachel, deep to her neck in translucent water, and he heard her voice. He saw her sleeping, in the heart of her fragrant wood, fragrance within fragrance. He beheld her in the margin of the wood over against her own white house, and saw her lifted arms and her bosom, and his heart stirred in his breast like a child crying for its fellow. And these things he said were the promptings of the flesh and the devil as plain as that the crucifix blessed again by the dear contact of her flesh was the sign of Rome. And Rome was a Babylon, and there was an equal sister of Babylon to be taken to his heart this day.

"If it might be that this cup should pass from my lips. O God——"

There are many gardens in Gethsemane and many agonies.

In this deep passion of his that divided him he found

his mind speaking clear and cold, proffering wise and vain advice. For in anguish there is always such a cup of water offered, though man can seldom drink. He heard his brain declare the nature of his bride and her true wickedness which his own lips could have told him, and he saw how she hated Rachel rather than loved him, and he knew he would loathe her. For though she worshipped with her lips within the same walls as himself, he knew her heart was barren, and her soul was barren, and if it might only be that her body was barren too it would be a thing to thank God for. And yet within some swift hours they would be within four prison walls, and she would make him say he loved her.

“If it might be that this cup——”

The cup of shame was offered to Rachel: that he knew. For he had loved her and now adored her, and he perceived her love for him was something mighty and terrible, and his heart told him that there was no such thing as solitary love, but that love was the molten passion of two, and that years ago in his own heart he had spoken to hers, saying, “Oh, heart of gold, I love you.” In wild self-accusation he said that he had created his very love that he would not satisfy. And now the dawn came, the little starved child of the east, and he was cold. He set his mind to think upon the rain and the ploughing of the uplands and on the salt grasses of the meadows and the gifts of God to man, and his face was like the set face of death as he thanked God. And at last he rose and looked out of his window and he called out aloud to his own heart “Fool,” and again “Fool.” And therewith he set about preparing for his wedding and the keeping of his word to the devil of pride and self and the breaking of it to God and nature and Rachel, the finest creature of breathing nature that breathed that hour.

And no man or woman in his house knew that he was anything but grave. For there was this in Anthony, that he held to a pride of self-control that had never been broken. It was his pride, and yet he gave the control of himself to one instinct only, and destroying the rest if they could be destroyed, he yet called himself a man.

And that day there was no man so good to look upon in Morna or all the country round as Anthony Perran. But when he came to the chapel on the winding road between the village and the Church Town on the upland there were eyes upon him that saw deeply. For word had gone round about him, and a sense of great tragedy settled down upon those who saw him, though now he smiled greeting them all.

But still the rain fell in floods, and the roads were so difficult that few came to the wedding save some cousins of the bride and bridegroom. And Rachel did not come, though Winnie had sent her a smiling invitation. For Winnie knew that whether the girl came or not, here was occasion for triumph and Rachel's hurt, and she said to Anthony very smoothly that she hoped to see her, even though they had sometimes quarrelled. But Anthony said nothing to Winnie, and all he said to Rachel a week before the wedding was "do not come." For they spoke little, not even with their eyes; they could not face each other, for there was great shame in their hearts.

In such a day of rain there was much idleness save among those whose houses were flooded, so it happened that the fishermen and all the idle ploughmen strayed to the chapel. The fishermen stood in their oilskins and sou'westers and glistened in the downpour, and three big ploughmen were there with heavy sacks upon their shoulders, and with them was Timothy Cragoe, who had come down with his axe to cut up trees that the storm had rooted from the soil. He bore the axe upon his shoulder and looked happy, for Susy Cragoe stayed a deal in the house just then, and was wondering what she should call her child when it was born. With him stood old Steve Penrose, for he seemed to foresee beer in the matter, even if his heart was sore that day. He looked at Anthony Perran very hard and saw deep, and Anthony stared past and over him, and nodded to two or three girls of the village who had ventured there through all the downpour and stood with their skirts above their heads. With them was the old grey woman who had rebuked Tryphena Burt and made her weep. Being old and fond of

Rachel she saw as much as Steve and her heart was sore.

"'Tis a fine man," said Timothy; "a fine cut of a man. He should be able to swing the axe."

"There's no such man with horses hereabouts," cried a ploughman.

"Then he's no judge of mares," muttered Steve.

"Oh, but he's a pale, sad lover," said a girl.

"'Tis nervousness, Carry."

"They say a man has no need to be nervous with Miss Perran," Carry tittered. And the girls put their heads together giggling.

"Here she comes."

And Winnie came driving with her cousins.

"Oh, but she's jaunty," said Steve, "and has more colour. Faugh! the thing of moonlight!"

"How did she catch him, girls, when our Miss Rachel walks about Morna?"

"'Twas witchcraft likely; some spell."

"Craft of the body," said the old grey woman.

"There's a witch in every woman," cried an old man by her. "Oh, 'tis so. I mind years ago—"

"She's proud of him. Look! 'Tis a take in a net; he might be a boat-load of pilchards and she's a fisherman. He's her catch."

"Not her first, by one at least," said Steve to himself. "Oh, the day!"

"What's Steve muttering?" asked the girls. "'Tis a pity he won't speak out. He says half-things that makes one swear."

Steve growled.

"One thing I'll tell you. Her father'll be glad to get shut of her. Oh, he'll be drunk this day!"

He went apart.

"If Johnny Perran had been here he'd have never let this happen. He's a devil, but a man, and I've no courage but when I'm drunk, and then I've no legs. Who's got everything in this world?"

With such a chorus Anthony married his cousin, and came out in the day again with Winnie triumphant. But

even she felt the strange heart that was in her husband and there was poison in the cup.

"I didn't see Rachel, did you, darling?" she asked, and waited for an answer.

"No," said Anthony.

"Poor girl, I'm sorry for her."

She felt his arm quiver. If she drank poison other lips should drink it.

They saw Rachel after all, since she had courage and pride beyond the common heritage. Go to the wedding she would not, since she knew Winnie's cruel heart; but to avoid them utterly was to give her equal pleasure, so she went out and waited at the top of the hill by which they must pass to go back to her father's house. Old Steve had seen her standing and went up the hill to her, staying a little distance from her. The poor old unvenerable wreck was wet and cold, but for her his heart was warm.

"She's steel and fire and flesh and blood. She's all pure gold and a princess," said Steve. "'Tis a woman now and a woman in ten thousand, and if I could be born again and love such a creature with the warm heart of my youth, I'd be a man all my days. There's no such heart in all England as hers, and her body's as fair as life. I could kiss her feet."

They heard a feeble, half-hearted cheer at the chapel, and they saw the carriage coming slowly up the gutted and stony road. Rachel moved forward to the edge of the high bank and Steve, red-eyed but with hot intent in him, got down into the road. He looked up at Rachel and saw she kept her colour.

"What a brave lass! And she loves him as fire loves the wind."

And Winnie smiled at Rachel, but Rachel never looked at her at all. There might have been no one in the carriage but the man.

"God bless you, Anthony," she cried out with sudden fervour born of a moment's self-abnegation that left her soft. "God bless you!"

He was very calm now. For all things were over, he

said, and this was the end. Nature lay dead within him, and the struggle had finished.

"O God, be merciful to me now!" his soul cried; "for this is the burnt offering of my red heart."

Together with his own he offered Rachel's heart to God. But as he prayed his eye took hers and she held him for a moment. There was agony within him, and she saw it, and she triumphed in the very moment of her defeat, and something sang within her, so that her face softened and the grandeur of her great heart showed itself, and she was almost something more than human.

But Winnie's face was like the face of death, even as she smiled. For she understood that if the man was hers, it was as a body of death. And she heard Steve run alongside the carriage and turned her head to him.

Then Steve spoke to the bride in a low voice. And Winnie went even whiter still, so that she was once more "Whey-face," and she struck him on the mouth with the back of her hand. His mouth bled, but he stood with a taunt upon his face and they went away.

And Rachel, who did not understand, stood there for a long while looking down on Steve.

"Steve, Steve, what did you say?"

"I told the beast some truth," said Steve, "but who'd have thought she had so heavy a hand?"

He spat blood upon the road and laughed.

"But I fetched blood, too, Miss Rachel. I said, 'Take him, you thing, but you can't keep him.' And I said something else. Oh, she's a bonny bride, and there's white fear will bed with her this night."

And as Rachel went back to Morna House she heard "but you can't keep him, you can't keep him" ringing in her ears. But why the words stayed with her she did not know, nor could she tell what was in the mind of him who spake them.

V

MARTHA had seen Rachel get ready to go out through the pouring rain to the chapel, and had mourned in her heart, being sore with thinking about the girl and her mother.

"Rain, rain!" she said bitterly, as she looked out upon the low grey sky; "there's tears coming for all of us but Rachel, and she's like her mother that never cried but when she was happy and it was seldom God's will she should be. And my girl, the darling, loves that fool that's marrying this hour to a bundle of evil, if ever evil hid beneath petticoats. Oh, 'tis the very choice of evil, while my dear walks alone that's sweet and good. She's great and fine."

She went about her work in bitterness, for she was in a boding hour, and there was no help for man or woman in strength or effort or in God. She had prayed to Anthony not to make Rachel love him, and by then the harm was done.

"And now I know," said Martha to herself, "that what's in her heart will never be torn out of it, and though she's yet a child in years and barely twenty, there's a woman's heart in her, and her mother's heart; and I've a bonny, bonny time before me!"

But when Rachel came in by the back way and hung her cloak in the stone passage that led to the dairy, Martha put on a cloak of cheerfulness.

"Did you see 'em, dear?"

Rachel eyed her calmly, but was in a dream.

"I saw them."

"The sun didn't shine on them, Rachel."

"It doesn't always shine."

Martha nodded.

"If the old saying was true there'd be little happiness in marriage in this country. But the sun shall shine for you, darling. Oh, if I could only see you married, Rachel, then would I say 'Now lettest Thou me.'"

There were tears in Martha's eyes and voice, but none in Rachel's.

"I don't suppose I shall ever marry," said Rachel, and she went into the house.

"And I was nearly saying that if she had a child!" said Martha, throwing up her hands, "and I knowing that her heart's set on children. Oh, but I'm a fool, a fool, and any woman's a fool, and what is there in one man or another that our hearts should ache for blue eyes or brown? God help us all; but He never helped Rachel's mother."

And by this time it appeared to Rachel that she neither needed nor desired God's help. For she was in a cold mood, which seemed final and self-sufficing, and in it her desires were bloodless, and her thoughts moved slow. She stood by the window in the old parlour, and stared out upon the steaming valley across which lay Pentowan Farm, and yet her eyes never told her heart that that was the home of her heart. She moved at last and found herself dusting the old room mechanically, just for something to do, and she went very slowly, often stopping, as it seemed, to think, but when she asked herself what she had been thinking she did not know. She was aware that Winnie was Anthony's wife, and that Anthony did not love the woman he had wedded.

"He loves me," said Rachel. "I wonder why he did not want to marry me." But even this question did not stir her stricken emotions. To-day and to-morrow were like an empty nest, cast down by winds. Her emotions were numbed and frozen.

"I suppose it was my religion," she said. And then a spark came into her quietly burning eye. "My religion—oh, as if that mattered. I would have changed it if he asked me."

That was what one part of her mind said, and yet with her tongue she prayed very coldly to the Holy Virgin, and said familiar words which trickled from her memory as if something was broken in her.

"Yes, I would have changed it; quite easily."

She sat down in the window seat and took from her bosom the old ivory crucifix which had drunk her mother's blood, and she drew out its fine steel blade, read-

ing once more, "Non venio pacem mittere sed gladium." She fell into a reverie.

"That's what Christ said. There's a sword between him and me now, between me and Anthony. And my heart is dead to-day, and they say I'm young. I'm not young. I wish I could think of anything else. 'I come not to bring peace but a sword.' I don't love anything; not Anthony, or Martha, or Mary, or her boy. I've not spoken to him for days. Oh, I am cut off."

She put back the blade and hid the crucifix once more in her bosom.

"I do not love God," she said, and that which would have seemed a blasphemy yesterday made her smile. "There are so many who do not believe there is a God. They say Steve doesn't now, and grandfather didn't either. I've not been in his room since mother died."

She left the parlour and went to the door of the room in which old Tregilgas used to sit and smoke and read and rage and laugh. Steve had often spoken to her of him. She tried the door and found it locked as usual, and called to Mary for the key.

"'Tis in a fine muck surely, my darling," cried Martha, who heard her, "and you'll get as black as coal in it. Shall we have it cleaned? Your mother would never let me touch it; she said things, sad things, of old Mr. Tregilgas, though he was a fine man too, and loved her."

"Never mind about cleaning it," said Rachel. And then Mary brought the key and opened the door.

"Your mother always dreaded the books," said Martha, who peered in at the door as if she expected to see the ghost of old Tregilgas, or the devil himself. "They say it was the books which made your grandfather an atheist and full of high arguments which made believers tremble. I remember your mother as a girl, before she took to another religion than that she was brought up in, used to laugh about the ministers who came to convert him, for she said Mr. Tregilgas used to end up with, 'Tis you are the atheist, sir; get out of my house.' Ah, there was much talk about your grandfather when I was a girl!"

She turned to Mary.

“Don’t stand there as if the devil hid in a cobweb, Mary. Get a wet duster and do something.”

But Rachel shook her head and shut the door upon them, and Martha looked at Mary sadly, until it seemed to her that Mary dared to understand something of Rachel’s heart, and then the old woman raged at her.

“Go on, girl, go on and do things. Isn’t there aught to be done in rainy weather, or do you hold the creed of the lazy, ‘More rain more rest’? There’s mud in the house, and shall I always do the cooking? If there’s any hell for cooks ’twill be a kitchen, and I’m getting old and hate fires. And there’s that Johnny of yours howling in some mischief. In mischief you found him and in mischief you’ll lose him, if I see truly.”

And Rachel sat down upon an old chair over-spun with webs, and for the first time in her life was face to face with other things than nature, the wind, and rain, and storm and sunlight. For something in her heart and in her blood, which was the same stream that ran through the great heart of the old man who was father to her mother, made her desire to disbelieve in the things she had always held as sacred.

“Why should I love God?” she asked. Anthony was with his wife. She pressed a hard crucifix against her bosom. Her own nature seemed abhorrent to her, and there was no help in the music of the rain on drinking grass and leaves, or in the wild song of the wind chorus, or in the passion of sunlight in ancient woods. Here in these books was solace, so she had heard; men in grief came to them and straightway their folly was wisdom, and the voices of the dead reassured them and gave them consolation and odorous spices out of holy graves. She looked upon the books with her eyes, and with the eyes of her heart read the gospel of the living and dead flesh.

The room in which she sat was square and lofty; shelves hid the walls on three sides of it, and on the books was the dust of years. She saw scared spiders run from them in the gloom, for the day outside was dark and the windows were darkened with webs and dust. There were ancient folios and quartos piled upon the floor; on a deal

table in the middle of the room were books and an old brass candlestick. A chair stood at the table; it seemed to her that it might not have been moved since the day her grandfather died. The old armchair in which he had been found dead and at peace was still drawn to the fireplace with its red-rusty grate. The atmosphere was cold and heavy and yet dry; its odour was strange. For of books Rachel knew nothing.

She had always been a child of the open air; a creature of the woods and the sea-shore, delighting in the thunder of the surf and the natural sounds of the living growing world. Nothing artificial touched her; her very religion given her by her mother was for Rachel something born of music and colour. It lived in her still because it had been born in churches of Italy; its sensuous delights were wonderful. And then it had been a religion of the Mother and the Child. Her own virginal maternity was so warm and tender that the Virgin was her mother, seeing that her own mother had not loved her, and the Child, though holy, was no more holy than such children as she had held to her bosom in the vision of the wood. Life and religion and happiness for her were one; and now life stayed its course in an unhappy winter; happiness died in storm and religion seemed a vain thing. The Virgin Mother's eyes were turned away; the Child was even as the children that were dead. A fierce intolerable aching was the first thing that wakened her from the cold reverie in which she had been plunged since the grey dawn of this morning of bitter loss.

"I shall tell Father Brant I believe in nothing," she said. Nature spoke ten thousand times more loudly in her than any instilled doctrine. All doctrines of the sun were good in sunlight; the delights of God's day were sweet in daylight; but deep within her heart's book she read that human interpretation might fail to read God's word aright.

"Perhaps there is a God, but not theirs," she said. Her mother's father believed what others did not; what others believed he scoffed at. Poor old Steve was said to be as bad an atheist as Tregilgas himself, and yet the old drunk-

ard had strange wisdom and was kind and loved her, as she knew. She said that she would speak to Steve about her grandfather. And then once more words were spoken in her brain that shook her—"Take him, but you can't keep him." She put no interpretation upon these words, but something within her hoped that it was true. She turned over the volumes upon the table idly and stared at the walls with blind unseeing eyes. What she saw was beyond them, Pentowan Farm and the old rambling house upon the hill, and rooms that Winnie now was mistress of. Her brow contracted. She saw too much, understood too much. And yet she smiled, for she knew that Anthony did not love the woman she hated.

There were books of history before her, and old volumes of strange travel and great folios of architecture with worm-eaten binding and pages. Some of the books were in Greek, for her mother's father had been something of a scholar. There were others in Latin, and some in French. Of Latin she knew a few words, as every Catholic must; of French she knew nothing. She looked for Italian, which she had once talked so well, but found none. As she walked round the room and read the titles she regretted that she knew so little, that she had never been taught anything. She was uneducated, she said. And yet she could read the skies, having learned them from the fishermen; she knew the message of the winds; she had observed the gifts of the sea and the pleasant profitable land which comforted its children with fruits. The hearts of women were half open to her, and the dear hearts of children were a stretched scroll for her eyes. And in her own heart she had seen things that were terrible and dear, as terrible as love and as dear as love's return; and in it were half decipherable messages from the God of Nature, and in her caves strange priestesses chanted messages, true and obscure and prophetic. Books were nothing to her; it was only when her heart closed that she thought of them. In winter men lived in houses; the shut heart searched out the hearts of the dead.

All this was dead wisdom; her live soul declared it as her fingers touched the words of the dead. There was

more wisdom in the words of the spring, and the high sun of summer, and the fruitful hours of autumn than in any poet, if the heart was its own interpreter and needed no prophet to disclose the present future. But now she was of the cold company of the dead for a time, and no natural chant appealed to her. She shut her ears to the earth's harmony, for she had ceased to be a part of its music. She stayed with the dust of thought, which declares itself true wisdom, and having lost touch with the sunlight, she made a tent of darkness in the wilds. For long hours she remained among the books of the dead, and heard those, who being dead, yet speak.

And when the bridal night of him whom she loved had come at last, she lighted a candle in the old brass candlestick and read about dead emperors and their passing glories, their battles, their triumphs, and their spilt blood. She heard the tramp of the dead and the sound of muffled drums and the thunder and the shouting afar off. And queens walked by her side, no more queenly than she who read of them while she thought of the funeral of her own desires. They lived and loved and had their happy day, their dreadful year. Through and under all these was the voice as of one who said, "To what end is this sorrow? Surely men create their own woes and deny themselves peace." As she read grass grew upon the quiet graves of the unquiet, and their foolish children struggled for honour by the edge of the pit.

And this was the wedding-night of him she loved. Her flesh crept upon her bones, and she was as old as some of those who, being dead, yet spoke to her. But neither the sense of vanity, nor the sight of vain passion and the vain lust of glory, could beat down the nest of her young desires clamouring upon the tree of life. It was in the dusk of midnight, when the candle flared in its socket, that she agonised. And then Martha came in to her, coming from her bed, and clad in white stood by her side.

"Go to bed, Rachel, go to bed," she cried. "'Tis dark and cold."

Rachel turned and stared at her without understanding.

This was a voice from a strange world. And then Martha cried out:

"Don't look at me with those eyes, child!"

Rachel woke from her dream and took Martha's hand.

"How good you are to me, my old Martha. What is wrong with my eyes?"

"Oh, but this hour they are your mother's," wailed Martha.

"Had mother beautiful bright eyes before I was born?" asked the daughter.

"They were like stars," said Martha.

"Why was it she never loved me?"

"Her heart was full of grief."

Rachel shivered a little. But she was not cold.

"Who gave her the crucifix, Martha?"

"It was one who loved her, a friend, a friend."

"It was a strange gift between friends. Did it divide them?"

But Martha shook her head.

"What do I know? 'Tis time for you to be in bed, Rachel."

"You're a mother to me, Martha dear," said Rachel, stroking Martha's grey head. "I never knew my mother, did I?"

"You never knew her, not till now. 'Tis her eyes you have and her heart."

"And I've her crucifix against my heart," said Rachel.

"There's a power of division in it, Martha. What is it in religions that they are like knives?"

"They should be love, child."

"They may be hate, Martha. Do you think I'm a girl now, dear?"

Martha went down upon her knees and laid her withered face upon the girl's knees, and she shook with difficult tears.

"Oh, my heart of gold, my dear and bonnie daughter, weep with me; you're a woman and the most beautiful—there's no such tall beauty with eyes and a heart like yours."

But no tears came to Rachel's eyes.

"Give up things, my darling," said Martha; "there's better to be got than any can lose. Give up—oh, I talk vainly."

Then had she not given up, thought Rachel. Was this old woman a dreadful prophetic of evil, one who saw deeply into hearts and unborn days? Martha felt Rachel shake, and looked up at her and saw that her eyes were like brooding fire fixed upon space beyond the dark books of the dead wall.

"Give up!" said Rachel, and the words bit deep and ran like a sharp sword to her very marrow. And she heard Steve's words again, "you can't keep him." What did Steve know and had he, too, a gift of eyes which saw beneath the flesh, and a gift of speech that made things come to be?

"What did any Tregilgas ever give up?" asked Martha of herself. She said "Rachel!" suddenly, and Rachel did not hear her. And Martha shook violently as with ague and fell back from the girl who still did not see or hear her, and there was terror in the old woman's face. She rose to her feet and took Rachel's head upon her bosom.

"Don't, don't, don't look like my dead Mary!"

Her voice rose to a thin scream, and Rachel started violently out of a dark vision.

"What is it, Martha?"

But the old woman trembled.

"Come to bed, come to bed, it's midnight—you're cold."

"I'm not cold. But, Martha——"

"Yes, child."

"I understand mother now!"

Rachel felt Martha's heart beat in her very hands.

"You mustn't understand her, Rachel. There's nought to understand—she was troubled, that's all."

But Rachel paid no attention to what she said.

"I can understand her heart. It's the same heart in me, Martha. Was she not troubled before I was born?"

She held Martha's eyes with her own and the old woman quavered.

"You make me old, Rachel, and I'm cold and it's midnight. Hear the rain in the trees. There's the wind again. Come to bed."

"Was she troubled before I was born?" repeated Rachel.

"What's this you ask? What do I know, girl? Oh, the wind in the trees—the house quakes and it's past midnight."

She shook Rachel's shoulder.

"Let's talk to-morrow. I'll be your mother, Rachel. If I could only manage things rightly. Oh, my beautiful heart of gold."

Once more Rachel asked her the question and took her by the wrists and stared at her.

"Yes, yes, it's true," cried Martha, "it's true, it's true."

And Rachel smiled with a faint bitterness like that which sometimes heralds death, and foretells it for watchers.

"You go to bed, Martha. It's you that are cold."

"No, no, I'll sit with you. 'Tis flannel I have on, thick flannel, dear. I'm not cold, but it's long past midnight."

Rachel took her to the door and kissed her brow and held her to her heart.

"Do not be afraid for me. What's wrong, Martha. Am I a child?"

What fear was there for children? The fear was for women. But Rachel was strong and dominant, and she sent Martha away. And the old woman lay awake weeping. Rachel never shed a tear, though she waited for the dawn before she left the room of the books of the dead.

And when at last she went up to her own room, something in her imagination that made her heart sick thrust her from the bed, so that she took a pillow and some blankets and lay down upon the floor.

She said:

"Do I give up aught?"

And though she answered nothing to her question she cried out in strained lamentation:

"My mother's spirit is in me, in my heart!"

She heard the rain drip and the wail of the wind until the day broke, and then she fell asleep.

And at Pentowan Farm Anthony rose at the earliest sign of dawn and went out among his beasts.

VI

WHAT Martha prayed for that night and many days and nights thereafter was that Rachel should break down and come to her and say the sorrow that was in her heart.

"There's grace in confession, and I know it," said Martha, "although I hate priests for some reason that's in me. I never told anyone my troubles and they stay till they are told; that's the nature of them. But though I pray that Rachel may speak to me or even to Father Brant, I know she will not. It takes torture to make her breed cry out. Mary was mad before she spoke, and then she died."

But Rachel, though she was proud, was not so proud as the old woman believed. There were hours when a direct question might have opened her heart. The passion that was in it seemed nothing to be truly ashamed of; it was great and human. Pride there was in Rachel and her race, but no false pride, no littleness, no true shame for things natural and gracious, the gift of God. And though God's gift of love turned the fire and flame and burnt her to ashes, it was still strength within her, and her pride bade her cover its ravages only from those who could not understand and did not love her. Martha she knew had a mother's heart for her, and there were times at midnight when the girl, who was a girl no longer, could have told her all the truth in the darkness.

But she smiled on the world and once more worked in her house and looked after the animals, and went down into the village to help those that the winter harmed. For that winter was one of ceaseless wind and sorm, and the harvest of the sea was scanty, and it took men out of their warm homes and destroyed them. There was much mourning on the coast, and women were made widows

and children orphans. And Rachel had pity on the lonely and the fatherless, so that many rose up and called her blessed. Yet she lived a life that was solitary, and stayed with books rather than with humanity. For there was a drug within their pages which was a solace. She saw the red pages of the history of man and in her greater hours perceived the littleness of the grief of any single heart. And then again she saw that any heart was the history of all life, and its grief was the grief of all the ages.

The influence of her books was strong and they brought out things in her that were an astonishment, and she drew from them much that her mother's father had drawn, since she was truly his grand-daughter. The old man was ever present in his library, and she found a thousand passages marked in the books he had loved, and every mark was like a word from him saying, "Read this, and find out, my daughter, why I marked it." And first the message left for her was one of vanity, as though the dead man cried out that there was nothing but vanity under the sun, and afterwards it came to her that this was not the truth and not what he said, and something greater grew up for her in the soil of living books. For though the dead spoke in them, she saw that they were yet alive and put upon them a garment of immortality. And she sat over them at midnight, finding out that he who was her teacher saw the universe as one, and that there was no distinction to be drawn between the fertile earth and its children, and that matter existed not and that spirit was a delusion, and that the one thing that lived and rejoiced was a stream of energy that came out of eternity and clothed itself in a thousand shapes, rolling like coloured fire through the vaults of space. This energy was in the fire of the sun and the glory of the stars, in the floods of ocean and the streams of rivers; in the windy heights of heaven and the depths of fire below the earth; in the secret heart of any seed and in the fertile nature of the hearts of men. For the man who taught her said that God was but the Word of Man grasping at the highest thought of unity within him, and she perceived that the doctrine of growing man enlarged as his soul grew, and

his soul was the fine apprehension in him which, using the intellect as a forge, and the fires of thought as the fire of the forge, welded one conception to another. And for man necessity was his nature and his freedom, and freedom grew as necessity at last became stronger, so that the heart of man rejoiced in what he had to do, ~~knowing the force within was God. This was harmony and evil was but discord, and if few smote pure harmony on any harp of the senses, time would come when all would play a right.~~

And out of this Rachel drew comfort, for she was no longer ashamed. But there were those who would have said she drew evil from it, since she was made not less but more the child of the strong energies which flowered within her. Her intellect grew rapidly, like a flower in a forcing house, but her strength was so great and her nature so abundant that her heart was not starved. And she came to love the old man who had given her the books, and with them something that was strength that as yet had not been hers. She desired to know more about him and spoke about him often to Martha.

"The old man was too much for me to understand," said Martha, "and I feared him. Often he chucked me under the chin, and then I was but a scared village girl and his eyes were fire. He had eyebrows like thatch, and they said he was an atheist. Boys hooted him. I mind they broke his windows once after a preacher preached against him. But there was none who seemed to understand him but that old drunken Steve. 'Twas before he took to drink, though, for your grandfather was sober. If you want to know aught about him, ask Steve Penrose."

And the next time that Steve came round upon a begging errand, as he often did, seeing that he was often like to starve but for charity, Martha sent him to the window of the library.

"Miss Rachel wants to speak to you, you old reprobate. Tap at her window. 'Tis often you've knocked at it; 'tis old Mr. Tregilgas' room."

Steve blinked and nodded.

"Drunk or sober, I remember him. 'Twas him that made me and destroyed me. He poured new wine in old bottles when he made a philosopher of me, Mrs. Martha, that he did. And I'm a bursten bottle and I've only the dregs of wisdom in me. I'll see Miss Rachel."

And for a long hour the ill-matched pair talked. Rachel sat in the window-seat and Steve squatted on the steps outside.

"Your grandfather, Miss Rachel, oh, he was a man! There's a look of you in him. He had your look of pride and strength and there was fire in him. Why, what do you think? I went to him to convert him (think of that, oh, Lord!) and he converted me! Oh, yes, but he was a man. I can see him now in his chair, big and savage and fine as a big windy day, Missy; broad his brows were, and his hair, even when he was old, was like night over the sea, and his voice was grumbling thunder. 'Tis said he had his way mostly with men or women. But children loved him, though men feared him."

The man pondered, and then his eyes brightened.

"I'm an old fool, I know, Miss Rachel, but I loved him, though the wisdom he taught me was too much for my strength. I see now that there's wisdom which bursts a man. I took to drink to have the courage to be wise. Not but what I've had much satisfaction in my mind from wisdom and the big thoughts of God he roared at me when I went to show him that God was very little and had foolish thoughts about wickedness and goodness, begging your pardon if I hurt you by being free-spoken about him and what he taught."

"You don't hurt me," said Rachel. "What did he think of God, Steve?"

"God save us if I rightly know," said Steve, tugging at his beard. "I could tell you if I was more or less the worse or the better for drink. But now I'm fuzzy-witted. All I can tell you is that he said all things were God, and that God spoke through and in every heart, and that the churches sold second-hand deities as if they were brazen images. I do remember one day when I said something about atheism that he roared. 'Atheist, atheist, quotha!

I an atheist? Oh, Lord, that's in all things! These tin-god worshippers and I! God's in me struggling; I see Him outside beaming, hear Him rejoicing, doing His best.' And then he shouted, loud as any Methody, 'Oh, the energy out of Darkness! Oh, the big Light whereof we are sparks! God forges us on His anvil; we are God and hammer and iron and anvil!' There was great meaning in him and he loved all living things as much as you do. 'Tis a bitter thing I've the grace not to come nigh you when I'm full of liquor, for then I could tell you things and preach about him. Ah! but I could!"

She sent him away with a shilling and he preached about old Tregilgas in the village beer-house.

"Miss Rachel's his true grand-daughter," said Steve. "Oh, the beauty and the heart of her!"

And indeed her beauty for a time became even greater than it had been, for by the struggle within her she was spiritualised even if she grew a little wan. But she had strength at the back of all her struggles, whatever might seem victory to her in the end, and though she saw little of the sun she drew power from the very winds. And day by day through all that winter she went like one in a dream, being utterly unsure of herself. Her feet were upon slippery places, and in the room of the books old assurances departed, and the warmth that had been in religion died out, so that she was often very cold, going like one naked in a strong wind. For this was in her nature, seeing that her mother had given up salvation at the last, choosing rather to walk in hell with her beloved than to be alone in heaven. And part of the strength of her grandfather was in her, and his analytic mind, so that the very touch of its solvent made things fall apart for her. Heaven stood far aloof, and its thronged courts were as a fading picture, and the saints were troubled, and the Virgin's self was but a woman weeping, and Christ was but one of the prophets, and man was a creature of destiny. At this very crisis of her fate it happened that Father Brant fell ill, and was sent away to the South, and though she saw him and confessed to him before he went, she did so doubting and never told her

heart, being sorry for the old man and very loath to hurt him. The priest who replaced him for the winter she refused to see, and when Father Brant wrote to her she did not answer.

"What do I believe?" she asked. In her dreams she believed in Anthony, and often spoke with him, and if there is any truth in the thought that mind can speak to mind, they suffered together in sleep that divided them, though they seldom spoke with their lips. But often and often she met him, and seeing strange things in his eyes, wondered whether he knew and remembered in his heart things she had dreamed.

Not yet had she achieved in her heart, so as to put it into words, the thought that in truth and justice and in the nature of things, according to the gospel of nature, he was hers and hers only. But the unspoken thought, which ran in her like hot flame, was often with her, and at night she believed it. Nevertheless there was much between them now, a great barrier, and she had no more visions of any magic wood. And sometimes by day it seemed to her that death itself might be sweet, and then once more her great heart and the strength of her limbs, and her infinite capacity for the love of children and the warm earth made such thoughts terrible and cold and lonely. In death she would no longer draw the same sweet breath of the winds that he drew in, nor would she see the stars, or the wide dome of heaven, or the drifting clouds, nor would she suffer upon the earth he trod.

Once she came upon a book which hurt her so that she cried out, for in it was the song of one who was barren, and hated the earth because it was fruitful and failed not. The graves she loved, for in them nought quickened; and in her heart she always thought of the child and the sweet laughter he would bring. For then the nests and the huts would call her sister. Strange agonies and sharp pains shot through Rachel as she read, and with tears she called the childless one her sister, and her arms and bosom ached.

And yet again she came upon a very strange book, which she could not understand, and she closed many

pages quickly. But upon one page she found the saying, "Fay ce que voudras," "Do that which pleaseth you." And among the company who held this legend for a rule she read were all noble knights and great ladies who did as pleased them and were happy and good according to the unspoiled heart and law of nature. And when she pondered this in her mind she seemed to see that there was no desire within her which was not good and sweet and simple. Only it happened that there were also men who wrote, "Do that which thou dost not wish," and out of this she perceived could come nothing but unnatural disaster and distrust of God, who wrote His word rather in the heart of man than in the creeds men built.

And so the days passed, and the storms of winter, and once more spring came and found her pale, but still strong. And the spring was the time of growth, even as the autumn was the season for the plough. Much that had been sowed came to the surface in the spring, and she believed, as the trees budded and the grass renewed itself, that even yet Anthony was hers, and hers only. A hundred dreams gave her assurance of this, and the sight of Anthony doubled the assurance of her dreams, and she cared nothing for the doctrines of her youth, seeing that they were like a house founded upon sand.

And then she was told that in the summer Winifred Perran was to become a mother. Her heart grew cold, for she knew if a child was born that Anthony was lost to her for ever. Only then did she know that her heart had never held him as one divided from her utterly.

VII

It was in the days which followed that Martha first began to fear that she understood how things stood with Rachel.

"God help us," said the old woman, "if this is true. God help us and help me."

She mourned in secret, and wrung her hands, and then prayed to Heaven.

"'Tis a natural folly in us to pray," she said bitterly;

“prayer is but vain hope in the heart of man, God forgive me for saying so, for what has prayer done for me, and what did it do for my Mary?”

And then in her very soul she was bitter against Anthony. She could have struck him, and indeed she did strike him harder than any man could have done, and said things to him in passion that she repented of, for if Rachel had known she had said them, forgiveness would have been past praying for.

She met Anthony on the road to the Church Town not a week after Rachel had found herself wondering if she had indeed given him up. He was riding his grey horse, and his face was pale and his look was an inward look. When Martha called to him he started and stared at her a full moment before he knew her worn and wrinkled face.

“You, Martha; what is it?”

He checked his horse.

“I want to speak to you, Mr. Anthony, and but a minute ago I said I would not speak when I saw you come riding, and now I must, for my heart is full and like to break.”

He alighted from his horse and stood facing her, so that she saw him full and noted the strong face that was his, and his blue eyes which even yet shone, though there was sorrow in them like a shadow. And she nodded to herself, saying that this was a man for whom women were fools and abased themselves, and the woman within her abased herself a little, and then she was angry with him over and above the bitterness of her soul. And Anthony quivered and knew that Rachel was in her mind and he stood still, waiting.

“What did I say to you years ago, Mr. Anthony, about one who is very dear to me? I told you what you were doing, and perhaps you didn't know your own heart then, but I knew hers, as I fear to know it now, and I said that the sun rose when you came and set when you went away. And now you've married a certain one, about whom I'll say nothing, for, thank God, I know little and want to know less of her, and yet I fear you planted what you

will not reap, and if you were out of the country or dead, for my own part I'd be happier."

Tears ran down her withered cheeks, but Anthony clenched his hands and looked down upon the road.

"I'm a fool to speak, a wicked fool, and if she knew it she would hate me, but for a long time my heart's been full, and speak to her I can't, and if I say 'Let us leave Morna,' as I have done, she says naught. But her face is enough, and I know her heart."

Anthony heard himself speak, but his voice was strange to his own ears.

"You—you know her heart—what's in it, Martha, what's in it?"

There was passion in the strained accents of his voice, and it shook the old woman into rage, for she saw for the first time what was in his. She cried out in lamentable astonishment:

"Oh, Mr. Anthony—oh, sir, you loved her!"

And he said:

"I loved her."

In his heart he cried out, "I love her."

And there was that in Martha which almost made her strike him.

"You cruel fool!" she said.

She stood nodding at him, and muttering to herself.

"Oh, God, here's evil and strange things, and what's wrong in it? For I know that if love's in his heart, 'twill be wind to the hot fire in hers, and her nature's dreadful."

She turned again upon the man. He was as white as white paper, and yet upon his face there was strange and awful script.

"You means she loves me—yet?"

What voice was that which asked such a thing?

"God forbid, if He forbids aught," prayed Martha, but what she denied with words her accents confirmed.

And then she said:

"What stood between you, then, that you did this other ching?"

Seeing that the hated woman of the eyes of flame stood between them now, it seemed to him that nothing had

stood between them, and his very heart was torn. His soul bled inwardly.

“Was it any lack of love?”

“Not in me,” said Anthony.

“Or in her?”

He knew better; his very body bore witness to it.

“Don’t torture me, Martha,” said the wretched man.

“It was that which could not be changed.”

Martha laughed even as the tears ran down her face.

“And this is a man, oh, and a fine man, and he let the thoughts of a girl on things the world’s in division about keep him from his love. ’Twas a carved crucifix, then, that stood betwixt you! Oh, you fool, and my heart’s hot to hurt you, take this thought home and live with it, that her heart’s a woman’s, and that her religion was no more to her than it is to most of us women, something to hold till the man comes, as a child plays with dolls till nature gives her a babe to suckle. Rachel would have worshipped idols with you and you had asked her. I know her heart, I know her heart.”

He could have said nothing if she had spoken blasphemy, and indeed what she spoke was blasphemy to that which he called his soul. And yet, being stricken and divided, his body said this was true doctrine, and as fixed as the stars in heaven. He staggered as he stood, and a passion of pity waged war with a passion of anger in the old woman’s heart.

“You men, you men!” she cried, and they looked at each other strangely, so that that which was in their minds came near to silent speech. But when she spoke, she uttered something very bitter, coming upon it in her mind, as one might clutch a knife in a struggle in the dark.

“You hate your wife,” she said.

And his lips moved, but he said nothing. Then there rose a sudden flame in Martha’s eyes, and what that flame meant neither of them knew to the utmost. But as he went away there was a strange seed planted in his heart, and Martha said:

“Oh, but I’m a wicked woman!”

She ran after Anthony, and called to him, saying:

“Forgive me, Mr. Anthony, but this thing is like death working at my heart!”

She clutched his hand and wept. But though death worked at his heart he never shed a tear.

VIII

At the end of the month of April news came to Morna that set more than one heart beating. And some were glad and some afraid, and Steve Penrose laughed uproariously, seeing prospect of much liquor and wild converse. It was indeed old Steve who brought the news to the village, for he had been at the Church Town and there came across the whistling doctor, who stopped him in the street.

“Well, you remarkable old scoundrel,” said Greer, “and how’s your health?”

He stood straddle-legs, and looked as strong as a stone bollard on a quay. As he asked his question he whistled an added interrogation.

“Many thanks, doctor, but I’m remarkable in my health,” replied Steve; “my thirst is prodigious, and I have the capacity of a cask. As it happens, owing to bad times at Morna, and the selfishness of man, I’m suffering from over-much sobriety, which I own has a tendency to make me gloomy. But nevertheless, I keep going and the summer’s coming on, so that presently I shall desert barns and sleep in the open, which is food, if not drink, to me. The coroner won’t sit upon me, yet, sir, and though I doubt not you’ll tell him I died of drink, you’ll as like as not lie, knowing ’twas the want of it slew me.”

“What would you do if I was ass enough to give you sixpence?” asked Dr. Greer.

“Make it a shilling and I’ll tell you,” said Steve; “and to show you my trust in your fine sense of charity I’ll even tell you beforehand. I will drink the lot and get two-pennyworth of credit besides.”

Greer laughed and gave him his shilling.

“And how are things at Morna?”

“Sadly healthy,” said Steve, “as of course you know,

and as it happens there are few of the women likely to need you, though they do say you'll be wanted at Pentowan Farm by-and-by. I wish you'd tell me your natural grave opinion of the lady that Mr. Anthony Perran has taken to his bosom, for I'm sure it would do me as much good as beer."

"You don't like her, Steve?"

"On my soul, I don't," said Steve, "and for that I've a thousand reasons. One of them is my instinct, and when my instinct gets up and warns me, I open my eyes, for it's natural reason in me. And then there are facts about which I don't speak. That is acquired wisdom; for the speaking of truth, when there are ash plants about and fierce husbands who hate truth, is sadly unprofitable. And there's another thing that on her wedding-day she smote me on the mouth with the back of her hand because I ran alongside her carriage, and, when Mr. Anthony was looking at other things, told her something she knew. If this good shilling that was yours and now is mine wasn't burning my hand and shrieking to hide its shame in the till of the Blue Anchor, I might have time to confide in you what I said. However, there's a time for all things. Have you any news for me, sir? For news leads to treating, and I fetch and carry news when I can!"

Greer shook his head.

"Not that I know of, Steve; nothing that will make Morna charitable, except that John Perran's back from abroad and may be down here any day."

Old Steve laughed.

"That's news for me. John Perran is the boy! Oh, what talks we had! He understands me, and I understand him, sir. Mrs. Anthony's father will love to hear that, if others don't. I'll have my beer, and away down to Morna."

But the doctor spoke again.

"What was it you said to Mrs. Anthony, Steve?"

Steve grinned delightedly, and wagged his beard.

"All I did was to speak to her about him we've just spoken of."

And Greer whistled.

"You know too much, Steve. There are sticks that will beat your back yet. How's Miss Rachel?"

Steve's face softened and he sighed a little.

"She's heavenly, sir, and a great woman of heart, and she's sad in her mind. There's a cloud upon her, and I'd give up drink to make her happy, if so little a thing would do it. I never see her now but I think of her poor mother. Mankind is full of tragedy, sir, and as for women, well—well——"

He went away murmuring and Greer shook his head.

"What does he know of her? There are fools in the world, and if I were twenty years younger I might be one of them. She's the finest woman I've ever seen, and should be the mother of children. But if I've any skill in judging she's of those who reach for the stars."

There are some, and he knew it, who extinguish the very lamp of life to see a falling star in the obscure of heaven. He sighed a little, nodded, and went about his business.

"We are all fools," said Greer.

And no doubt one of the chiefest was Steve, who drank up his shilling, and then went back to Morna full of joy that John Perran was returning.

"Oh, he's the man," said Steve, "full of the joy of things, he is, and he can sing and drink and wrestle and sail a boat as finely as Mr. Anthony. But poor Mr. Anthony picked a fallen apple in the orchard surely, and as like as not John knows nought of it. Somehow, I don't think he'll laugh. That's not what he laughs at, for if Mrs. Anthony had been a natural creature and good of her kind, she would never have married his brother. That's sure. But if he comes across this now, and things should come out (oh, but they might, Steve Penrose!) who knows but that Mr. Anthony might throw her off. But I fear not; he's a sad fool and makes a God for himself out of his own strength, so that he can do nothing without his own permission that he makes overhard to get. 'Tis a sad and merry mixture, and I'm thinking that there's not a soul in Morna that knows it all like wise old Steve. That's me, gentlemen all, that's me, and the

knowledge of it makes me wicked, and if I could take Mrs. Anthony by the white neck and drop her overcliff I'd thank the sea for playing muck-heap and main-drain. Oh, poor Miss Rachel! 'Twould have been better for her to set her heart upon John Perran. A man may kiss a girl or two by moonlight and not be much the worse for it, but when he's like Mr. Anthony, who follows finger-posts even if the road goes where I'd like to put his wife, there's little good to be got out of him. There are times I would have preached against John, and now I'm preaching against Anthony, his brother."

He ambled on down hill and presently came in sight of Morna's chimney-smoke among spring's green trees. He paused and looked down where the hidden village lay. He slapped his thigh.

"And to think I near forgot how, in the mixed kettle of broth that brews on fire, there's the fierce heart of old Jose simmering. He's never been the same man since his daughter went into arithmetic and got so far in natural learning as to make twice one into two. He'll be heating a bar of iron and making John's skull into an anvil. Like as not John never knows that there's another brave boy of his about Morna without his name. I'll have to go straight to Miss Rachel; she's the only soul in the village that can handle such iron as Jose. But for her he'd have wrung Mary's neck for her. Now he'll murder John for sure, beat him into red pulp and make prayers as he walks away looking for law. I'm for seeing Miss Rachel right off. Things are getting thick hereabouts, Steve, so they are."

He went to Rachel's house by the upper path, and found her in the garden, working hard. He stood at the fence and looked at her for a minute before she lifted her head and saw him.

"You've a power over plants, Miss Rachel, that only a good nature has. It's been in my head a long time that there are eyes which scorch blossoms," said Steve.

"Well, what do you want?" she asked shortly. She was always a little stern with him, and yet not too stern, for she knew he loved her in his heart.

"I've brought news," he nodded, "and it may be big news, and it might be black news, and there's no knowing if it mightn't be red news, as red as spilt blood, Miss Rachel."

She rose from her knees and dropped her gardening gloves upon the moist earth.

"What news is it, Steve?" she asked more kindly, for she saw that he had not come begging, though he might not go without.

"'Tisn't far from having something to do with some that live in Morna House."

She did not think of herself.

"Is it about Martha?"

"No, 'tis of a young mother with a child whose eyes are a known blue," said Steve. "And to beat no more about the bush, 'tis of the father of the blue eyes, Miss Rachel. John Perran's coming to Morna again at last."

Rachel stopped and looked at him with far-off eyes. It was long, long since she had seen the brother of Anthony, and since then she had learnt so much and dug so deep into the heart of the world and her own. The very mention of his name took her by the hair and drew her backward into the dark wood where she had found Mary and his child to whom she had given a home.

"What is it to me, Steve?"

She spoke very softly, though the words were hard.

"I wouldn't presume to say it was aught to do with you, Miss, but if Mary Jose has no mother, she has a father, and he's a man some might fear, if they had cause. As a young man he was a man of his hands, and stern, and now he's a man of a hammer and very old and fierce. And there's none but you in Morna that might make him do this or that, if it were but to yield a hair's-breadth. All in Morna say that, and if I know any man's heart by his eyes, and I have a deep gift that way, he's sworn on fire and red iron to break John Perran and beat him to powder."

And this Rachel knew was the truth. For even yet the old man had never spoken to his daughter; he passed her in the village as if she were some gipsy of the fields.

"I will speak to him," said Rachel. "Thank you, Steve, for coming to tell me."

And she went back to the plants that she had one time loved so and now tended as if they were such flowers as might lie upon a grave.

"What has John Perran to do with me?" she asked as she dug at the deep earth.

And perhaps the deep earth might have answered her, speaking in red flowers and white.

"What has Anthony's brother to do with me?"

For as she dug it almost seemed to her that she had done with Anthony. And yet presently hot tears fell upon the opened earth, and it may be that she planted more than she knew. For neither the earth nor the human heart can know its children.

IX

THERE was always work to do, and Rachel did hers even now, though she spent half the day and half the night in the ghostly company of books. Anthony, it might be, was as one dead and buried, and still life had to be lived. Work hid certain things growing in the dark garden of her heart, where bitter herbs rather than sweet scented the secret air. The marriage of Anthony was even as death, and still thoughts grew in her hourly that she trampled on, but could not subdue. Something other than herself spoke within her and gave her desires unholy comfort, so that when she was but half awake she sometimes waked herself by bitter laughter. And now they said that Winnie was like to have a child some day. If one were born she knew that there would be more than death between her and Anthony. This was a new life, and she hated the unborn with jealous hatred, that for a time made her hate more children than one.

And now John Perran was coming back, and his return might mean tragedy. His child was, they said, the mother's shame, and the shame of the mother lay upon the old man of the forge like a dark shadow, while John him-

self was no doubt what he had been, strong and bright and careless of any law. Though it was so long since Rachel had seen him, she saw him now and heard his voice. He was Anthony without Anthony's fierce soul; he was a man of the sun and air, a lover of women, one that children loved, a conqueror of animals, an arbiter among men; he went among men laughing, while girls' hearts beat at the sound of his voice and many women sighed.

"It might be red news, as red as spilt blood," said Steve. And Rachel went down into the village with Sigurd at her heels to seek old Jose. She found him alone at the forge, and when he saw her coming he stood up straight with a long iron rod in his hand. He always loved her; he had told her so and it was true. She went to the point with him, for he was a straight man and loved the directness of speech which came natural to her. Yet now she was cunning.

"Would you do anything for me, Mr. Jose?"

She leant against the dark door-post of his forge and smiled upon him.

"Oh, Missy, there are few men who would not do anything you asked them," said Jose; "and though I'm old, I'm a man, and anything but one thing I'll do for you."

Not once but twice a year she had sought his pardon for Mary. Now a brighter smile leapt into her face, and Jose's brows drew together suddenly, for he had a quick mind concerning things near his thought.

"She's not asking that I should forgive Mary," he said; "she's not asking that this day."

And yet when he had said that he would do anything but one thing for her, he had meant then that he would not forgive Mary.

"There's another thought in her," he cried to himself; "oh, but there's another thought in her, for why should she smile when she knew what was in my heart?"

And Rachel smiled because he was to do anything but one thing for her. It was fair to catch the old man in his own words, since to get his promise to lay aside vengeance

was a good deed. But even as she spoke she doubted what was in his mind and her smile faded.

"Then will you forgive Mary?" she asked.

And Rachel saw a strange and bitter agitation grow up in the old man. He murmured and tried to speak and could not, for he knew he had been trapped and could not resent it since she was so good and was ready to do her best for all the world. He went towards the light so that she turned and he could see her face.

"What's in your mind?" he said.

In his own mind there was still the desire not to forgive his daughter. But there was a greater desire still, and he knew that Rachel knew it and touched it in his heart.

"Oh," said Rachel, putting out her hand, "there's love in my heart for you and your daughter and sorrow for you both."

"And fear?" asked Jose quickly; "is there fear in your heart?"

In her face he saw fine apprehension and his eyes shone and he called out suddenly:

"This is not that which I will not do for you. Bring Mary and I'll forgive her!"

In his knotted hands he bent the iron rod nearly double. He nodded.

"I'll forgive her."

He went back into the forge and Rachel followed him. She caught him by the arm.

"I thought better of you, Mr. Jose," she said as she made him face her. "This is not done for me, but that you may get the best of me."

"I love you, Missy," said Jose, "but I can hate too. I know your heart, but you've come here to-day to catch me with words and make me promise that which I cannot promise. There are things as plain to me as fire in darkness, and now I know that John Perran is coming back to Morna."

He dropped the bent rod and took up the hammer and holding it near the head smote it on the anvil.

"And if he is——"

"Let him keep out of my path," said Jose fiercely;

"where I walk let him not come. There is much strength in me to keep God's commandments and I will not pursue him. But there is also weakness in me, and if I see him, or if I know that he speaks aught to my girl except concerning marriage, I will grind him to powder."

"And with this heart you forgive your daughter," said Rachel; "you forgive her to cheat me, and to keep the most wicked desire of your heart."

But the old man shook his head.

"There are those to whom God speaks," he cried, "and there are some He makes instruments of His justice. And if any man prays, even for God's vengeance, and finds comfort and the wicked under his hand, it is the answer of God."

And Rachel turned away from him.

"I cannot tell Mary you forgive her," she said, and tears ran down her cheeks. And Jose dropped his hammer and ran after her.

"Oh, Missy, Missy, ask me nothing," he cried, "for my heart has been hot in the fire and has been tempered in tears and blood. But you I love, for you are a great and dear woman, and there's no Perran but what I hate for through them sorrow comes no less to you than to me, no less than to me."

But though this was the first time that Rachel knew that her heart was as a show in the market-place, she made no sign, and gave the old man her hand and went away sorrowfully.

For the hand of fate was heavy upon many in Morna, and Rachel knew it. She sent down to the village for old Steve and told him to warn John Perran when he came. And Steve shook his head mournfully.

"He may have as many faults as there are meshes to a net," said Steve, "but being afraid of aught living isn't in John Perran."

X

THE news spread quick in the village and the country roundabout that Anthony's brother was coming back for a while, and it was soon known that if he came his days in the land might be few. For Steve talked of William Jose, and men looked upon the old blacksmith fearfully as one who had murder in his heart. And two preachers spoke with him, and got nothing for their pains, for upon this subject the old man's heart was as hard as the nether millstone or as the anvil that he worked at in stubborn anger while they spoke.

But there were yet many days before John came to Morna, and other things grew up in the harvest of rumours, and one was that which might have been looked for, and indeed was looked for. Folks said in whispers that Anthony Perran and his wife were for ever at odds, and that the man was more than unhappy. And soon what they whispered was said openly, and Mary Jose brought the news to Rachel, since the carrying of news is so pleasant a thing that few tongues find the misfortunes of others a burden. And Rachel forgot the very existence of John Perran and of old Jose, and of all other living creatures than the one she loved and the one she hated. and now, being unable to pray except dumbly to deaf gods, she stood in the fire and was herself a flame. For any action was impossible, and she saw no way of help, not yet being driven this way or that. But for many nights she did not sleep, and once more she sat up among the books trying in vain to read.

And once she waked herself from a half-dream at midnight in the book room by calling out "Anthony!" She knew what she had called out and her flesh crept upon her bones and the hair of her head was stirred. For it seemed to her that Anthony was in the very room with her. She ran to the door and looked into the passage, and then went down the passage quietly but with clenched hands to the old parlour. It seemed to her as she walked that Anthony was before her, and that not only his spirit

was there, but the ghosts of her old grandfather and of her mother whom passion had slain. She opened the outer door and went into the garden and looked out across her moon-lit valley to Pentowan Farm upon the hill, and her heart bled for the folly of the strong man of God who was the fool of his beliefs.

"I've hated you, Anthony," she said; "I've hated you, often, and now is it true that you are so wretched?"

If any yearning can send a messenger some true angel must have left her soul as she spoke.

"It's true what old Steve said once," she cried to herself, "that if anyone can be wholly wicked it is a woman. And Winnie is cold and cruel, and a liar and a coward. I've seen her hurt living things, and his living heart is in her hand."

She heard Sigurd stirring in his kennel and walked round the house to where he lay. As he heard her coming and knew her step, he gave a low joyful bark, greeting her pleasantly. She stroked his great head and fondled his pricked ears.

"You hate her too, don't you, Sigurd?"

Now she hated Winnie and let herself hate. The dog leapt up and put his big paws upon her shoulders, and his love eased her heart a little.

"If one could only love always, Sigurd," she said to him. But love was often terrible, and its child was death, or shame. Suddenly she remembered that she stood close to the spot where she had offered her very heart to Anthony in a half-dream by the verge of the wood, and a fire burnt in her face. She moved until she stood there once again, and she moaned so that Sigurd whimpered sadly. For she knew that she had changed, and was no longer what she had been, for it seemed to her to believe in God was good, and now she believed in nothing. She stayed quietly, and once more in her set mind she heard Anthony running furiously in the dark wood, and she could have cried out aloud at his folly and her own shame. And her soul still cried:

"Take me, Anthony!"

For she was as a ghost walking in a woodland, and he

was a spirit in the wood, while Winnie was a white woman of the flesh, luxurious and horrible.

Now in the mystery of the night and the clouds of the moon and the deep wet shadows of the wood thoughts grew in her swift as mushrooms of the moon and the fruit of fairy circles; and she saw things in strange lights; perceiving herself even as another creature. Here the word of God was no human word; it was formulated in no alphabet; she had rights that the day denied. And suddenly all horror of herself died within her; she became light of spirit, and it seemed to her that Anthony fled no more from her, but came running to the refuge of her heart. She cried out in her soul:

“Anthony! Anthony!”

And she bowed her head, and faintness came over her, which was sweet.

“I could believe in God,” she said. Ancient creeds lived in her again. Her ancestors worshipped in groves; she offered sweet sacrifices for her forgotten fathers that had been fertile dust these million years.

“God of the woodland, and the sea, and the moon, and the hearts of women, give me my lover!”

She knelt upon wet turf and offered salt oblation of poured tears; she murmured voiceless incantations; gods grew in the woodland, and nature blessed her; the moving air was like the breath of God. She heard the low voices of strange sibyls; she consulted dark women in hidden mephitic caves, and went back into the cave of her books like one walking in her sleep.

And there a strange chance brought food for her desires, if indeed it was chance and not the working of her inward mind. For she went like a dreamer to a shelf and plucked down a book which was a history of ancient Rome, and she opened it at a page which told the story of the strange woman who came to Tarquinius Superbus, the King, and offered him nine books to buy. And when the King refused the stranger smiled and went away and burnt three books of the nine, and coming back offered the remaining six at the very price that she had asked for the nine. At this Tarquinius laughed and she went away

and burnt another three books, and once more returning asked no less a price for the three that were left. And the King, being struck by the strangeness of this, spoke with his augurs, and they bade him buy the three, for these were the Books of the Sibyl and contained great secrets.

And as Rachel read the mere words of the book, her own dark mind interpreted the story according to the mystic passions within her heart. She herself was the Cumæan Sibyl, and the books were the books of her soul and body, and the King was Anthony, who had no laughter in his mind. This thing had happened strange long ages ago, and she perceived the passions of ages within her, believing in that hour in re-incarnations and all the imaginations of mortal man. And she rose suddenly from her book and stood up and lost sight of her dark room and perceived Herself and the King by a magic wood, and there was none other alive in the deep world save strange priests and augurs and flamens and those who consulted the torn hearts of men in sacrificial fires. Then once more her flesh moved and her hair was stirred, and it seemed to her that warm lips were laid upon hers, so that she could not cry out. But her heart said:

“I offered him the nine books, and the three books of his God are ashes within me!”

She lay with her head upon the table and in the wildest passions of her nature conceived a purpose which lay close to her heart.

After this she avoided neither Anthony nor his wife, for she knew there were other books to burn if the fire was needed. And the very next day she met Winnie face to face.

XI

SUCH thoughts as lived in the dark garden of Rachel's heart grew best at midnight, even though they were not wholly alien from her soul. As a child she knew that bitter herbs grew with sweet herbs, and now she saw

that hyssop lived where fragrant basil and marjoram died of drought; and she had always loved the hours about midnight, for in them there was peace which in the day no solitude afforded. Now that she had no peace, night yet gave her gifts which resembled it, for there was rest in yielding to the storm of passion within her. In the day she was strained and not herself; she showed signs that she did not sleep well; there were moments when she almost lost grip of herself, as she thought that Anthony suffered and yet was strong. There was one hour in which she believed it would be possible for her to kill Winnie, for she saw deep within her soul such weapons as women might use; such indeed as many must have used who were her dead forerunners. And then she shook, not with terror of the law or terror of death, but with the knowledge of what the price of such deliverance would mean to the man who loved her. It would be better to kill Anthony himself. In the dark such a thought had dreadful power of growth. It returned to her as perpetually as suicide to one who builds vain hope against despair.

But now this darkest hour passed. She said to herself and to Anthony, "Stay till the dawn; there is another way."

And she remembered, what she remembered so often, that she had said as she swam in the Cove at midnight, "I would do anything you wanted, Anthony; anything you wanted." Now she was ready, since he suffered, for any sacrifice if so she could release him. God hindered her not, since there was no God; and her will was bound to Anthony's service and the bitter passions of her love. She had consulted the Cumæan, and had read in her dark books; she went in a great dream, accepting destiny.

And that day destiny worked for her since it gave her peculiar courage and set her face to face with Anthony and afterwards with his wife. She was standing in the high road with Sigurd about noon, when the dog barked and ran eastward and came back presently with his old master, who was riding the white horse that Rachel knew

so well. She stayed till he came up and then she smiled at him without speaking. And for a little while he could not speak, though he looked at her steadily, for he marvelled at her beauty and the deep changes in it, and at his own folly and the ways of God with man.

“Are things well with you, Rachel?”

She said they were well, and she saw that he suffered, for his voice was strange.

“And is it well with you, Anthony?”

But he could not lie. His face twitched painfully.

“Why should one expect that on earth?” he asked with forced lightness. And yet it might have been. She said that to herself, and a fury of hopeless helpless anger rose in her. What she said aloud cut him like a whip.

“It will be well in heaven, since there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage there.”

His pale face flushed.

“What do you mean?” he asked. And she did not answer, but kept her eyes upon him and wondered what was in his heart, since she knew he loved her and knew he hated his wife. And he was so fine, she said, so good, so strong. How came it that there was this weakness in him both of act and endurance—what led him, what drove?

As for him he suffered without showing it, as he believed, and a terror of Rachel came up in him. His mind was quick and tender, not yet dulled by suffering, and it seemed to touch her mind and learn of it, so that he perceived something new in her which had come since they last met. Neither pain nor labour nor the anxious thoughts of those who deal with the seasons and the earth could blunt him, and he saw that she was awakened, aggressive, and had some purpose in hand like a sword. And in his hand the sword of the Lord was sharp, but it shook, and he was not sure of defence. Though she was worn and of a spiritual strength such as he had not seen in her, she represented the body rather than the soul, the flesh rather than the spirit. But this was the flesh that drew. There was that which made his heart sick; and it was fertile.

He knew she was speaking to him with Winifred in her mind. And while there was sorrow in her that might bring tears, there was contempt which was a scorching flame. He spoke at last in desperation.

"Have you heard that John is coming back?"

"I have heard it."

"He comes to-morrow."

"Tell him that William Jose will kill him," said Rachel, "unless he means to marry Mary."

She spoke quite calmly. In the living presence of tragedy a threatened tragedy was nothing.

"He'll not marry her," said Anthony. "I asked him not to return, but he does what he will."

"There are many who do," said Rachel. "We all do, Anthony, even if we think we do as your God wills."

"My God—is He not yours?"

The fanatic in him woke and his eyes gleamed.

"I am not even a Catholic any more," she said, and saying that she turned and leapt upon the bank which separated the road from her woodland acres. Sigurd followed her quietly, as if he had forgotten his old master, and they went away together leaving Anthony in the road. Knowing that he suffered she made him suffer more.

There came back to him words of fire, as it were written upon a dark cloud, and they were the bitter words of Martha. He heard her say, "he let the thoughts of a girl on things the world's in division about keep him from his love. 'Twas a carved crucifix that stood between you! Take this thought home and live with it, that her heart's a woman's, and that her religion was no more to her than something to hold till the man comes, as a child plays with dolls till nature gives her a babe to suckle. Rachel would have worshipped idols with you!"

If Martha had stabbed and hurt him Rachel used a blade which made him bleed inwardly. He prayed as he rode, and all the time there was a faint physical sickness upon him, and it seemed that God was far off, and that heaven was only to be reached through hell. His prayer

was wordless anguish; it was the prayer of the suffering brain and body rather than any appeal of the soul. And that part of him which was not subdued, that part which was the mate of his own brother, that wild nature which flourished in those whom men of religion called "the bad Perrans," refused to pray at the altar of any God.

Yet still he held himself close and rode soberly upon the high road, knowing that nought could be done, and that if he was a slave by his marriage and his word, he was doubly a slave to the unborn child. And it was not till hours had passed and much labour had dulled his nerves that he thought upon Rachel's heart of flame, and perceived that he stood in peril of his soul.

And before he thought of this certain other things befell, and Rachel met Winnie by the little wooden bridge which crossed the stream and made a path between Pentowan and the Church Town. Her heart was bitter, so bitter that she was glad to feel what Anthony must have suffered when he knew that religion stood between them no longer. But she herself suffered, for she met that which did stand between them, and there was that about Winifred which made her heart sick. For though she looked much older and as if she were not happy, yet even in her lack of happiness there was a sense of satisfaction which was something more than herself. She came upon Rachel suddenly, for Rachel was sitting on the western bank of the stream at noon, while Sigurd amused his hunting nature by muzzling after rabbits in the fern nearer Morna House. But when he saw someone with Rachel he came back to her fast.

"Oh, it's you, Rachel," said Winnie, and Rachel turned and stared at her. Sigurd bounded upon the bridge, and when he knew it was Winnie he growled softly and turning to Rachel put his slate-grey head against her cheek. She threw her arm over his neck and considered Anthony's wife for a moment before she spoke.

For it was the first time they had seen each other close since the day that Winnie made more trouble than she reckoned upon with Rachel. What she said then was clear in her enemy's mind, for now Rachel knew they

were enemies. "I said you were sick with love for him and owned it to me." There was truth in this, and a lie, and perhaps much had come out of both. And now Winnie came softly with her softest face and saluted her. Rachel remembered that their quarrel was about the dog, who now kept growling in a low monotone of anger, for there was virtue in Sigurd and he knew his enemies. What had Winnie said? "Keep the dog, keep him. You've taken him from me, but I've taken Anthony from you!" Oh, yes, that was true!

"Yes, it's I," said Rachel at last, as she took her eyes from the woman's face and stroked Sigurd's head.

"I was coming to see you. Make that brute stop growling."

"Be quiet, Sigurd. Lie down."

And Sigurd lay down obediently, but he still made little noises in his throat, and Rachel in her mind called him a wise dog.

"Why were you coming to see me?" she asked.

Winnie said in her heart, "I came to see if you suffered, and I came to make you suffer if I could, for I know Anthony loves you, and I say things to him daily which make him bleed."

But she said aloud:

"I came to make friends, for I knew why you would not come to my wedding. I didn't mind then, because I was so happy, Rachel, but after one has been married for months even if a woman loves her husband as I do, and is loved as Anthony loves me, she thinks of her old friends."

"Was I ever your friend?" asked Rachel.

She looked Winnie fairly in the face with clear eyes in which contempt lurked. She stripped the woman's soul of her mask, and left her naked.

"Oh, then you can't forgive!" said Winnie. "It was not my fault."

Rachel nodded, and knew what she meant, and held up her head, knowing that if Winnie chose to stab she must endure.

"I understand you," she said; "is it not enough to say

I understand you? You were coming to my house; don't come; you will not be welcome."

There was a quality in her voice which roused Sigurd. He lifted his head and growled so fiercely that Winnie flinched.

"Keep that beast quiet," she said angrily, "and don't think that I or mine wish to enter your house. We know you too well; and all Morna knows you."

"Oh, yes, Morna knows me," cried Rachel, laughing. "Morna knows me, and there are those in Morna who know others!"

She rose to her feet and faced Winnie.

"Have you anything to say that you think could hurt me? If you have, say it!"

She stood high above Winnie and grew fierce. And her enemy was willing to wound her, and was yet afraid, and then could not restrain herself.

"Don't make yourself the talk of the country by waiting in the road to see my husband," she said. She bent forward and whispered, "Don't give him and me chances to laugh at you in bed of nights."

But Rachel neither went pale nor red, since she had prepared herself. She bent her head a little and looked at Winnie with eyes which seemed to see beyond her. What she saw was Anthony and his suffering. She spoke as if she were in a dream.

"Oh, yes," she said suddenly, "you are Anthony Per-ran's wife."

There was the making of a bitter taunt in this, and a quick apprehension of jealousy woke in the woman who sought to find the sting in it.

"What do you mean?" she cried angrily.

Rachel bent and patted Sigurd as he licked her hand, and she said swiftly:

"What was it Steve Penrose said to you on your marriage morning that made you strike the old man on the mouth?"

And Winnie fell back from her, going white as ashes. She tried to speak and at first could not. At last she screamed thinly:

"Did he tell you what he said? He's a liar! Anthony will beat beat him like a dog!"

"Have you told Anthony?" asked Rachel. What Steve had said she knew not. And yet there were thoughts in her mind as to what he had said, for where much seed is sown some will grow.

But Winnie stammered furiously and was afraid, for nothing had been spoken against her openly. She dared not ask Rachel again if she knew what Steve had said, and she was sorry that she had tried to hurt anyone who held a weapon in her hand.

"I know your heart," said Rachel, when the other answered nothing. And rage flowered in her and she cried out, "I know your heart and that you came here this day to hurt me if you could. There's never been a time when you did not hate me, and now, for reasons I could tell you, you hate me worse than ever."

"What—what reasons?" asked Winnie. "'Tisn't true."

"Oh, it's true as that poison kills," said Rachel passionately. "For what you said on the cliffs that day when I had it in my heart to kill you, if you had not been too mean a thing to kill, I don't forgive you and never shall."

And Winnie's lower lip quivered.

"What will you do against me?"

And Rachel shook like a reed in running water so that Winnie's heart beat again.

"What can you do?"

And Rachel said to herself that perhaps she might save Anthony from her even yet.

"Reckon all that done which I can do," she said. And great tears rolled down her cheeks. At the sight of the hot tears Winnie laughed.

"What I said that day was true," she cried triumphantly, "and you can keep the dog. 'Tis for Anthony you're crying." She pressed closer to Rachel and her rage grew like a rising storm.

"If he loved you (and he laughs o' nights) you couldn't take him. Marriage is a sacred thing to

Anthony; 'tis part of religion, and his religion is in his blood. And there's that which is part of me, and of him, that will bind him to me faster than death binds two in a grave. And that's the new life I carry, that which will never be yours."

She screamed her words at Rachel and stabbed at her with her finger. And now Rachel was as colourless as a grey sea, and her eyes had a deathly inward look as of one who sees things that are hidden. A voice that was not her own spoke with strange assurance, and she listened to herself wondering what she would say.

"It may never be born," she cried. She clutched at the hidden crucifix over her heart, since it seemed to move there as though the blade thirsted, and calling to Sigurd she walked away with her head down. And Winnie shivered a little since she was always afraid of Rachel, but plucked up a wicked heart and called after her:

"We'll laugh at you to-night, you sick of love; we'll laugh at you to-night."

XII

Now in her dark grove Rachel consulted strange oracles, and heard the voices of Sibyls and the rustling of those leaves of strange script which lie deep within each human heart. Her mother was dead, and had never loved her while she lived, but now there were hours in which it seemed that a voiceless sighing spirit of maternal love strove with her. And with the sighing of her mother's soul there mingled the wail of her own uncreated vision of the woodland. For days, long days and nights, after she had spoken with Anthony and his wife, with God's man and with a succubus, she was played upon by ten thousand impulses which were of earth and heaven, of the soul and body, of the flesh and spirit; Life called to her and showed her sweet imaginations in Elysian fields; her body spoke and her soul and the dying beliefs which had been dear to her. Death urged that he was sweet and that the grave only gave rest and oblivion. For

oblivion was peace—the very peace of God. Her life was tormented and no clear purpose sprang up in her out of the undergrowth of the mixed passions and desires of her heart, and yet underneath she knew a clear purpose ran like a hidden stream. This was certain, and other things declared to her that it was predetermined and the work of destiny. Her dreams gave her assurance of it, and in them she was less troubled. Not even a clearer vision which came to her of her mother's life gave her any pause, for in her thoughts she now became more her mother's child. Even in the day and in her daily life stray folks brought her help without knowing it, and those she knew said things which added fire to fire and fuel of fire. The whispering rumours about Anthony and his wife ceased to be whispers. The servants of Pentowan sent out tales of her, for not even her desire to make Rachel believe that love dwelt at Pentowan could restrain her.

"The mistress at Pentowan has a bitter tongue," they reported. Morna laid heads together and said things.

"And here's John Perran coming back."

Whether Steve had spoken plainly or no was uncertain, but now Morna spoke with some plainness, and spoke loudly.

"And she married his brother: oh, 'tis a devil of a woman! And she says things about Miss Rachel, she!"

Martha heard what she said, and in her rage told Rachel the rumours about Winnie and John. And Rachel knew they were true, for Steve must have said this to the bride on her wedding day. She went sick of heart to hear it put into words.

"Don't say it, Martha!"

"If words were poison," said Martha, "my tongue should make her shriek. Ah, there are loathly wicked hearts that beat in the bodies of folk!"

She ran to Rachel and put the girl's head against her withered bosom.

"Oh, my pretty, oh, my heart," she said, "if you would but leave Morna!"

It would be to leave Anthony. Rachel said no word, but went to her books and sat without reading. What had she meant when she said to Winnie, "Reckon all that done which I can do"? In the hidden stream of fate her purpose ran darkling. She knew what it was and would not know it.

"What shall I be?" she asked, and she answered:

"What does it matter if he be saved?"

If he suffered for a time she would be like a fire to burn up his vain regrets. His religion seemed but a madness to her. If he lived and loved he would know that God was good, though not the God he now prayed to trample on his heart.

Her purpose grew clearer; the stream threatened to be a flood. As she sat musing Martha brought her something to eat, and Rachel never knew she had been in the room till she found cold food at her elbow an hour later. She ate what was given her, for she desired strength.

"All that I can do," she repeated to herself.

And an hour afterwards she said very soberly:

"Anthony is mine, by nature."

Then she smiled and was quite cold and calm even when Martha came in and said that Father Brant desired to see her.

"He looks sadly," said Martha.

"And I shall hurt the poor old man," thought Rachel. She pulled her grandfather's big armchair forward, and when the priest entered the room she led him to it and stood before him quietly till he got his breath.

"I trust you are better, Father."

"I get old," said Father Brant, "but it is well with me."

She saw that he had aged, but there was peace in his face that she envied for a moment. Then she knew that this was the peace of death which passes the understanding of the living and her red blood revolted against it. He looked at her in silence and she met his eyes calmly.

"It seems to me that there is a great change in you, my daughter."

"Perhaps it is that I am a child no longer," replied

Rachel. There was bitter-sweet in her voice, and the old man did not wonder at it, for he knew her nature and her inheritance, and was aware that beauty such as hers was no less a gift of sorrow than exceeding strength.

"You must have much to tell me," he said presently. "You have not confessed since I saw you. Why was that?"

Her weakness was the reason and her great strength was also the reason. A veil hid her soul from him; she grew hard. Of old she would have clasped her hands before her like a little child, but now she clasped them behind her.

"You said there was a great change in me, Father. That was true."

"What is it? Kneel down and tell me, my daughter."

The priest within him spoke with authority, and Rachel made a motion as if to obey.

"I cannot," she said in a low voice, "I cannot."

This was pride or fear, he said, for he knew the little hearts of humanity like his own little books.

"Is there anything that you have done, or anything in your heart that your fear to tell me?"

Her heart was a great book, and in its pages a greater man might have read her fear to hurt him.

"I have done nothing."

Yet she looked at the serried ranks of hostile books and his eyes followed hers.

"I have read many books that you would have forbidden."

"Whose books are these?" he asked.

She told him they had been her grandfather's.

"Of a certainty his books are not for you," he said. For he knew what Morna said of old Tregilgas.

"You read them knowing I should forbid them to you?"

"I read them knowing that," said Rachel. But she had read many books, those of the flesh and of the spirit and of the spirit of the woods, and those of red-leaved passion and pure desire. And she knew that many books lied, for the heart of man is only desperately wicked so

long as he fears it and lives by barren argument and theory.

"That was wrong," said the priest, "but the heart of faith can get no harm."

He looked at her and she knew his simple heart of faith. But she cried to herself, "What faith have I, and why should I believe one man rather than another, rather than myself?"

For deep within her was a well-spring of faith in the sweet nature of man, and true commandments were written in her heart. But she was young and had no gift of speech, and words came not at her desire, so that she said simply:

"I have no faith."

There was a long silence. It lasted so long that she turned to him in fear.

"How can a child like you say this?" he cried. "What madness has hold of you?"

Even as he spoke he knew she was no child, but a grown woman, subject to a woman's passions, and in her brow there was power, and in her eyes fire and sullen flame. And she knew that this was a man in whom passion was a dead root, for children were forbidden him and the warm life of living things. The mightier if not the greater half of humanity was for him a thing to learn by difficult report. Had not he and his fellows made strange sins? She remembered what he had said of foolish Mary Jose.

"I am not mad," she said with a sudden access of passion. "It seems to me I never was so sane; I see things differently—no, I always saw them so."

She knew that her religion had been a coloured veil.

"I always saw them so," she repeated. "You yourself set me thinking when you said it was a mortal sin for Mary to have a child. And when I asked you how it was that God rewarded a mortal sin by sending a baby from heaven, you spoke to me of the Church and what it said."

And the priest groaned in his heart, for this girl was

herself the child of mortal sin, and the fruit of shame. Her very parentage was a blasphemy and the sins of her parents were a foundation of rebellion in her. He was getting an old man and weak, and his heart failed him at the sight of her stubbornness, at the sound of her voice.

"Do you deny God's Church her authority that she gives me?" he asked feebly. "Is your faith in God and the Church become so little?"

His voice was as the pipe of a little forlorn child in a great wind. What was the Church he spoke of to the passion and pain of the great world? Here in this very room the mighty spirit of a great old man was still dominant; without words or any power of expression she felt the living power of an unknown God in all things and all nature and all spirit, but most of all in the hearts of man that were God and witnessed to Him. Who should impute sin: who should offer salvation?

"There's that within me which says these thoughts are nothing," she cried, answering herself.

"Kneel down and pray with me," said the Father.

But Rachel said:

"I will not, I will not. Why should I pray while all that I am God made?"

Her nascent faith, her green and growing religion, was anathema to him. When he tried to speak she went up to him close and spoke passionately, repeating what she had said. She laid her hand upon the old yellow crucifix which was on the table and his eye followed her hand.

"And this is the cross on which Christ suffered," he said.

A rage of revolt rose within her.

"It made my mother suffer," she cried, choking; "it is what killed her."

This was her thought of the religion, not of the sharp steel within the ivory. No one knew but she and Martha what had killed Mary Marr. And Father Brant trembled.

"What do you know of your mother?" he asked;

"and why do you say the emblem of Christ's passion killed her?"

For he knew the dead woman's heart, and what had sent her to death.

"She cast this out into the garden the night she died," said Rachel.

And the priest who had risen sat down again, and stared at her.

"What is it you say, girl?"

Rachel threw up both her arms passionately, holding the crucifix in her right hand.

"I ran out and got it and gave it back to her!"

She choked a little, and then spoke in a strange low voice.

"Oh, twice it killed her!"

She drew out the blade and held it up. She had polished the fine steel till it shone.

"What thing of evil is this?" asked the priest.

And Rachel answered:

"It is written upon it. Read!"

He took the blade from her and, holding it with a shaking hand, read the inscription.

"No good man wrought this," he said, "and though Christ brought a sword it was to slay evil."

"Then has He slain it?" she cried in bitter passion, "has he slain it? Oh, but I'm a child no more."

She took the dagger and sheathed it, and put the crucifix into her bosom. And a great light came into her eyes, light that was assured knowledge and pity for the priest and the man dead within him.

"After what I've told you, you think my mother is in hell this hour," she cried suddenly.

And Father Brant said:

"God forbid that she should be!"

And Rachel laughed aloud.

"But you believe it, you believe it!"

She pressed upon him passionately and put her hands upon his shoulders, standing over him with gleaming eyes.

"You believe it!"

His lips trembled, for now he was an old man and weak, and she was strong.

"Because she loved over-much!" cried Rachel. "Oh, I believe better of God than that; better of God than that!"

Then she turned suddenly and left him and ran upstairs to the darkened room which had been her mother's. She knelt by the couch on which the dead woman had found God's eternal peace, and she stayed till it grew dark. There Martha came to her. She went downstairs with the old woman very soberly, for within her now was one clear purpose. She was very sweet to Mary Jose and her little boy, and she sat through the evening with Martha, holding her withered hand in her own.

XIII

THE next morning when Rachel came down, first of all her household, and unbolted the back door to go out to loose and feed Sigurd and the chickens, she found old Steve Penrose fast asleep, coiled upon the seat of the porch. She stood for a minute and the motion of her heart was to pity the old man, but she restrained it, for what need was there?

"He's not unhappy," she said, "and he has done his work and had his way, and now he talks. And as for drink, it seems to come by way of his philosophy. But he beats no one, and he hates what I hate, and Sigurd never barked at him."

She loosed the dog and he leapt about her.

"Is this the way you protect me, Sigurd?" she asked as she showed him Steve upon the seat. "Remember you are all I have."

Sigurd nosed Steve lightly and turned to Rachel as if he said, "We know him, mistress; there's no harm in him."

Then Steve woke and presently discovered where he was and rolled off the bench and yawned apologies to Rachel.

"I didn't sleep here without leave, Miss," he said as he rubbed his blood-shot eyes and shook out his tangled mane. "I got good leave from your steward Sigurd when I came at midnight. He half invited me to share his kennel, knowing what a straw-lover I am, but I was loth to discommode him and found this place. It is hard, but then the way of a transgressor is hard, and I don't complain except when bitter drought strikes me."

"You shall have some coffee soon," said Rachel as she let the fowls run.

"Coffee's a comfortable creature," Steve replied yawning, "and in the beginning of the day I know no better friend. If it would stay six in the morning all day I should be sober again and as like as not go to work preaching or fishing. But what's worrying me at this moment is to discover in the thick darkness of my mind what it was I came here for. My memory is like a torn net, Miss Rachel, and fish can sail through it contemptuous till its cobbled up with drink. As you observe, I'm mixed and stagger. Now what was it? On my word, I know it had something to do with psalms. That's as clear as fog to me."

He rubbed his chin with his fist.

"Oh, aye, to be sure. 'Tis in the matter of old Jose, Miss Rachel. Did you persuade him to cut down the crop that's been growing in him? For if not there's bitter beer brewing, since last night John Perran came to Morna."

Rachel shook her head.

"I did my best, but he was quick to see what I came to ask him."

She told Steve what had happened and the old man laughed.

"William Jose was never a fool, except by way of religion and the belief that his own flesh and blood was not like other men's daughters," he said, "and he's no doubt proud that he got the best of you. And that's bad, for he's proud at any time and this thing has been a running sore in him. I passed his house at ten o'clock last night, Miss Rachel, and being in a very bright state of mind

and swift in my intellect, owing to timely irrigation of my fruitful wits, I stood outside his window and heard him speaking within."

"Who was with him?" asked Rachel.

"'Twas his own dark spirit, Miss Rachel dear, and the dark spirit of David when David took pen and wrote curses against his enemies. He was reading psalms in a loud voice; and to be sure it wasn't the hundredth psalm he read. He made no joyful noise unto the Lord, but if I remember rightly 'twas the fifty-fifth or thereabouts, for he roared out, 'But Thou, O Lord, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.' He gave me the shivers when I peeped in and saw his wrought-iron face like a mask in a forge fire. I said, 'I'll away to Miss Rachel,' and here I came and found the house asleep."

Rachel listened to his talk and scattered grain to the fowls who crowded about her in a clamorous ring.

"Where is John Perran now?"

Old Steve looked so odd that she added:

"What is the matter with you?"

"I'm all right," said Steve, "seeing that by-and-by in your good time I shall get some coffee. But where do you think Mr. John is?"

"Pentowan."

"Not he," said Steve; "he's with old George Perran. And a wet and windy night I'll lay they had!"

He sighed to think of it.

"He never knew that Mr. Anthony was married till yesterday," he added. "And it's said that when he knew he cursed in the most prodigious manner. 'Tis why he's not at Pentowan. And why he cursed many can guess, but only I and one she can tell."

But perhaps Rachel knew.

"There's one she in this neighbourhood that's the wickedest cat that ever mewed. Miss Rachel, would you think it a liberty if I mentioned her name?"

But Rachel hardly heard what he said.

"Come in and I'll give you your coffee."

"'Tisn't often queens make coffee for a beggar-man,"

said Steve. "If I could only brew happiness for Miss Rachel I'd call myself King of my tribe."

When he had finished his breakfast Martha and Mary came down. It was then barely six o'clock.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Martha; good-morning, Mary," said Steve. "Here's long life to you both, and early rising helps."

Mary looked at him with nervous eyes, for she had slept little that night. She slipped up to him when she got a chance.

"Did Mr. John come last night?" she asked tremulously.

"Aye," said Steve, "but don't reckon on him, my dear. 'Tis the wildest hawk that flies."

"What brought you here so early, you old vagabond?" asked Martha. "'Tis a fine thing for the likes of you to have our young lady lighting fires and making coffee."

"I'm a newspaper," said Steve; "I carry news and sell it."

"And make it. Now, then, Mary, don't stand there gaping like a fool at a fair."

She drove her out.

"Wild Johnny Perran came back last night," said Steve. "Keep your eye on Mary, Mrs. Martha; blue-eyes is a devil surely, and all flesh is weak."

But Rachel called to him from the yard. He took a last drink of coffee and ambled out to her.

"Go to George Perran's and tell Mr. John what you know," she said. "You can say I tried to get William Jose to promise that he would do no folly and that I found the old man too hard to deal with. He must look out for himself."

Steve nodded.

"I'll do it. 'Tis a sad world, the silliest world, Miss Rachel, and yet I think it's not wickedness that makes our world a mark of folly among all the stars of heaven. If there was but a fool's island for fools we wise folks might have our ways and never be the worse for it. If you'll excuse my mentioning it, Miss Rachel, I've a very great

affection for you, and I'm glad to see you looking better."

That she looked better Rachel knew. Her spirit was calmer since she had surrendered, and some of her colour had returned.

"Thank you, Steve," she answered. She offered him her hand, but Steve looked at his own and shook his head.

"I'll borrow some soap and give it a scrub, Miss, and when I can do aught for you I'll come up and remind you that you wished to shake hands with the old vagabond."

There were tears in his eyes as he went away.

"She's the greatest, finest, and most beautiful woman betwixt sea and sea," he swore, "and if I were a gaudy bishop with a cathedral and a palace I'd offer her the one and thank God for her in the other. I wish Johnny Perran would cut Mrs. Anthony's wicked white throat, and cut it deep."

In Rachel's heart were checked thoughts which rose and clamoured to be heard.

"John's being here may make a change," something cried within her.

She went back to the house, and for once found Martha idle. She kissed the old woman's cheek.

"What are you thinking of, Martha?"

"This news of Steve, my darling," said Martha. "Mary knows. She's in a wild tremble, and makes sad work with your crockery. I believe the poor fool thinks he'll marry her."

"He won't," said Rachel.

"He may be wicked, but he's not a fool like his brother," said Martha angrily. "And as to being wicked, well, it's a big word, and what's a man to do when a woman who loves him over-well lets him know it. Men are men and fire's fire and flax is flax."

She spoke without any deeper thought in her mind, but Rachel whitened a little.

"Is the knowledge of a woman's love so much?" she asked with a pretence of lightness.

"It's flame," said Martha, "it's flame, if his heart's empty."

Now indeed other thoughts came to her, and she looked at Rachel from under her eyebrows.

"You think I know nought of men, but I do," she said suddenly. "Some day I'll tell you."

Rachel stroked her cheek.

"Tell me now, dear."

But Martha shook her head.

"Can one tell anything in the morning? One's heart is shut in the morning and only thoughts come up. I think a lot of you, child, even when it's dawn. What was it Steve came to say besides that of John Perran?"

"He heard William Jose reading psalms against him last night."

Martha threw up her hands.

"John should never have come back and old Jose should be shut up. There'll be murder done in Morna!"

"I've sent Steve to warn him," said Rachel. She went away to her room of books and opened the shutters and let in the light of day.

"Has there been murder done?" asked Martha, "or is her heart still alive? There's something in her this day or two that I've not seen before. And I said to her, 'Oh, it's flame if a man's heart is empty, it's flame!'"

She went about her work, and Rachel went about hers. They all had breakfast together in the great kitchen and Mary brought down her boy clothed in his best. There was scarlet in her cheeks and her hands shook, and she met no one's eye. They took their meal in silence.

XIV

STEVE PENROSE went by way of the village to George Perran's house, for the field path was wet with rain, and he wished to pass the time of day with William Jose so that he could have as much to tell as possible.

"Old George drinks early," said Steve, "and it's likely that John has a thirst on him this morning, if I'm judge of men. So there will be drink going and the more my

tongue can tell the more call I shall have to ease a dry throat. For two hours after dawn a man may drink coffee, but after seven it's as poor a thing as ditch-water, and the very thought of it makes me sick. Good-morning to you, Mr. Jose."

He laid his shoulder against the door-post of the forge and looked in while the old blacksmith lighted his fire. But he got no answer.

"May I warm my hands at your fire?" asked Steve, being nothing abashed.

"Thrust your hand in it," said Jose fiercely, "there's other fires lighted for you and your companions."

His face was white and drawn, and his eyes were like pits of hot coal.

"Why, sir, you scare me," said Steve, "for there's a dry fire in me and the threat of hot without is most horrid and unnatural. However, I'll warm me, for the morning's damp and there's more rain in this wind, if I'm a judge of wet. I heard you singing psalms last night, Mr. Jose, as I went past."

"You lie—I sang nothing," said Jose.

"Well, then, you chanted them," said Steve. "Have you heard the news that one has come to Morna who has more need to be scared of fire than a harmless old devil like me?"

"If you see the man tell him to keep out of my sight, if he has not come to make reparation," cried the blacksmith, "for I know what you mean and he was a friend of yours."

Steve shook his tousled head.

"He's too much of a gentleman to be that, but I own I've drunk with him at times when he condescended to take notice that I was as dry as August!" he said. "But I'll tell him, I'll tell him."

He winked at the world at large as he went away.

"As I told Miss Rachel it's a silly world. I'd send our blacksmith to forge shoes for asses in Fool's Island. What could John do when the girls chased him? Cut off his pretty nose, eh? I wonder what's in Mrs. Anthony's mind just now. She's in velvet, and no man but me

speaks above his breath about her. But Mary's the white flower to her spotted carcase!"

He came to George Perran's and found it breakfast time. He sent the girl in to say that he wanted to speak to Mr. John Perran, and John himself came out upon the step.

"'Tis the same man," said Steve to himself, "oh, 'tis the same man. Years fall off him, and he's like his brother dipped in sunlight and full of red wine that glows."

There was a wonderful resemblance between the two brothers and an unlikeness to the full as wonderful. When Anthony smiled it was as though men's eyes fell on a rare gold flower in a wood. But John was a garden. He glowed like a warm blossom and had the colour of a maid who loved the sun. His eyes were fountains of light, blue as the sea and as variable. And yet there was a steadfastness in him which was the steadfastness of the sea and of nature's self. He followed himself, loved his own nature and the sun, saw no God in heaven, for he was full of joy. He was less than Anthony, and more. There was no division in him, no dualism split his laughing mind. There was folly in the world, but no sin; there was crime, but no wickedness; there was death, but death was nothing in the splendour of life. As a creature of the earth he was admirable, swift-witted, yet without the intellect which looks before and after. He sang like a bird; his speaking voice was the mellowest that ever said "I love you, my pretty maid." No excess touched him; he was young and strong and agile. Men loved him and so did women, children ran after him with joyous laughter.

"Oh, my poor old Steve, it is you?" he cried. "I knew you'd be on my trail as soon as I struck Morna. Come in and have something with me and George Perran. I see you want it. Drinking time comes before earliest milking time with you, Steve."

There was pleasure in his eyes at the sight of the debauched Democritus of Morna. Steve climbed up the steps with outstretched hands, not timid or abashed.

"Oh, sir, 'tis fine to see you. There's no man under heaven like you to find brothers in such as me. When I see you I've enough pride in me to give away. You and the sun are friends to me."

John slapped him on the shoulder.

"Come in. Old George is still at breakfast and I've put him into the sweetest morning temper he's had since I went. He'll not curse you as he was apt to if he saw you before noon. Come along in and tell us the news."

In the passage Steve caught him by the sleeve. When John turned the old man looked him in the eye.

"'Twas a strange marriage, Mr. John," he said significantly.

"I thought I knew some rotten hearts right through!" cried John, "but I've a deal to learn, it seems. Was there much talk, Steve?"

"There were whispers that fairly hissed," said Steve, "but drunk or sober (and now soberness is apt to embitter me) I never let out what I knew."

"It's a pity you weren't bitterly sober then," said John. "However, all's ill that ends ill, and fools must be fools."

They went into the breakfast room and found George Perran still at the table.

"Well, what's brought you here, Steve?" he asked; "it's surely not hunger?"

Steve shook his head.

"Why, no, sir, hunger may drive me at times, but it's thirst leads me. And as a matter of fact I came here neither for hunger nor thirst, but on a matter of unrighteousness and the command of Miss Rachel."

"What was it? Have some coffee, man," said old George.

"Miss Rachel made me three cups of it bright and early, sir, and I can't touch it after eight o'clock, owing to some weakness in me," replied Steve with a cunning air of sadness.

George nodded to John Perran, who laughed and mixed Steve a Gargantuan drink of whiskey.

"Fill up and tell us what Miss Rachel sent you for," he said. So Steve drank hugely and sighed.

"Coffee's a good creature and can be made warm," he cried, "but the soul of heat lies in malt. 'Twas for you I came, sir."

"For me?"

"For you, Mr. John. And I gather Miss Rachel wants you to put on armour and a helmet, as men's skulls are thin and apt to crack."

He looked significantly at John, who stared at him wondering.

"'Tis in the matter of William Jose, sir. For seemingly he resents certain passages which occurred betwixt you and Mary Jose, which led to results, Mr. John."

"What did I tell you, John?" asked George. "It appears you can't leave honest men's daughters alone."

He laughed a fierce unpleasant laugh, and going to the side table mixed himself some liquor.

"Oh, that's it," said John, "that's it. What does he want?"

"I stayed at his forge this morning," said Steve, "and he plainly declared that hell was waiting for you and me, sir. Unless you married her——"

John walked up to the window and drummed on the pane.

"He was reading psalms against you last night," said Steve, "and when a dark-skinned, silent man like Jose, who has crushed the devil in him for years, let's the devil come back in God's service and reads what David wrote when he thought of his enemies (of whom he seems to have had a suspicious number, sir), I think with Miss Rachel that it's time to look out."

Here and now in such a case sin would have bulked in Anthony so large as to block out God's sky. In the matter of sin not so much as a midge obscured the sun for his brother. These were the ways of women and the foolish hearts of men, and by nature's light he walked serenely, deeming it incredible folly for the world to complain of nature and of passion's red script. What for Rachel was the natural path of God, for the happy spirit

of this light heart was the natural path of man. He accused no one and accepted no rebuke; life was work and play and strife, and energy which accomplished itself truly in the replenishing of the world. If any sadness struck him in this state of nature, this high and magnificent paganism, it was born of the thought of all the joy folks missed and lost and put aside. For him Anthony was the very incarnation of foolishness, and religion as it grew within the man was such a cypress grove as no child of the sun ever willingly walked in. Under his influence this daughter of the forge had been as sweet a pagan as any in far islands of the southern seas. She had neither wept nor reproached him; he had left her laughing, she left him with a smile. Even now he felt that she would sing to see him and would forget her tears. But fierce old Jose, a seared Puritan, a child of a creed that was the offspring of Calvinism, shouted psalms against him. It was folly, incredible folly, to fight against nature.

"I'll see the old man and the girl," said John.

"Oh, take care, sir," cried Steve. "There's no fear in you and no understanding of the madness of religion as it grows in such hearts. Your brother, Mr. Anthony, was always a sealed book to you."

"I never cared to read such," said John. "And as for fear, why, he fears who fears death. And no one fears death who feels he lives."

Old Steve slapped his hand upon his thigh.

"It's astounding how much fine wisdom of different kinds grows in the gardens of the great Perran family," he cried out; "that's a great saying of yours, Mr. John, and it takes a man like me to understand it. To fear death is to be half dead. But there's the other side to it, after all. Even religion and madness that fear not death may well shout that they are immortal."

"What they fear is life," said old Silenus. He had been drinking steadily while the others talked. "They dread not the devil, but themselves. How's Miss Rachel Marr, Steve?"

"Day by day she is more beautiful, sir. But she's sad

and paler than she was. She's taken to books and has me up at Morna House to talk about her grandfather. I tell her things of his bigness, and repeat his sayings, and she sits smiling and understands. She has a great heart and a mind, too. 'Twas a good deed in her to take in Mary, Mr. John, and someone besides Mary."

"I know, I know," said John. "I'll go and see her. Will she be hard on me about this, Steve?"

"Do I know her heart, sir? Why no, sir, I'll liever say I could read Greek. But there's such gentleness in her, and such pity for fools, and such a visible aspect in her of knowledge of her own heart, that I lay she'll treat you as if it was no other business of hers but to get you out of Morna and away without Jose mistaking your skull for his anvil."

"What's the boy like?" asked John.

"Like his dad," replied Steve, "with the same devilish blue eye and a mind to have his own way. He's as healthy as a young cockerel. But are you warned, sir, are you warned?"

"Oh, tut!" said John. He filled up Steve's glass again and straightway forgot any warning, and talked like a mountain stream in flood, while Silenus grew red and wallowed laughing.

"Go back to Miss Rachel and thank her for me," said John, "and if you hear anyone asking as to whether I'm thinking of marriage, say I'm a Mormon now and have forty wives in Utah."

He sent Steve away singing.

And Silenus asked hoarsely with a mocking chuckle:

"Is it only forty, my boy, is it only forty? 'Tis a brave man that has daughters; he's the man with valour."

XV

By this time the spring was in all men's blood and all women's, and the west winds roared of the waking year, so that folks were querulous and anxious and eager, as they have been in the waking season of the earth since

the beginning of time. For in spring the bodies of men are like their barns and garner, full of the dust of a dead harvest, and there is need of renewal. Those who fished repaired their storm-beaten and weathered boats, and the ploughs were put by, and there was the rest which comes for a little while before the arduous work of the sun. Such an hour's rest is like the peace which preludes a storm, and it was such a peace which came to Rachel. Her heart had been ploughed and seeded and the harrow had gone over it, and the grain germinated within her bosom, and she knew what some would say of the harvest for which she looked. And this year, for the first time in her life, she seemed no longer young. She went about her work soberly, and even Martha, whose eyes were on her always, was sometimes lulled into forgetfulness of her darling's trouble and she believed that Anthony was no more than a dream to the girl.

"She thinks of us all," said Martha, "and thinks for us all, and she bides less in the book-room and once more the sky is a help to her. It seems to me, too, that this papist religion is nought to her now, though she always carries that crucifix."

A day later Martha saw that she had guessed truly, for Rachel refused herself to Father Brant when the old man walked down from Caerhays. He went away very sorrowfully, not knowing that Rachel knelt by her bed weeping because she had hurt him. That night she wrote to him, and though she yielded nothing, it seemed to him that the spirit of God was upon her and for a moment there was a glow within him of that human charity which perceives that the root of all religions is one root only. If he had known her heart and the seeds it bore, he would have said she was mad, and that God's grace was wonderful and not less than the growing charity of any poor priest. So he prayed for her, and by prayer was comforted, since he knew she carried an inheritance which any soul might find grievous and heavy.

And Rachel put the religion of creeds away from her, and did what work came to her hands. For she was waiting and was ready to wait long. But things moved

faster than she knew, and seeds sown long ago bore fruit before there was any harvest in her. If Anthony was all the world to her, his brother counted for something in the working out of her fate, and so did Mary and Mary's father, to whom she had been kind and even over-kind. It was the third day after she had sent warning to John that he came to see her, and the first sight of him after more than three years was a strange shock to her. He came riding by the upper road, and met her at her northward gate. It was a beautiful day of spring, and the damp air was warm as her own breath and as sweet. The cry of lambs was on the wind, and the grass was bright and the trees hung upon the slopes of her valley like a mist of green. The wind shepherded his flocks of dappled clouds, and the sea was full of deep colours and upon it ran dark purple shadows sweeping off the ploughed uplands where grew the tenderer mist of promised harvest. The world was a wonder of dewy wetness, for the rain had fallen half the night, and the sense of growth was in the mould and the breath of the scented earth. Birds rejoiced and the sky was a heavenly paradise and every tree a home, while the pigeons cooed in dripping woods. And Rachel perceived the glory of the day, but it was such a glory as must pass, and sometimes her brow was troubled. For within her worked hidden passions which were like the passions of the later year.

She lifted her bowed head and saw John come riding. She saw him and saw not him, but Anthony, saw him as a bridegroom coming home; saw him as she wished to see him, smiling, human, happy. For this was John Perran's chief grace, that he was happy. So rare a thing was this that it seemed to give him the right to every heart's forgiveness. Folks said that he was kind to all that lived, save to women. And all the women in their hearts said that he was kind to them; there was no woman bitter against him on account of her own folly, seeing that the magic in his voice was not truly evil and that the passions of the song he sang might have been lovely if it had not been ordained by the creeds of man that they should be evil. He was blamed and straight-

way forgiven, for something showed many tortured hearts that there was no evil in him, even though it seemed that there was according to creeds graven on stone.

Rachel's heart cried out:

"If Anthony had but been like him!"

She straightway forgot Mary in the house, and smiled upon the man. He sprang from his horse, and leaving it, ran to her beaming.

"Oh, Rachel, I was coming to see you!

Now the difference between him and the man she loved was the difference between sunshine and shadow. Was it possible, if men had souls, that there were some whose souls went up to paradise before they died, leaving them disdainful of the earth, longing for heaven? If that were so, then John's soul was yet within him, and the bright earth was his and the fulness of it, and heaven was where his soul burned in a clear flame.

Now she remembered Mary and forgave her.

"Poor Mary," she said. But she held out her hand to Mary's lost lover, and only then knew that she forgave herself for the mad thoughts of dearer Anthony.

"You're grown up, Rachel!"

She had been a girl when he left Morna, a splendid promise. Here was a great and dark fulfilment, full of sweetness and sadness and majesty. As he spoke his heart leapt with pleasure, for he knew beauty when he saw it. And yet as the knowledge of beauty may be a grievous burden to man, his heart was troubled, and it seemed to him for the first time in his life that sorrow might yet come to him from a woman.

"Oh, how splendid you are! Let me look at you," he cried. And there was such a frank and pleasant ardour in his eyes that her beauty was a pleasure to her again, though it was only for a little while. And then John said a strange thing:

"I'm a great fool, Rachel, but there are bigger fools than I."

She knew by this saying that someone had spoken about her and Anthony to him. Her heart beat for the world to see! Old Jose had said as much as that. She

drew back within herself, and John saw that she did so, and having that touch of a woman in him which makes a man both dangerous and cruel to women, he was swift to hurt her no more.

"There have been changes in Morna since I went," he said in a tone that implied she would mind no changes.

"A death or two, a marriage or two, and the world is older," said Rachel steadily.

There had been one birth at least which concerned him. That was in both their minds. She saw the thought in his eyes and wondered what he could or would say, if he said anything.

"Do you think I'm the devil himself?" he asked; "and do I deserve killing?"

Near at hand the young lambs cried, and the busy nesting birds were gay; there were children's voices in the village and a child's voice nearer still. The earth grew.

"I judge no one," said Rachel. "But unless you have one thought in you it is not wise to be here."

There was a touch of almost boyish shame in John for his misdeeds, but deep within his shame was anger, seeing the past folly made him unfit before her. That she judged none, might be true in words, but it could not be true in her heart.

"My brother is a madman," said John to himself. "Oh, here's the most wonderful creature! And he could have had her for the asking. If she knew nothing about me——"

A strange deep trouble oppressed him, so that he wondered at himself. He spoke idly:

"Where's your old oak that was yonder?" he asked.

"It was blown down," said Rachel.

"That's another change," he said. "We played under it years ago."

There was a glimpse of the graver Anthony in him as he spoke.

"You sent me word about William Jose," he said presently with his eyes upon the ground. There was a new

bashfulness in him which was stranger to himself than to her.

And Rachel nodded.

"Did Steve tell you?"

John slashed at his legs with his whip.

"Aye," he said, "but he can't drive me out of Morna."

"He may kill you."

John smiled.

"I've heard many threats in my time; I'll speak to him."

"Don't," said Rachel, "don't; at least do not if——"

She hesitated, and John finished what she would have said.

"If I don't mean to marry her?"

"Yes," said Rachel.

John frowned and stood without a word for a long minute.

"Do you think I should?" he said at last.

"Mary thinks so."

"But do you?"

Rachel looked at him fairly in the eyes.

"I think so. What else could I think?"

But within her she said: "I don't know what I think," and now in John's heart he heard a voice saying, "But for you, perhaps I would." In the damp and fertile earth seeds germinated every moment. Some that had laid long broke their covering and thrust forth into the soil; the mighty earth was in labour and the hearts of men.

"I don't know what brought me here," said John, "and now I'm half sorry I came. Here's my brother in hell——"

Oh, but her heart knew it, and leapt to hear him confirm it.

"In hell, John?"

"That Winnie! By God——"

There was a strange passion in him, and now she knew the truth of the thoughts that Steve's dark sayings had sowed in her and of the rumours that Martha had repeated.

"That Winnie and my own brother——" said John.

Many things came to fruit in him then, and he was less and more than he had been. Rachel's eyes burnt and the swift questions rose in her mind.

"Is he unhappy, so unhappy?"

She knew it, she knew it. But out of John's eyes leapt a flame.

"You're a queen," he cried, "and the finest creature among women—and I've seen many—but between the best woman and the worst there are greater degrees than lie between Christ and Judas. She's a foul thing, Rachel!"

Lifting his face he showed her how he knew Anthony must suffer.

"Think the worst of me for knowing what she is," said John. She who had never seen him aught but laughing groaned in her inmost soul.

"And I love Anthony," said John.

She put out her hand, and for his love, which was also hers, forgave him all those passions of the earth which the birds sang of around them.

"And then there's this Jose and Mary," said John. He stood considering things for a moment and then turned almost savagely to Rachel.

"I'd like you to think well of me," he cried, "though of course I don't see how you can. But I want you to know that if I seem ashamed of myself, it's only because I think you feel I ought to be. Anthony loves me, but he says I've no soul or conscience. But I can't see why folks make such a fuss about natural things. You can hate me if you like."

But Rachel heard herself say:

"I don't hate you, John."

His smile was brilliant.

"If you say so, I could sing again," he said. "And now I'll go to your home and see Mary."

He brought up old George Perran's horse, which had been feeding by the roadside, and entered the gateway with it.

"Go," said Rachel, "and do what you feel you ought to do. I'll stay here."

"I wish I was just half as good as you," said John. Perhaps it was the first time he ever felt that he was not as good as need be.

But she shook her head and cried: "Don't say that!" And as he went she repeated to herself, "Anthony is in hell. Oh, she's a foul thing!"

The wet sweet earth was all afflicker with life, and the birds sang in their green houses. The pines swayed new delicate tassels of their spring growth in the soft wind; a silver birch by the road showed its fair tracery against a north-west patch of blue; the swift unfolding leaves drank in the air of heaven. It was a world of azure and argent and verdure that was sweet as young life.

"Oh, this is mine, mine by right!" she cried; but her eyes were dry flame, her soul's feet were on burning marl. She saw and saw not, heard and heard not, and life was an aching passion of pain. As soon as Anthony's brother was out of her sight she straightway forgot him in remembering Anthony deep in the pit that he had digged for himself.

But John went down the path wondering at her and his own heart.

"Why, she's great," he said; "she's the only woman I've ever seen—oh, I'm a fool. I wish I'd never seen Mary. Here's a knot, and I'm the ass that made it. And that Winnie—paugh!"

At the corner of the house he ran straight against Martha bringing water from the well.

"Mr. Anthony!" she cried, and then she saw she was wrong. "Oh, it's you, Mr. John!"

She put her pail down and eyed him with disfavour which had a touch of humour in it.

"What do you here, sir? Is it Miss Rachel you wish to see?"

John smiled mockingly.

"Why, Mrs. Martha, you're as fierce as ever. I hear Miss Rachel's well worth seeing. Is that true?"

"The truest word ever spoke. And the worst of it is that the unworthy can see her as cheap as the worthy. She's out about somewhere."

"Am I unworthy?"

"God knows, who made you, Mr. John," said Martha, "for He that made you made all the bad Perrans as well as the good, and no doubt He has His notions of you. All I do is to go by report and facts."

"There's nothing like them to lead you wrong," said John. "But I've seen Miss Rachel, and I came here to see someone else."

Martha put her arms akimbo. "Well, here I am."

"So I see," said John; "you're like a hen with a chicken hidden in a wood pile. I want to see the chicken."

"Not with my consent," said Martha; "she's no chicken of mine, my young cockerel. I never liked you as some do."

"It's not my fault you were born so long before me, Martha. If you were twenty you'd have a smile for me now."

"Not half a one," declared Martha stoutly; "though I'm darkish myself, my fancy was for dark men. And you were overmuch a lover for my taste. Your brother has a sad opinion of you, sir."

"And I've a sadder one of him," returned John without a smile.

"That's as may be, and what my opinion is of him I'll declare when I'm made to. But as for you—there are no chickens for you here, sir."

"Tut," said John, "I want to see Mary; I've business with her."

"Business!" cried Martha; "business! I've seen a lot of wickedness in my time, Mr. John, but you're the only man without shame I ever knew. I suppose you'll be saying Miss Rachel told you to come?"

"As a matter of fact, she did, Martha."

"Truth, sir?"

"Truth according to the Fifth Gospel," said John.

"If the devil quotes Scripture he quotes it right. What's the Fifth Gospel?"

"For you it's what Miss Rachel says," returned John, "and for me it's what my heart says."

Martha shook her head.

"You've a keen mind, sir, but as for your heart, that's mincemeat. You'll not see Mary with my consent."

John threw the end of his horse's bridle over a post by the wall and walked to the kitchen door.

"I'll see her with my own, then."

But he turned to her again.

"Do you really think I *want* to see her?"

"Humph!" said Martha suspiciously, "how can I tell?"

"I don't. Send for her."

"If I must, I must," said Martha.

She found Mary in the kitchen all a-shake, for the girl had seen him.

"There's old folly for you outside," cried Martha fiercely; "go out and speak, but don't forget that you're in Miss Rachel's house."

Mary quivered and looked at Martha piteously.

"I don't know what to do," she said; "what is it he wants? I'm—I'm frightened."

Martha snorted scornfully.

"What a pity you are easier scared now than you were years ago. D'ye think the man will eat you? Where's little Johnny?"

"He's upstairs," said Mary. She had rushed with him to the top of the house when she first saw John, being stricken with a sudden panic fear that the father had come to steal the child.

"Oh, how do I look?" asked Mary, fiddling at her brown locks with trembling hands.

"The worse the better," said cruel old Martha; "streak your face with tears and flour and the devil will flee from you. I'll out and say you'll have nought to do with him."

But Mary ran past her and stood at the door with her hands clutching at the posts. It was long since she had seen him, and she remembered the last time—a night of waning moon and warm wind, with the song of the sea beneath them. He had sworn nothing to her, made no promises, and no oaths, and had gone away laughing.

The man was an orchard-robber, and stole fair fools that hung low. He had never climbed high yet. An ache for climbing grew in him now, and he scorned dangling apples near his mouth.

"Oh, sir," said Mary.

Of old she had feigned to herself that she called him "Jack," but such a name had never passed her lips. He was a fine man and all above her, a gentleman, and richer by far, they said, than his brother. His love, or passion, or fondness was the condescension of a god to a daughter of the forge. It was "Oh, Mr. Perran," or "Oh, Mr. John," at the utmost with her, even when they parted under the moon.

Now John came back to himself, and being himself felt no such mighty difficulty before him. He smiled easily, for he knew enough of the girl to know that from her point of view he had done her little harm. The harm lay elsewhere, no doubt.

"Well, Mary, and how are you?" he cried genially. There was such an air of natural gaiety in him that a little gleam of sunshine came into her meek, beseeching eyes, and made her look almost mischievous. His being there brought about her once more the atmosphere of an opinion that feared nothing and knew not sin.

"I'm very well, sir," stammered Mary. She added (for these three years had enlarged his air of being above her), "Thanking you kindly, sir."

Such a little speech was automatic, slavish. She had been his slave. He took her by the arm above her elbow and led her out towards the wood pile where the chickens clucked.

"I hear that you found something in the parsley," said John; "why didn't you write to me?"

Mary smiled through her tears. "I was 'mazed, Mr. Perran. I'd never had much of a head, sir, and I lost it—the paper you gave me, Mr. John."

But for Martha at the kitchen window he might have kissed her wet brown cheek. Or—was it but for Rachel at the north gate?

"Did I treat you badly, Mary?"

He thrust his hands into his breeches pockets and faced her squarely, a fine head and shoulders over her.

"I'll never say you did," she murmured, "no, never!"

"I'm going to look after the boy and make a man of him," said John. But Mary put out her hand timidly.

"Oh, sir, you'll not take him from me? He's all I've got."

Now she wept a little, for her faint dream that "Jack" would come again and marry her was no more than the memory of a childish fancy, built in idleness.

"To be sure I won't till he's ready to go to a big school," said John, "and then you shall be near him. If you're not happy here——"

"Oh, I'm very happy with Miss Rachel, sir."

"And with Martha? She's a fierce old tabby, Mary."

But Martha used no claws.

"She's kind enough," said Mary, "and very good to the boy."

"I'd like to see him, Mary."

Mary's bosom heaved; she would have let him trample on her. The boy was the gift of the laughing Apollo to a humble nut-brown maid.

"I'll bring him," she cried, and she ran to the house happy as any pagan of the singing woods. She met Martha face to face in the kitchen.

"Well, has Mr. Devil brought you proposals of marriage?" asked Martha, with her head on one side.

"He wants to see little Johnny," said Mary, who looked neither before nor after.

"Tell him he can't till he swears he'll take you to church," said Martha. "If he hasn't a number of 'em, who knows what he'll say? Some men are as cracked as women over children."

"He's waiting," panted Mary, "and I must wash Johnny's face."

"Wash the scarlet off your own," grumbled Martha. "'Tisn't such girls as you get married. He'll not marry you, Mary."

But Mary for once stamped her foot like an angry ewe.

"I'm not asking him," she cried, and diving under Martha's arm she ran upstairs.

She bundled Johnny into her lap and washed his face mightily. He bore it like a Trojan, for she promised him apples and lots of pennies, and the sight of a new man down below who had a horse. And down she came, shame-faced, flustered, and triumphant, and set apple-cheeked Johnny with the Perran blue eyes on the doorstep outside the kitchen. Martha came out after her and stood watching John Perran.

"If there weren't any rules," said Martha, "what would be wrong with him? And moral talk is water on a duck's back to him. There's men wouldn't have come here; there's some would have come repentant; some would have come brazen. But John Perran walks in here as if he was a model. He surely don't know black from white. I'm wondering if I do."

"So this is the boy," said John. "What do you call him, Mary?"

Mary gasped a little.

"Johnny, sir."

"Well, Johnny, do you know me?" asked his father.

Johnny put his thumb into his mouth.

"No."

"You're no wiser than other boys then," said John. "What's this?"

Johnny looked from him to the horse and back again.

"It's a horse," he replied firmly as if he expected contradiction.

"Could you do anything with a shilling?"

He showed one, and Johnny marched over to him as bold as the north-west wind. He pouched it promptly and laughed till he was all fat dimples.

"He's a fine little chap," said John. And Mary glowed, though she kept her eyes from Martha. But Martha's heart was sore for the dead of long ago, and she said nothing bitter.

"Won't you do what you should for him?" she asked.

"He shall have a ride on the horse," said John. "Will you have a ride, Jackey-boy?"

"Oh, aye," said Johnny, and he squealed wonderfully as John held him in the saddle. The two went fifty yards and came back again. And Martha said something that Mary did not understand.

"Whatever happens you have your child."

Now Mary was sad.

"He'll not marry me."

There was strange bitterness in Martha's answer.

"You've a child of your own."

She went inside for a moment.

"'Tis the sight of the father makes a fool of me." She sighed, and a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Does a woman ever forget?" she asked.

She went out again and stood by Mary.

"Have you spoken to him about your father?"

Mary went very white and shook her head, for she knew the old man's bitter mind.

"You'd better, then," said Martha; "you've heard what Steve said. Or shall I speak?"

"You," said Mary, and John Perran and her boy came back to them. John set him on the ground and he ran gurgling to his mother. Martha left the pair of them and walked over to John.

"Are you going to make your peace with this girl's father?" she asked.

"How can I do it, Martha?"

"It's easy for a bachelor," said the old woman significantly.

"You never heard I'd turned Mormon and had forty wives, did you?" asked the bachelor.

"I'd believe it if anyone else said it. But are you going to marry the girl and give the boy a name as well as his mother?"

"If I were a king there'd be nothing wrong with his name," said John.

"But you're not."

"I'm a republican and that's as good."

"Not here," said Martha. "And Mary's father is after you. He'll kill you."

"Others have said that elsewhere."

"I daresay you deserved it, Mr. John. And if you have forty wives, one more won't hurt you. You came to see Mary as bold as may be. Go and see her father!"

John shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course I'll go."

"With paper in your hands—marriage lines?"

"With bare hands," said John.

But Martha, knowing that he meant it, shivered at the thought of violence.

"Go away, sir, if you're not minded to do the right thing. Old Jose is mad and will murder you. He talks to himself and preaches against you in his empty house."

"I'll not go," said John. "What do you take me for? And I'll see him."

"If you don't care for yourself think of what it will mean for the man who kills you. And you are young yet, Mr. John, and might live long and happy."

He smiled upon her and she forgave him his sins. For this is the nature of women. Yet there was a little bitterness in his smile, and she knew it and wondered deep in her mind.

"What does Miss Rachel think of me?" he asked lightly.

"I should say she did not think," answered Martha, and there was more than a little bitterness in her voice.

"I'm going back to see her again," he said. He went over to Mary and picking up the boy kissed him on both cheeks, but he only stroked Mary on hers, and as he rode away the tears ran down her face.

"He—he doesn't love me any more," she quavered.

But Martha said fiercely:

"You've got your boy."

When John came to the gate he found Rachel was gone. He rode back to his uncle's whistling, but as he went he was conscious of a little ache deep within him, which was not wholly of the senses.

XVI

RACHEL had meant to stay till John returned, but something in the man and something that the sight of him roused within herself set her fast in the snare of a reverie, and she walked like one in a dream. For she saw the wonder of the day and its glory and yet saw nothing. And what her thoughts were she could not have said, for only at times were her consciousness and her inward soul one stream. She perceived now that no word was uttered which was not like another barrier against her return to the days in which her will was at war with her desires.

John himself told her of his brother's agony; he spat upon the ground in loathing of his brother's wife. John's frank admiration for her was sweet, not of itself, but because it showed the power of her beauty. And not a laugh or a look of his but said that such sanity and health were better, and in themselves more acceptable to God, than any madness of worship and sacrifice. As he glowed it seemed that here was one like an Anthony renewed and sound. His voice had been music to many women, but it was no less sweet to Rachel when she imagined that her love yet might make Anthony's voice an equal melody. John believed, they said, in nothing, neither in heaven nor in hell. What God then was it that made Anthony lay his soul and body on the altar? Not by fire or sacrifice came salvation, but by obedience to all equal voices within man. It was Anthony she loved. She declared sacrifice was alien to God, and yet accepted the fire.

These things she thought. But what she thought she knew not, for the mind of man is a deep flood, and what man knows of himself is nothing. Yet as she walked eastward through wet fields there were wild moments when Anthony and John were as one, and Anthony was restored to himself and to her, and her deep soul's thoughts rose to the surface of the great ocean within her and delighted in the sun. But she only woke utterly

when she found herself a long mile from home standing upon the high cliffs, looking to the south.

Here the world of the live fields was lost to her, and the birds of the fields sang no more. Their influence was an influence of melancholy: in the inland beauty of the fields there was something which seemed to sap her will and soothe her with empty anodynes. She obtained strength not so much from the things which were her heart-mates as from their strong opposites. Out of the deep silences of books came virtue and strength and singleness of purpose. But the great woods and the songs of birds and the cry of mothering beasts made her soft even to tears. On the high barren uplands where trees grew not and the grass was scanty and the soil no more than a covering for the primæval nakedness of the earth and its mighty bones, she found a natural hardness which helped. It was not the green worship of the priestlike pines or the smoking altars of the houses of men that strengthened her; they bowed her knees and oppressed her spirit and filled her with the patient thoughts of the poor in heart. But now the wet sparkle of the shouldering sea, crowding in between curved headlands, was something that braced her very soul. The ocean was a creature that was the equal child of God and brother to man, but it was bright and splendid and magnificently bent upon the deeds of great waters and its inward necessities. It was one and indivisible. But man drew his soul from those who begat him, and in one heart were a thousand hearts and in every heart ten thousand thoughts of divided desire. The elements of living thought lifted themselves out of the multiple soul's darkness, and created passions that died or survived. For he that claimed unity was a million creatures and his emotions were the passions of his dead forbears and those who had lived in the dark abyss of time, and God was not the gift of his apprehending intellect, but the mingled deities of all men who drew their soul's sustenance from that which lay within them of fear and fearful joy. Man was the creature of the fields and the fat pastures and the deep pleasant woods and the crowded huts. But he was not most himself

when he was among them, and an hour of the west wind, which now took on southing and blew graciously, made Rachel almost ready to sing. What she thought again she knew not, for the body of man thinks not in words, which are difficult art, but in processes of the living matter which responds to the myriad rain of influences as the grass of the fields to the rain of heaven. She stayed on the height for a long while, and then leapt almost lightly down a cliff path and came to a golden crescent of sand by the tumbling seas. She sat on a jutting rib of rock and looked out upon the marching array of the sparkling waters.

As she dreamed and grew and let the sea and the wind have its way with her great heart, only sometimes the thoughts that were in her came to the surface as strange creatures of the sea come up to breathe. Once she started and wondered why it was that her soul was set upon Anthony, and something within her said that it was because he loved her and was unhappy. But she knew that deeper still there was knowledge that this passion was as inexplicable as time and eternity and space. For the affections of the living body are like the gift of time and space to man. By her affections she existed.

And once again another thought rose up in her, and it was as though some coldly wise creature of her heart said to her that to love Anthony was folly. And this voice used the arguments that the world would use, and that pride might accept. For according to this wise voice Anthony was in no way so fine a man as his brother, seeing that he was a fool and the instrument of his passions no less than John. But John's passions were the fine passions of the good earth and a true harvest, and his laughter was happy laughter and a song, while Anthony rarely smiled and was not a creature of the earth, but an alien who feared its fruits, and his passions were the barren passions of the altar. And there was that within Rachel, seeing that she was now a woman, which told her that Anthony's brother might be to her what she chose, and that if she could put aside her deeper love, and could forget that Mary and her child lived, her strength could

raise John to her own level far easier than she could draw back Anthony to the dear and usual earth.

And when she knew what it was she thought she rose from the rock on which she sat in great and strange agitation. She was ashamed, for she perceived that under such stresses the soul and body might be dissevered. And for the first time in her life she believed truly in the indwelling spirit and abhorred her own flesh, until she remembered a strange little piece of script, written by her grandfather on the margin of a book, which said, not wholly obscurely, "The true man has neither soul nor body, for separation is disease and unity is health."

Then she walked upon the hard sand close by the verge of the sea, and touching the hem of the sea she drew virtue that was strength from it, and understanding herself better ceased to be ashamed. For all these things were natural, and good was in her even if evil was deep within. And whether she understood or no mattered nothing, since the earth and the air and the water, of which she was the sister, gave her comfort and simplicity.

And a cold wise voice within her said:

"It is a pity."

And she answered:

"That is as may be, but Anthony will need me; when I see him I will speak."

And the voice asked:

"How will you speak? For it will be hard."

And she said:

"I will speak, though it be impossible."

And she was answered deep out of her heart:

"Speak not for yourself, but for me."

And this voice was another voice and was like the cry of that which lives and yet lives not, and may never live. Sharp pains shot through her body and there was a warm fire at her bosom.

But she had said to Winnie, "It will never be born," and this saying was echoed in her own heart as she went homeward through the fertile fields that the sweet year embraced.

XVII

MORNA COVE did its talking and its cackling about things as they were and as they might be. There was a strange sense of expectancy in the village folks now that John Perran had come back. They talked of his brother and of Winnie, and about her things were said that not only touched the truth, but overshot it. They talked of Mary, over whom Rachel had cast her robe (for who should say aught against one that Miss Rachel pardoned?), and then of her father. The man was mad, they cried, and should be shut up. Till the time of Mary's troubles he had been accessible and friendly, but now he was so dark and stern and voiceless that the village resented it. John's return made him mad, so that he muttered, and other folks did what Steve had done—they listened outside at nights and heard him mouth the psalms of David, who himself had burnt his enemies and sawn them asunder. Martha had cried out, "There'll be murder done in Morna," and Morna believed it. Others than Steve came to Rachel to ask her help against such disaster, for they knew that William Jose would speak with none save her if it were not a matter of some forging or a horse-shoe.

"'Tis a hard man, and religion in him is the flame of his forge."

"His heart's a hot coal."

His passions fanned the coal till he wrought all the commandments to his will. As it seemed Heaven itself was behind him; he was inspired from on high. And even yet it was possible, he said, that the seducer would marry his daughter, making what reparation he could. He went up to Morna House an hour after John Perran had left it, and Mary saw him coming and ran up to her room and sat there quivering. Jose came on Martha and asked for Miss Rachel.

"She's out and about somewhere," said Martha. She thanked the Lord that John was not there, and Jose saw she was over-anxious.

"Has any stranger been here?" he asked, bending his dark brows on her.

"No," said Martha, none too lightly; "what strangers come to Morna?"

"Some that have become strangers," said the old man. "Has John Perran been this way yet?"

Martha's eyes flickered and she lied.

"Why, no, Mr. Jose," she answered in a high-pitched voice; "what should he do here?"

He looked at her hard and then turned away. And Martha stood wondering if she had done wisely.

"Maybe it would have been better to tell the truth. Yet truth or lie—what difference here? The man's mad; there never were such eyes. Where's the girl that made all the trouble? I'd like to wring her neck!"

When Rachel came back from the cliffs she told her all that had happened between John and Mary.

"And just afterwards old Jose came up," she said, "and I was in such a stew that when he asked if he had been here I said 'No' as bold as brass. But if he didn't know I lied then, I lie now. He looked at me fiercely and turned away. Oh, Rachel, what I said is true—there'll be murder done."

Murder came near even then, for John Perran was riding into Morna as Rachel went down into the village to speak once more with Mary's father. She saw John at one side of the Cove as she came to the other, and soon every soul in the village saw him too, and knew that there was trouble in the air.

"What folly of John Perran's," said Rachel, "to do such a thing!"

But she knew it was a hard thing to do, and that was something. The women talked at their doors; the men working at their boats came from the beach.

"Oh, 'tis Mr. John!"

They stood and watched; there was no help in them till Rachel came. She called to Sam Burt, who ran to her obediently.

"Yes, Miss!"

"Go to the forge, Sam, and stay there. I'll come too. If there's any trouble, Sam——"

Sam was big and simple, but as strong as a young oak. Before his marriage he was one of those who used their hands in argument, and had more than once been re-proved by Rachel. Now with her approval he would have fought the whole village.

"Whichever starts, Miss, I'm to go for?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," said Rachel. She walked with him to the forge, which opened towards the east, as John came riding from the west. Old Jose was working at his fire, and never woke to the fact that all the village was like an upset hive till Rachel came to him. Then he looked up and smiled gloomily.

"Well, Miss?"

She motioned Sam back and went into the forge.

"Are you wiser, Mr. Jose," she said. "and will you do what I ask?"

"I'll do what comes to me," he answered sullenly.

"What's gone wrong with the village, eh?"

He stared into the day and saw the women and the children in the street.

"What's wrong, Miss Rachel?"

"Nothing's wrong," said Rachel, "if you are wise. Mr. Perran is coming to see you."

She saw the knotted muscles ridge themselves on his hands and arms, and heard him gasp.

"Bid him go away," said Jose, "unless he comes to do me and mine fair justice. Does he do that, Missy, does he do that?"

Within her heart she knew that John was of no mind to do such tardy justice.

"I'll speak to him," she cried. "Stay here, Mr. Jose, till I come back."

She ran out and met John in the street. He was leading his horse now. Some of the younger men who had been his playmates on the beach spoke to him. Others stood back; there were some who had grudges against him, some who were sure he was the child of the devil.

And some women smiled at him; even those who knew him not. When he saw Rachel he stopped and raised his hat to her and made a little mouth of scorn at the curious folk around him.

"What do they look for, Rachel?"

She put aside the question.

"Are you going to see Mr. Jose?" she asked. And he nodded.

"They think I will not. And you thought I would not, Rachel?"

She put her hand on his horse's bridle-rein as it lay over his arm.

"Unless you are going to do one thing, turn again," she said.

"I'll do most things for you," John answered, "but——" There was one thing he could not. Now he knew why his heart ached a little as he had ridden away from Morna House; the knowledge woke within him very suddenly, and the ache returned.

"I'll not marry her," he said suddenly; "but I'm not so much of a coward that I can't speak to her father."

There was no one in the country around who could call him a coward, if taking advantage of sweet fools was not cowardice. Now the smile died out of him, and his face grew hard and stern. But the fire lived in his eyes as he looked at Rachel.

"Why won't you?" she asked. "There's no reason!"

"There's great reason. But she's not the reason," said John. "If I didn't speak to the old man you would despise me!"

He walked on again, slipping the bridle from his arm. For a moment Rachel stood there with it in her hand and then she too let the horse go. There was that within her swift mind which told her John's reasons. But they were folly. And she ran after him and came by him, getting to the forge first.

"He's coming, Mr. Jose," she said breathlessly. She caught the old man's arms. "If I've ever done anything for you and yours, you'll use no violence. Promise me."

And then John stood in the door of the forge. It was

sheer folly for him to come, and no advantage lay in the act for any, and Rachel's heart almost failed her as she stood between them.

"Have you come to ask me for my daughter?" cried old Jose; "it's very late you are, it's over-late."

"Aye, it's over-late," said John.

Jose pushed Rachel aside, not ungently, and came face to face with him.

"If it's over-late, and I think it is, what has brought you here?"

He overtopped John by inches and was gaunt and grey and white, but with the darkness of the forge about his bearded face.

"I heard you said I dared not," said John.

"Do you bring Miss Rachel with you?"

"Go, Rachel," said John.

But Rachel shook her head and caught hold of Jose once more. Other men than Sam Burt crowded to the entrance of the forge. Women chattered shrilly at the back of them.

"I'll not go. He never brought me, Mr. Jose."

"Will he marry Mary?" cried Jose; "will he marry my daughter?"

His voice was a sharp cry of anger—it was edged with madness. John was whiter yet, but his eyes were swift, and though he knew that coming there was madness equal to Jose's own, he could not stir. He looked at Rachel and then at the father of Mary.

"I'll do all I can, but marry I cannot."

Now the old man shook and the very hair upon his dark brow bristled while he wrung at his hands as though he fought with himself. Rachel kept hold upon his arm and said again and again:

"Mr. Jose, Mr. Jose!" He nodded dumbly at her and turned a little away from John, and she heard him praying and caught some of his words. Then he took hold of her hand.

"Oh, you've done much for me and mine, Missy," he whispered, "you've done much. I'll do something for you if you wish it."

"Oh, my dear, I wish it," she said, "and I know you love me."

"That's sure as God!" cried Jose; "that's sure!"

He turned again toward John, who stood there in silence with his eyes on Rachel, and his heart at her feet.

"Was I a fool or am I one now?" he asked himself bitterly. And as he asked it he knew that whatever happened here, his time had come and there was little joy in the world unless Rachel looked upon him smiling.

"I meant to kill you," said Jose in a low voice, "I meant to kill you. But for Missy's sake and her sweet asking, her that's been good to those I might have loved, I'll do nought to hurt you. Go, Mr. Perran, go, and let me see you no more."

He caught Rachel's hand again and held it so that he hurt her greatly.

"But if you stay in Morna and go nigh my girl that's in Miss Rachel's care and has lived respectable since you did that which makes me ache to crush you—by God Himself I'll grind your skull beneath my heel!"

He turned again toward the darkness, and as he turned Rachel motioned to John to go, and Sam took him by the arm.

"Let's get out of this, Mr. John. Don't you see Miss Rachel says we are to? Come on, sir. Oh, Lord, here's a coil about a girl, and if half that's done came out the world would be as foolish a place as ever old Steve makes it out to be."

But Rachel stayed in the forge for a little while and spoke to Jose, and then leaving him, she took him by the shoulders and kissed his sunken cheeks. He prayed God to bless her for all her goodness, and she went away back to Morna very soberly. But when she came to her own room she shook all over.

"It's not ended," she said, "for John won't go!"

And indeed as Sam brought up the horse for his old playmate of the beach and the uplands, John said as much to him.

"Will you leave us again, sir?"

"If I can take away all that makes Morna what it is now," said John; "if I can take that away."

"'Tis a sweet place to one that's born here," said Sam simply, "and my wife wasn't, which is a pity. But it's the women that make the trouble, isn't it, Mr. John? I married to save myself and somehow it don't quite work. But nevertheless Morna's a sweet village; aye, it is."

XVIII

It was days before John came to Morna House again, but come he did in spite of Jose's words, and Morna knew it and told Jose as he worked at his forge, and then went away laughing. For some fools could not see that the old man was not of those who say, but do nothing, and they laughed at murder, latent and near at hand. But old Steve, when he heard what had happened in the village and what Rachel had done, went up to George Perran's house and caught hold of John anxiously.

"Oh, sir, are you going?"

"Going where?"

"Out of Morna. This old Jose——"

There was something less of sweetness in John; his brow was darker.

"Shall I let any man drive me out of the country, you old fool?" he asked with an odd and rare touch of irritation in him. "You think I'm a cur?"

"What business have you here after all, sir? And wisdom need not be cowardice."

But John answered:

"It might look like it. And what do you know of my business?"

There was some bitter implication in his tone and Steve, being, as he swore, over-sober and ragged in his nerves, caught hold of it and wondered and finally drew conclusions which were not far from the truth.

"Oh, I know you, sir," he sighed; "there's the old signs in you. You were always wonderful and happy as a herring gull when herrings are plenty, when you cared

for no woman. But when any she of them all caught your fancy, the men found you bitter tasting and a discord. Aye, you wouldn't even drink with them then, and there wasn't a say in you. Oh, aye, but there's a woman in this again. 'Tis a sad pity, but then I suppose there weren't many in foreign parts. And you'll have your way if it leads to hell or over the cliffs."

That was true enough, it might be, but Steve did not know who the woman was, and never thought of her. The devils of chance and mischance put mischief into his head when he spoke of Rachel, as he did presently when John gave him whiskey and made him blinder and more bland.

"Oh, Mr. John, but Miss Rachel's the lady of them all, and a thing I'll tell you that perhaps you know. She loves your brother, sir."

John's face darkened, but now the old man saw nothing.

"She loves him and it's folly, and he's married to one we know of and that finishes him. But you, sir, are free, and are as like him as two peas, save that you are more the kind that women love, being blithe and bright. Why don't you make up to our sweet young lady and make her happy? Lord love us, women change, and as I say one pea's like another, and you're the dead spit of him, light or dark, sun or rain. She's a wise young lady, and listening to me has given her some knowledge. She'd forgive you Mary, I shouldn't wonder. And yet I don't know. All I want is to see her happy, for I love her a deal more than my own daughters. However, I'll away and say no more. It's silly meddling, and you are all my betters, and to say the truth, I have my doubts whether anything would change her."

He sowed poison where poison grew, and John Perran cursed him freely to his face and afterwards.

"Let me go," said Steve. "Oh, Lord, never a free word again. All Morna's mad, and a black cloud over it, when Mr. John is dark. That's more than I ever saw."

And after he had staggered away John Perran sat in silence, and as Steve said, there was no song in him. When George Perran bade him drink he marched out

into the rain and stood for a long hour on the cliff watching the sea and yet watching nothing.

"I never thought I could suffer," he said. He strove with himself to get his own soul back again, but it was like strife with some dark angel of the Lord. "Oh, she's wonderful, wonderful; Anthony's the fool!"

He walked to and fro upon the cliff, and going back to the house made false merriment with old George, and at nightfall deserted him again and watched the dark gleaming waters roaring round the roaring Lion Rock.

And even as he marched in the darkness of the night, waiting for some sign in himself of healing, if healing might come, there was another man who watched elsewhere with his heart aflame. In his hand he carried a bar of iron and the intent of death.

That night was one of ceaseless rain and the wet roofs ran floods. Martha and Mary were together in the kitchen, and Rachel sat solitary among her books. But in the garden of books she gathered no sweet herbs; bitter herbs grew all around her, and she plucked them and savoured them in all their bitterness. For her heart was now superstitious, and she made sacrifices to her one great hope, as there are those who give grudging alms lest some jealous god shall rob them of their wealth. She thought not only of Anthony, but let her mind dwell in agony upon his wife. And she prayed to her empty sky—prayed with that part of her mind which had to believe or perish—that Winnie's child might never be born. And then she let herself face the world with that babe in Winnie's arms.

"That which helps not, give me help," she cried. The rain fell and the eaves poured heavily.

And in the kitchen by the glowing fire, hidden by steaming cloths, Martha and Mary sat, saying nothing. But Martha's heart was with Rachel and Mary's was with her one-time lover, and both of them were bitter. For Martha grew old and she saw no happiness for the girl who was now a woman, and liker dead Mary Marr than Martha's memory of the dead.

"Rain, rain, how it rains!" said Martha, shivering.

"I always hate the rain. Why don't you say something, Mary, girl?"

"I've nothing to say," replied Mary sullenly.

Martha rose and went to the window and unbarred the shutters.

"Oh, you've your troubles, and so have all of us," she cried.

Then she heard Sigurd's chain rattle and the dog barked.

"What's he barking at?" asked Martha. "I'm nervous to-night."

Mary rose and went to the window. Sigurd barked again, but this time without the note of a watch-dog in his deep throat.

"'Tis someone he knows," said Mary. "But I hear no steps."

"Who should come now? It's late for any from the village."

She turned towards the girl with knotted brows.

"Did you hear steps?"

"I heard the rain," said Mary, trembling. "Oh, shut the night out—I'm afraid of the night."

But Martha threw open the window and called:

"Who's there?"

And Sigurd whimpered in answer. There was no other answer but the pouring rain. Martha closed the window and the shutters.

"He's like me and doesn't love the rain," she said. "It could be no one."

"It might be——"

"Who?"

"There was someone came at nine the other night," said Mary bitterly, "but not to speak to me."

"He'll not come again. Why should he?"

But Mary thought she knew better, aye, or worse. She sat down by the fire and stared at the flame.

"Oh, damn!" said Martha fiercely; "but this is a cheerful house. God forgive me for swearing, but there are times my tongue gets the better of me. I wish there was never a Perran on the earth!"

The wind rose a little and moaned in the pinewood and the elms closer to the house. It died away mournfully, for it was but a breath from the midnight sea.

"I heard steps," said Mary, springing to her feet. She trembled all over and her face was white as a bleached cloth; "I heard steps."

Martha gasped and then turned upon her.

"Go to bed, you fool. You'd hear anything. If there were we'd hear the dog."

"The dog knows him."

"Knows who?"

"My—my father," said Mary shaking. "'Tis my father watching!"

"What for?"

"You know," said Mary. Then she cried out "He'll be thinking he comes here for me; ah! but he doesn't!"

She sat down in a chair, for she could not stand. Martha stared at her.

"What for, then, what for?"

She ran to the window as she spoke and unbarred it so that a light once more showed that folks were up in the house.

"Who's outside?" she called tremulously. And Sigurd barked again very lightly. She turned to Mary and found the girl with her apron over her head.

"Are you sure?"

The covered figure nodded horribly.

"Oh, you fool, go out!"

"I daren't, I daren't!"

"I'll go to Miss Rachel," said Martha, and she ran to the book-room.

"Mary says she hears her father walking outside, Rachel," she cried to her, "and the fool is scared to death; and so am I."

She clutched Rachel's shoulder.

"Come and see, Rachel, come and see. To have him about is to have death walking in the garden. I'm terrified and I'm an old woman!"

And Rachel left her books.

"How can you tell, Mary?"

"Isn't he my father?" quavered the girl. "I know every footstep in the village. Oh, 'tis him, and he's after Mr. John."

"Unbar the door," said Rachel, and when the door was opened she went out. Martha followed her a little way behind, but Mary stood within the shadow of the doorway. Rachel called aloud—

"Mr. Jose! Mr. Jose!"

There was no answer but the pleased whimper of the great dog.

"Fear has got hold of us all," thought Rachel. And she said aloud, "It's nothing."

They went back into the house, and still Mary trembled.

"He's outside in the dark, he's outside in the dark," she said. And suddenly she screamed aloud and cried:

"What's that?"

What it was they knew not, but they heard no more the plash of the slow rain.

"Get the door open," cried Rachel. And Martha fumbled at it and could not open it with her shaking hands. "What was the sound? Was it a cry? Oh, let me to the door."

She thrust aside Martha and opened it herself, and ran out in the rain again.

"Loose the dog," cried Martha, "loose the dog! If it's murder, loose the dog first. Mary, Mary, come!"

But Mary lay in a dead faint upon the floor and never stirred. So Martha ran after Rachel and caught hold of her dress.

"Let's loose Sigurd!" she cried; for now Sigurd was barking furiously and straining at his chain towards the gate which led down into the village. And Rachel let him go. He ran no further than the gate almost hidden in high shrubs, and they followed him.

"It's open," screamed Martha, "and it swings shut of itself! Don't go, Rachel!"

But Rachel followed Sigurd, for the dog howled. And upon the gate, wrenched from its hinges by his falling body, they found John Perran lying in trampled flowers and his own blood.

"Oh, Mary's father," said Rachel, "Mary's father!"

She fell upon her knees beside the man and, listening, heard a faint moan.

"Is he killed?" asked Martha. "What did I say? 'Twas death in the your garden!"

"He's alive yet," said Rachel. But on her hands and dress was blood. She straightened out the man's limbs and bade Martha sit down and hold his head, and the old woman did so, wailing.

"We can't carry him in," said Rachel; "I must go to the village."

And though Martha reached out and caught hold of her dress she tore herself away and ran down through the woodland path to the Cove. The first cottage she reached was Sam Burt's, and he came out when she knocked.

"You, Miss Rachel!" he said. "What's wrong, Miss?"

"Go at once to Dr. Greer and bring him back with you."

She dragged him from his doorstep and Tryphena Burt came after him crying out in wonder:

"What is it, Miss, what is it?"

But Rachel neither saw nor heard her.

"Tell him Mr. John Perran's at my house and has had a dreadful accident. Go and bring him back."

She pushed him forward to the road.

"Run," she said. And Sam ran labouring, while she got two other men and took them up to the house. They passed Jose's cottage, and in the front room there was a light, and old Jose was chanting a terrible psalm to God.

XIX

It was a full hour before Greer came galloping through the wet night to Morna House, and during that time those who watched the wounded man died many deaths, as watchers do. Rachel had John carried into the big front room, furnished with old oak and china and shining pewter, and they laid him upon the table on a soft mat-

dress. She and Martha tended him, stanching one great wound that ran down his cheek and another on the head, and they murmured about him, fearing death. For though he breathed, it was over quickly and his pulse was weak. Mary sat outside in the passage, but her limbs failed her and she could do nothing to help. The men who had carried John into the house stayed in the kitchen and spoke in low voices.

"'Tis Jose's work, this, Tom."

"Aye, lad, and it's hanging if he dies!"

"And if not?"

"He'll die. Did you see there was blood in his ear?"

"I never noticed it."

"'Tis mostly fatal, as I've heard tell."

"His left wrist was broke."

"Saving his head—but for that he'd ha' been like a dropped egg, lad. All this comes of running after girls. The old man's daughter is snivelling now in the passage. She used to laugh too lightly, and so did her child's father. This is bad for Morna!"

Rachel walked into the kitchen swiftly, took a glass and walked out again.

"She's fine," said the older man; "why aren't all women like her?"

"She daunts me," returned the other. "I prefer something more common-like."

"You *are* common, lad. Hark!"

He held up his hand.

"'Tis the whistling doctor at a gallop. He'll break his neck some night when some woman needs him, but he'll never come where he's needed more. That is if he is needed at all!"

He ran out into the yard and Sigurd barked loudly. Rachel came back to the kitchen.

"Bring Dr. Greer through this way when he comes," she said.

And Greer stopped his horse outside and swung himself down.

"What's the trouble, Tom?" he asked. "Sam Burt

came for me, but all I could get out of him was 'murder' and 'somebody's skull.'"

Tom told him, and Greer took his saddle-bags and went in. He followed the light down the passage and came to the room in which John lay. Martha sighed heavily and sat down, but Rachel took Greer's hand.

"Bring the light close," he said. And when Rachel put the lamp down upon the table Greer whistled queerly through his teeth.

"I thought they said it was John, and it's Anthony!"

But Rachel shook her head.

"It's John, doctor. But now he looks more like his brother."

He looked terribly like him on the unwounded side of his face, and Rachel knew it, and there were moments in that hour when she could not distinguish one from the other in her mind, and trembled. But now she did all she could to help, and her hand was steady, her mind set and concentrated. She watched the doctor as he examined the man and his wounds, but she sent Martha back to the kitchen. The old woman was all ashake.

"Who did this?" asked Greer, as he felt John's skull with skilful fingers. He got no answer and looked up at Rachel.

"Who knows?" she answered, for she could not answer. "Will he die?"

Greer listened to John's heart, and then laid his wounded left arm out straight, and, lifting his eyelids, looked at the pupil of his eye. His mind was set and there was rude strength in his face which was a comfort, even if he said nothing comforting.

"Get some hot water, my dear; and where's the brandy?"

Rachel showed it him and went out for the water. Greer opened his bag and got out stimulants. He found himself whistling lightly and checked himself.

"It's a fracture of the base!" he said. "What a skull he must have!"

And Rachel came back, and found Greer in his shirt sleeves cutting away hair from the side of John's head.

"This will be a longish job for you, my dear young lady," he said, "but I think he'll pull through. The shock isn't half so great as it might have been, and the skull is sound on top where he got the blow. He must have saved himself with his arm, you see. He's strong; nothing can kill a Perran but drink or religion!"

And though John drank, he never drank what folks in Morna thought unwise.

"The Perrans live for ever," was a saying round about. Rachel remembered this and thought of Anthony and Winnie living till they were old, and living together.

"It would be better for him to die."

She helped Greer coolly, and all the time her mind was thinking of Anthony.

"Now he'll have to come and see me in my own house."

She spoke aloud.

"It won't be possible to move him, Dr. Greer?"

"Not for Heaven knows when—if he does well," replied Greer. "But if he doesn't——"

Now he had the scalp wound clean and strapped. The long ripped wound of the face looked terrible till he washed it. He cleaned it, dabbed it with an antiseptic, and bound it up. And John's breathing was a little slower, his pulse not so weak. Yet Greer asked for hot water bottles, and while they were coming he put the broken arm in splints. He sent Rachel out of the room for hot blankets and when she came back he kept her at the door a minute. When he let her in John's clothes lay on the floor and he was wrapped in warm woollens.

"Is there anything else we can do?" she asked. As she spoke she bent over John and saw once more how like he was to the man she loved. And she knew that she would rather see Anthony in his brother's place than where he was. The sight of the helpless man in her care hurt her horribly. For there was another who needed help worse than he and could accept none from any.

"I'll stay," said Greer, "and to-morrow we'll have a nurse. If there's nothing supervenes that should not, the man will live and someone won't be hanged."

In her mind Rachel heard old Jose chanting his triumph, as of old Israel chanted over the spilt blood of the children of Moab.

"I'll watch with you," she said.

"Nonsense," said Greer, "I've had three whole nights to myself. If I want you I'll call. Get Martha to light the fire here, and I shan't want anything else."

And then he added:

"Oughtn't his brother to know? You had better send over for him; it's not eleven yet."

And Rachel's heart leapt in her bosom and she caught her breath.

"I'll send for him," she said in a low voice, and then Greer remembered what idle folks talked of, and he knew that it was true, and was sorry.

"Here's another human being wanting the moon and the stars," he said; "another dear fool would crack the earth for its kernel!"

And Rachel sent the younger man who had stayed in the kitchen over to Pentowan. Then she took Mary in her arms and told her that John Perran would live. Mary had been her servant, but for the moment seemed her sister. Yet still the girl shook and her eyes were wild.

"Oh, Miss, it's all my fault. What will they do to my father?"

But Rachel gripped her hard.

"Who can say it was your father?" she asked. Deep in her mind she knew that if John recovered he would not denounce the man who had struck him. She sent Martha and the weeping girl to bed and sat by the fire in the kitchen waiting for Anthony.

XX

Now a west wind rose out of the sea and moaned through the woods of Morna, and the rain was still heavy, and the wet roof dripped. Outside in the darkness Sigurd was restless and his chain rattled. Sometimes he whimpered softly and gave a single bark which was almost a howl.

Then it seemed as if he feared the very noise he made and was quiet for a while.

And yet Rachel never heard him—her mind was where her heart was, and all the world was a dream because she dreamed. As she sat before the red-hearted fire that companioned her loneliness the very figure of the half-murdered man upon his strange bed within was the figure of a dream. There was nothing real round about her, and all the human beings of her household and the strangers within her gates were ghosts. But if they were ghosts, and it might be portents, prophetic of disaster, Anthony himself was greater than life, and more wonderful now that she had run close to the sight of death once more. The sense of human insecurity that chilled her made her reach out to grasp the flower of life while it blossomed. She grew like a magic plant out of the cold white bosom of her dead mother, whose blood had been like fire. The unconscious within her was dominant; it struggled for life and pursued it, but desired the difficult with unchanging steadfastness. Whatever she knew of her mother one thing at least she knew, and it was that the dead woman, even at the edge of the grave and on the very verge of hell, pursued the desire of her heart.

And Anthony was coming! The wind rose and the sound of the rain was heavy and the rising sea roared upon the rocks in foam.

Not once since his marriage had he set foot within her house. And now he must come and come again, for it was so contrived of fate and the hand of him who read aloud from the fierce words of David. What should she say to him, if she said anything? What could she say of his agony, or of her own? Now she felt dumb, and was like one in a nightmare, speechless and afraid. She might be able to say nothing, now or in the few days that were given her, those days John had brought to her stained with his blood.

“Oh, I’ll speak,” she said. But the crawling minutes sickened her heart. She went upstairs and stood before her glass. Her hair was in disorder; she loosed it and knotted it low upon her neck. It was so long that she

might have wound it thrice about the neck of love. Her eyes were dark-circled; they gleamed like moorland pools beneath the evening star.

Her heart cried!

“I’m beautiful!”

And she was glad. She ran downstairs again and found Greer in the kitchen.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said; “he’s as well as may be. But you look ill, and no wonder!”

“I’m very well, doctor, and always strong.”

He sighed.

“Oh, you’re strong. But don’t carry weights that are too heavy. Take it easy. Are you friends with both the brothers, now?”

“Why not?” said Rachel.

“We are all different kinds of fools,” said Greer. “I’m one myself. I give advice—sometimes gratis.”

He strode back lightly to the room where John lay, and let her wonder what he meant. But the wind and the rain drew her from his words; what matter was it if he meant much or nothing? She went to the back door and threw it open, and stood in the porch listening to the pulse of the sea and the wet sob of the windy trees. The sky was low and very heavy, the only light in the world was the gleam from the lamp lying in the worn hollows of the brick-paved yard that was full of rain. Anthony was coming through the storm. She remembered the awful night of lightning and thunder in which her mother set out upon her last journey, and she felt in her bosom for the crucifix which promised life and held immortal death. She carried it into her book-room and laid it on the table and then lighted the lamp there. A strong sense of calm came over her, and with it a feeling that life could not be counted by years or any contrivance of man. Who could compute the hours since she found John trampled into the hollow earth, or the eternal minutes since the messenger set out for Pentowan?

She sat down by the fire again and then she heard a creaking of the back-stairs and looking up saw Martha peering in through the door that opened on the kitchen.

"How—how is he?" she asked.

She was a white ghost and an intruder, and Rachel frowned.

"Go to bed," she cried, "you can do nothing."

Martha nodded her head.

"I'll go, dear," she said quite meekly, "but it's you I think of. Has Mr. Anthony been?"

"Not yet," said Rachel as she turned to the fire. And Martha crept upstairs again and spoke to Mary, and in her own room prayed to God. But she did not pray for John—she prayed that Rachel might be happy, and did not count the cost or her own words.

"Some think God can only really forgive themselves," said Martha, "and not others. But is it my darling's fault she suffers?"

She called Rachel her darling now, for Mary seemed incarnate in her child. The memory of the aging declines upon the dear children of the dead.

"I prayed for my lover and the sea took him. There's crueller creatures than the windy sea," said Martha.

And the windy sea moaned, and the rain fell, and presently Sigurd's chain rattled again and he barked aloud. And Rachel stood at the door waiting, for she heard the sound of one riding fast till he came to the northward gate. In another minute Anthony alighted from his horse and took her outstretched hands. He knew she offered him her very soul in them, and deep under the restrained passions of his heart he rejoiced and was afraid.

"Is he alive?" he cried.

"Oh, yes," said Rachel, "come in, come in."

But though she hungered to behold him in the light she was glad even then to see that he thought of his horse. He led the dripping animal to the stable, and knowing the stalls were empty, turned it loose there. As he passed Sigurd he put his hand out and the dog whimpered joyfully.

Ere he came she had been wan and pale. Now she was like a rose. He was tall, but she nearly matched him, and she was erect as a sheltered pine. His lips trembled a

little as he spoke to her of John, but though he loved his brother the emotion of the almost accomplished murder was not that which shook him. He saw his own murdered life under disastrous and malignant influences that took upon them the authority of heaven.

"He lives then?"

"And will," said Rachel.

She cried aloud to herself:

"I live and will live." And then she said, "Come with me."

He followed her and Greer met them at the door. The two men shook hands.

"This is a bad business," said the doctor, "though I believe he'll pull through. But he is unconscious and may be so for days."

Anthony stepped past him and stood by his brother's side, and Rachel followed. From where she stood she saw John's uninjured profile and marked its pale and quiet likeness to the strong head of fraternal pity bent above him. But John was nothing and Anthony was the world.

"They say Jose did this," said Anthony; "is it true?"

"Who knows?" replied Rachel. "The poor man is mad and not responsible."

"Who is?" asked Greer quietly. "There's more mad than Jose."

Anthony bent over his brother and kissed his brow.

"He has brought this on himself," he said. But his voice was not stern, for he knew that evil might be wrought in more ways than one. He knew that now. But whether a man works evil or permits it is one.

"If he dies——"

"He shall not," said Rachel. She caught Greer's hand and he patted her on the shoulder with the one she left free.

"We'll do our best."

"If he dies," said Anthony, "this will mean—what murder means!"

They thought of the old fanatic at the Cove, but Rachel thought of her own bleeding heart as well.

"If he lives John would be the last to revenge himself," she cried almost angrily, and Greer nodded.

"Look here, Perran, we'll leave this to your brother."

"If he lives," said Anthony; "I never meant otherwise. I was thinking of the madman that he made."

"You're just as mad," cried Greer. "Now go and settle with Miss Rachel what's to be done. There won't be any moving him for weeks, that's certain, and Morna House is my hospital. We're all mad, Perran, there's no sane soul between sea and sea."

He looked Anthony in the eyes.

"There are good madmen and bad," he said, "but the good ones do the most harm, Perran. Take that from a wise physician like myself, and swallow it."

He thrust Anthony to the door almost cheerfully.

"Give the man a drink, Rachel," he said. "You want something, Perran."

And Anthony knew what he wanted, but what he wanted Rachel should not give him. Yet his soul was athirst and she was like a river in a desert. He followed her to the book-room and there he stood before the sinking fire for a long while and never spoke a word. It was Rachel who opened her parched lips first.

"This is the first time you have been in my house since it was mine," she said. There was one who hated him to be there now. He knew his wife was raging even then.

"Aye," said Anthony. That which was next to death had brought him; and sin had brought him—his brother's sin. The desire of his heart shook him. He asked her for water and she brought him to drink, and he looked upon her very strangely. For as he looked he remembered what Martha had said to him in the road, and how the old woman wept while she stabbed him to the heart. And once again he heard a ghostly musical voice say, "Anything you wanted, Anthony, anything you wanted," calling from the dark water at midnight. And then he saw her as he had seen her in the moonlight when she lifted her hands above her head, and the crucifix fell from her bosom. And once more he heard her say,

“Your God” and “I am a Catholic no more.” His eyes fell upon the crucifix now.

She watched him with passion and without remorse. The pupils of her eyes were dilated; excitement had hold of her and gave her strong drugs, so that she was more than herself, greater, more imperial, majestically humble, frank, and subtle, enticing, pitiful. She watched his mind and knew its every emotion; intuitions sprang up in her and she saw through his guards, knew his strength and his weakness, and her own.

She knew what folks said of him, and knew they spoke truly of his kindness to the weak, his justice for the strong. There was no line in his face that was not graven in her heart; the sound of his voice was music to her, and before him she felt her weakness well up in tears even when she passed before him like a queen. He was a man, and all men said so, and now she saw him struggling fiercely with himself. She sat down by the table, and took her eyes from him out of very pity, and when she looked again there was something in his face which made her think upon those who were said to be blessed of God. And yet within his eyes was love for her, and she knew it, and for one immortal moment she surrendered her body to death and believed in love that could not suffer.

And then she remembered her dream, and the man saw her shoulders shake with dry sobs that wrenched at her heart strings.

“Rachel! Rachel!” he cried. And she reached out her hand to him and he took it and trembled.

She desired to speak, to express her inmost desire, to throw herself at his knees and embrace them, and the bonds of silence were upon her, holding her as with steel, and she could not break them. But her very hand spoke, and the silence of her fever of inward thought was more dreadful to him than words. For it was nigh upon midnight and he was alone in the house of the woman he worshipped. What she thought poured into his soul by the channels that the waked souls knows of, and he grew swift and swifter in his mind to understand.

And still behind him stood his God, and the pillars of the temple in which he worshipped were not shaken, nor was the veil of the temple rent.

"I will speak if it is impossible," she had said to the sea.

It was impossible and she spoke. But not yet could she speak and not for herself first—for when had women spoken? And now she knew that speech was but a rude symbol for the passions of the heart, and failed even when re-cast in the very furnace of passion. She was like one stricken dumb. Then she looked up at him, and he saw that she was asking him for something. But what it was he knew not, though he sought for it in her eyes and in his own soul, and even prayed to God to find it for him.

"What is it?" he murmured, and his voice was strange to his own ears. He waited for her answer as one waits for the first words of those who have escaped the grave. And her eyes asked, "Do you not know?" and he did not know, and he cried out again, "Rachel! Rachel!" Then she spoke and asked:

"Do I make you suffer?"

And he answered "no" as she loosed his hand and took hold of the crucifix that lay between them.

"If I were dead would you suffer?"

Did she say that, or did the thought spring from her to him, swift and wordless and terrible? He choked, and wrenched at his throat for breath, and she saw him shake. But she did not help him. She asked for help again and now spoke it.

"I want to speak and cannot. Help me, Anthony, help me!"

Her eyes burned and he saw her bosom heave like the sea. She was a woman, not a child or a girl, and one who held all the gifts of womanhood within her beating heart. And she held inspiration and the power that moves men and gives them strength unless it destroys them, and out of her mind he drew words and knew what they were and what they implied even before they shaped themselves into unspoken speech within his brain.

"I cannot."

She caught his hand again, and still insisting with her eyes spoke soft words to him.

"Poor Anthony! I make you suffer!"

But he had loved her first, and had held her to his heart in dreams when her dreams were only those of the fruitful earth. His love he had beaten down in his own soul, but it had taken refuge in hers like wild seed floating on a wind, and now it was again a red, red crop upon his wasted land.

And once again her eyes sought his, and the insistent question of her soul repeated itself and hammered upon his brain, as thunder hammers at the gates of sleep till the tired night wakes. He let her hand go and walked up and down the room, and coming to the door caught the handle as if he would escape, but he could not turn it—a strange paralysis seized him; he was impotent, stricken. And the words she asked for cried out for birth within him and wrenched his shut lips open and were born with a strange physical agony.

"I—I love you!"

In the very moment of speaking a deep and perfect peace floated down upon him. So deep it was and so perfect that he heard again the sound of the fine and falling rain outside, and caught the faint sounds of the surging sea and the passing wind. And within him he tasted the holy chrism of nature, and for a while the word of nature was true scripture, and his peace the peace of God.

And he heard Rachel sigh, and ran to her like a true lover, and fell upon his knees and murmured voiceless things to her that were terrible and dear. And then Anthony prayed to Heaven and laid his heart before the throne.

"My heart is Thine, O God, and Thy gifts are love; order Thou my steps."

For the spirit of man was one thing and his body another, and the body was the slave of the Most High God.

And Rachel turned to him and laid her hand upon his head and blessed him. For now there was a passionate

peace in her own heart, and having accomplished so much it seemed to her for a time that no more was needed, since the knowledge of his love was all her heart asked for. And for a long while neither she nor the man spoke, and they forgot even themselves as he knelt upon the floor beside her.

And the night was quiet and the rain ceased and the wandering wind died down in the woodlands, and there were stars in the deep heavens.

And Rachel spoke again, for the lamp grew dim and the coals in the fire were darkening.

"You suffer, Anthony?"

He spoke the truth.

"Oh, yes, Rachel."

"You have no peace, then?"

"What peace is there, here?"

"There might have been peace," she cried, and once more her voice was bitter. "Why did you do this?"

She felt him shake, but he did not answer.

"And you loved me?"

"Always."

He heard her breathe:

"And I loved you."

She took up the crucifix.

"I think you let this part us, Anthony; or was it your word given when you were a boy?"

He flinched as she spoke.

"Oh, it's done, it's done!"

He made a motion to rise, but she pressed him to his knees.

"Let me go home, Rachel."

"Where is your home, Anthony?"

No houseless wanderer of the roads was half so homeless. Old Steve himself, of the grass and fern, was less far from a warm hearth where love dwelt. He felt her quiver as she asked it, for he knew where his heart was, and heard it beat then. Passion rose in her once more and beat its wings, and she beat her bosom, and as he looked up at her she seemed strangely old and worn.

For a great maternal passion for him mingled with the inexorable implacable love she bore him.

"Here, here!" she said, and the burning passions of the burning South where she was born flowered in the garden of her heart. And her mother's unsatisfied soul cried out in her, and the broken desires of the exile who begat her.

"Oh, here's your home," she cried, and she sprang to her feet. "I want to speak, I want to speak!"

Once again she wrestled with a woman's dumbness, for he was suffering, and she could give him rest. Nor right nor wrong nor any law oppressed her. There were some beyond and some beneath the law. And what she said shook him, for her voice was once more the voice of one out of deep waters. She cried out:

"I'd do anything you wanted, Anthony, anything you wanted!"

And again she bowed her head as she had done upon that unforgotten midnight, and Anthony rose up and went backward from her so that he stood against the door. He heard her speak again and her voice was like the sound of a low wind in trees and it wavered and grew strong. And he clenched his hands and the beaded sweat stood upon his brow, and as she spoke he spoke to God. And he listened to every word she spoke.

"I would have married you if you had asked me," she said. "Oh, you made me love you years ago—I was a girl, then—a girl! You used to come here and talk to me. And I didn't know I loved you till you were married; I didn't know!"

But something within had known. He saw her in the moonlight by the wood.

"I thought you were so strong, and such a man. Oh, Anthony, Anthony, help me to speak, help me!"

She wrung her hands and ran to him and he stood before her moved, unmoved.

"O God," he said, "O God, look down on me—on us!"

She cried out passionately:

"There's no God, Anthony—don't look up, don't look up!"

He tried to speak and could not.

"Oh, you've bitter strength," she said. "If that had been which might have been I'd have knelt with you—I'd have worshipped any God with you!"

He heard old Martha's words that cut him to the heart. "She'd have worshipped idols with you, idols with you." And she had said, "I know love's in his heart and 'twill be wind to the fire in hers and her nature's dreadful." There was no woman like her, for she was woman, this Rachel.

Rachel lifted her arms.

"You love me, and your heart's a fire. I'd have brought you all I had, my heart for you, and my heart for God, and what there was in me. Was I not young? Oh, I'm young still! Many think me beautiful. Hear me, Anthony's God, there's my beauty for him, but my God's heart is dead!"

She shook with dreadful passion, and her eyes were fire and the soul of flame, and her bosom was as tumultuous as the sea.

"I offered it all," she cried; "I offered it all. There's less to offer now. Here I'm shamed, for shame is on me, and my lover's in hell and an evil thing battens on his heart, a thing I hate!"

He held up his hand, but she caught his wrist and pulled it down.

"'Tis true, oh, true as death, and your heart cries to me it's true. And she said things to me—my God, she said things that were blisters!"

Anthony cried out:

"What things, what things?"

"God! what things!" said Rachel, writhing. "Oh, Anthony, do you laugh in bed at nights with her because I love you?"

Her voice was an anguish.

"My God!" said Anthony, "my God!"

"Oh, oh, she said it!"

"And she's my wife, my wife!"

Rachel's voice rose almost to a scream again and she beat her bosom.

"No, no, no, Anthony!"

Her knees gave way beneath her and she fell upon the floor.

"Oh, here's your home and here's my heart, here's my heart." She tore choking at her bosom, and Anthony groaned and cried out:

"Rachel, for God's sake, for God's sake!"

And she sank down at his feet and clutched his knees.

"Is it true, is it true?"

"Oh, a lie!" he said. "I love you and I'm shamed, and yet's she's my wife, and I can do nothing, nothing, nothing!"

The strangled passion in him almost burst his heart. He beat his fist against the wall until it bled, and Rachel sprang up and caught him.

"Don't, don't. Will you kill me?"

"I have killed you."

She caught him in her arms and laid her head against his shoulder.

"No. I'll live; and you shall live, Anthony."

She heard his voice and she laid her hand upon his mouth.

"Don't pray for my death, don't pray for that!"

"Your salvation and mine, yours and mine. That's what I pray for. Aye, and hers! Oh, you think me strong."

In her fervent heart she cursed his strength and her own weakness, for now weakness got hold of her and she shook terribly as she held to him. She went almost blind, and he took her to the big chair and put her in it and stood by her. And he stroked her hair, and his soul said she was dearer than heaven, while his fixed mind was set on a paradise which was less sweet than love on the cruel earth. And yet love was cruel as the grave, and the awakened passions of the real heart of man were as awful as the gates of hell, and the fumes of the pit.

"You think me strong?"

Her soul cried out for strength, and that the earth's. She needed warm joy and the gift of little children and the sheltered house and the love of her own man.

"But I'm not so strong. I said I loved you!"

She reached out and took his hand and kissed it.

"I'm tired, Anthony, I'm tired!"

Reaction came on her and tears ran down her face quietly, and the man's heart was broken.

"Always, always, I shall love you."

"Oh, yes, Anthony."

"You'll be in my heart. There's another life, dear."

She shook her head.

"This is enough. You'll be in my heart on earth, I'll not let you go."

"I must go."

"Now," said Rachel; "oh, yes, you can go now."

She took both his hands and looked up at him.

"You are sure you don't despise me?"

"I'm sure of that."

"Next time, perhaps I shan't be beautiful, Anthony."

"Next time, Rachel?"

"I offered more than words to-night, Anthony."

He knew that. Yes, he knew it.

"If I'm not beautiful, I may love you more, or you may learn to love me by then."

"Don't, don't!"

"Good-night, dear. Go now."

But he could not move. For she still held him.

"Kiss me once, Anthony."

And he kissed her brow.

"Kiss my lips," she said.

And he kissed her mouth.

BOOK IV

I

THE summer began the very day after Jose went walking in the woods hand in hand with murder, and heat wrought such swift wonders with the plastic earth as his forge had wrought in stubborn metal, and Morna was aflame with sudden blossom of apple, and the scent of flowers was in the air. As rain fell no more and the wind was soft the steeped earth smoked under the sun and the young harvest grew mightily, and the grass upon the lower meadows was as high as the little children who played beside it.

But though the season promised rare prosperity, even for the gaunt farms upon the upland, the village lay under a cloud, since part of a bitter harvest had been garnered in its midst and a sense of foreseen calamity was not dim within those who dwelt there. Jose's forge was silent and his house empty, and the worker in iron sat with his Bible in a cell of a grey stone building in the near town. There were too many talkers for him to escape suspicion, even though the chief witness against him might never speak again. Or so the talkers said, for the whistling doctor came and went twice a day from the Church Town and said but little even to the nurse who sat with John Perran all night, and less to Rachel who helped her in the day. He held his tongue and waited, for though he saw no reason yet why John should not live, he wondered what manner of man would rise with the silent figure that he handled like living clay.

"Jose's iron might make a saint," he said to himself; "but it's far more likely that he'll be a stranger

devil than he was. When skulls are cracked, wits are cracked. He's as still as death or sleep now, but, if I'm not wrong, when he's up he'll be mad-drunk at times when no drink's in him. These Parrans are strange folk, and so are we all. Damn these passions of humanity that won't take nature easy!"

Before old Jose was taken from Morna, and while John Perran was quiet in his bed, Rachel went down to the Cove and spoke to the old man, though many of the villagers implored her not to enter his house. For now they feared him, and feared for her, since in her house were those who had together done such things as made him mad.

"Hurt me! Oh, he'll not hurt me," said Rachel, and though Jose did not answer her knock she opened the door and went in and closed it quietly. She found the old man sitting at his table with the Bible open before him. It was full thirty hours since he had met his enemy at midnight, and since then he had not tasted food or slept. But now he was sane, and when Rachel put her hand upon his shoulder tears ran down his worn face and he took her hand trembling, and he said:

"I'm not worthy to touch the hem of your garment, Missy. What is it that I've done—is it murder?"

"The man will live," said Rachel. "Oh, how could you do it?"

"Twas me and the devil, Missy."

He stared at her from under heavy brows and sighed.

"And I thought it God in me, and I said, 'Vengeance is mine.' But I'll give myself up for it!"

And Rachel lighted his fire and made him some tea and put food in front of him.

"How can I have you serve me, Missy dear?" asked the old man, "and me a killer of men!"

But once more she told him that John Perran would live, and she said he would never say who it was that had attacked him.

"For though he did evil, he's no coward, and he knows he wronged you."

"'Tis all the more reason for me to seek the law," said Jose stubbornly.

"You can't be forgiven then?" asked Rachel, and the old man's eyes burnt like blown embers.

"Oh, 'tis hard!"

"Don't you remember I asked you to do something for me and you would not? Will you do something for me now?"

The old man adored her, and she knew it, and he was hot iron in the fire and she twisted him as she would. He laid his head upon the table and cried like a child while she bent over him and talked softly, and soothed him.

"I'll do as you tell me, Missy," he said at last. "I'm weary and old, and too much of ordering myself and being hard and strong makes me tired, and I miss my wife, poor dear, more these days than I did when she died. And I've no daughter to be a child to me."

But then Rachel kissed his forehead.

"Whatever happens, say nothing," she said, "and no one will speak against you."

He rose to his feet and took her hands.

"Oh, but you are a blessed woman!" he cried; "and your hands bring healing and your voice is like a choir of angels singing, and may God make you happy and give you all things, here and in the life everlasting. For you comfort the poor and the afflicted and the childless and those who are like me, even like me!"

He turned from her and leant against the wall and prayed aloud to God to bring her into the paths of peace, and as he prayed she left him and walked back to her house, neither happily nor unhappily, but in a strange calm of spirit which seemed passionless and was passion's self. And she stayed for a moment by her own peculiar pine and laid her cheek against its cool scales, and dreamed.

"You comfort the childless," she said to the pine, "and those who are like me, like me!"

And that night old Jose was taken away until it was seen what would happen to John Perran if he lived and spoke, or if he died and others spoke for him. It was

Anthony who told her of this, for he rode over every evening to ask about his brother, and often enough came in the morning too. But he never spoke of what was in his heart, and she was very silent, and both greeted and said good-bye to him quietly. For there had been no such strong quiet in her heart for years as that which had come since he understood and had spoken those words that she drew from him. The sense of shame within her was laid asleep because he loved her greatly and had said so, showing it not only in words, but in a passion of control at which her woman's heart marvelled, being sore at it and yet wondering. But the silence having been broken there was little need of speech, and the relief within her was so great that it seemed at certain hours that the knowledge of his love was enough. And at other hours, when she knew that it was not enough, she declared to herself that it would have been if Anthony were in any way happy or at peace. But in his eyes she read of his torment, and she knew that his coming to Morna House, even though his brother lay there, was a bitter offence to his wife, and one for which she made him pay. But as he did what was his duty, and also fed his hungry solitary heart at the table of vain desire, he came and paid, and lived a life that held a little dear-bought joy in it.

And on the third day after Jose had been taken to prison John Perran became conscious once more, and Greer rubbed his big hands and stood, straddle-legs, by his bed and pronounced the man lucky.

"That is, if it's lucky for fools to live," he said; "and as I have my doubts even about wise men, why there we are, you know."

He broke off and whistled, and had a tolerable and happy conceit of himself both as a wise man and a physician and a surgeon. But truly he did most, if he did anything, for those who watched the patient rather than for John Perran, who owed his escape to an elastic skull and the swiftness of his guard to which his smashed arm witnessed.

"He'll get through now, I think," said Greer, "but he

must be kept quiet, and all talking's bad and any excitement's worse. Now our job will be to keep him in bed. I wish I'd had the fore-sight to put his leg in splints and tell him that it was broken."

The injury done to John declared itself soon enough, for though his wounds healed and his arm grew sound with wonderful swiftness, it was more than the nurse could do to keep him quiet, even with drugs. And presently he took a violent dislike to the woman, and Greer sent her away and brought another. But even her he could barely endure, and he perpetually sent for Rachel. When she came he was very humble and as quiet as a child, and he begged to be allowed to hold her hand so that he could sleep. And one day when Mary came into the room he got violently excited, and drove her away with curses. Rachel found the girl sobbing violently on the landing outside his door, and when she went to her Mary refused to speak and ran to her own room without a word. So Rachel went in to John and found him just quieting down under a sedative.

"Don't you let her come near me," said John angrily; "I won't have her. I'm going to do the square thing if I can, and I'll say nothing as to who put me here, but I won't have her about."

"She only wanted to be kind," said Rachel.

John grew sleepy, but resisted sleep.

"Some women are too kind," he muttered, "and some not kind enough. I hate her because—of you—Rachel."

And then sleep struck him down suddenly, and Rachel sat by him sorrowfully, for she understood. And as she stayed she wondered at the dark web of life, and the strange follies of men, and of passion, and the weakness of women and their strength. For here was John Perran become her slave, and his poor slave was weeping jealously, and Anthony's soul and body cried out aloud for one who would have gone down into the pit to give him any joy of earth.

As she sat within the dark web that she and fate wove the sun set and the glory of the evening shone into the room, and she saw John's pale face upon the pillow. And

as she sat upon his right side she could not see the red scar on his left brow and cheek, and he became so wonderfully like Anthony in his quiet sleep that she trembled and bent forward and stared at him. Her heart leapt and was still, and a dream took her and her world was strangely shaken and a fearful uncertainty as to the very nature of things got hold of her.

She remembered how John had come riding to her house, and how it seemed that here was a happy Anthony riding like a bridegroom to his beloved. Then she had trembled and for a moment the fresh green world was wonderful and God was in His heaven, and nature was God's church and men His glorious ministers and the sweet birds His choir.

And here, in her own house, in the best chamber of the house, lay one who was no happy bridegroom, but a man escaped from death, and, in his pallor, the exact and awful image of his dearer brother. For the living red had gone out of John, and the glow had left him, even as a sunset faded, and his face had the clear, cool aspect of the quiet stars rather than of the living sun.

She knew that in death they would be alike. Now it seemed to her that Anthony was dead and in her house, safe and secluded, given to her for ever, and she held the thought to her heart like a child, and fell upon her knees by the bed, thanking whatever gods there were, gods of the woodland or the sea or the earth or the heaven, for the gift of his death. And the light faded and the room grew dark, so that her imagination flamed about the sleeping man, and she set him to play in his unconsciousness the part of Anthony in her house and her home. For first he loved and blessed her, and then he died blessing her, and she took the crucifix out of her bosom and laid it upon his heart, and for a moment believed again in the Virgin Mother and her Son and in immortality. And then she bent and kissed John upon the brow.

But as she kissed him the door was opened slowly and Mary looked in and saw what she did, and she hated Rachel bitterly.

II

THUS it was that what Rachel did out of pity and a dream and her engrossing passion wrought upon her life and made the girl whom she had helped her bitter enemy. And though Mary was little in her mind, and rather because she was so little, she was capable of waiting to do her friend an injury. And she had no other home. Even at the forge a stranger worked until it should be known what John Perran said of her father to the law which held the old man close in the grey house upon the hill.

But John had cried out already that he would say nothing.

"It is one to him and one to me, and now we're quits," he said. But he rarely spoke with any of his old lightness even when the forty days that Greer gave him to be out of any danger drew to their close. There was something in his mind that was striking deep roots, and there were times when he not only understood his brother, but hated him and turned away from him when he came.

"He loves Rachel and she loves him, and he sits at Pentowan with that spider, that blood-sucking she of darkness. Oh, the fool! And what am I?"

Though he had always been wild and often violent, there used to be a wild sweetness in him such as women loved. But now much of his sweetness went out of him; he was sometimes almost brutal, and was sullen even to Rachel. And he would not see Mary or his boy; they both stood to him for points of shame. Seeing them, how could Rachel love him? He was a changed man and argued angrily with Anthony about free-will.

"If I cracked you on the head with a hammer you might run all over the country after the girls and spend your spare time preaching atheism and drink," he cried. "Look at me—I'm not what I was! Damn old Jose and all wild rose hedge girls! Oh, I'm sick!"

But he had his hours when his voice was sweet and the new melancholy in him, which was bred of doubt and a

loosed hold upon life, made him more lovable than ever, and Rachel listened to him and heard Anthony. His heart leapt, because he deceived himself. Then he saw her eyes wander, and her mind seclude itself from him, like a singing bird flying into a deep woodland, and the snarer of singing birds sang no more.

"I'm an accursed fool, and I'll out of the country when that lingering, rapacious ass of a Greer lets me out of this."

He cursed Greer and all doctors and medicine men, and all women and all mankind, and then was astonished at himself for taking things so bitterly.

"I'm as mad as Anthony," he said. And it seemed to him that he understood his brother better, so much better indeed, that at times he understood a man's conscience and all the bitterness that comes of that sense of sin which cannot exist with real health. But he wanted what he could not get, and till now he had never asked for the impossible, and if any that he desired loved him not, he had left them lightly. Now desire was a barbed thorn in his flesh, and the very aspect of the bright world was changed.

"It's a pity I guarded my head; by now I'd have been food for the roots of grass."

Nevertheless he yearned passionately for life, and growth, and for Rachel, and he hated the hollow consuming earth beneath the trodden ways of men. And once he said with a strange note of lamentation in his voice:

"Rachel, you make me want to be good."

And Rachel smiled.

"I do not think you so bad, John. If the world was different I could think a man like you better than many of the best."

But the world was what it was, and John Perran knew it, and saw strange growths in his own heart. They rose above the surface at times, and Rachel saw them and feared him and was sorry. But always and for ever her soul was with Anthony, and she only gave John husks where Anthony had all the harvest of her heart. And as

she waited for him, and waited for something that she knew not, she only sometimes spoke to his brother, making him the image of the dear god she worshipped. There were times when John hated and desired her, for now his spirit was quick within him, and he touched things in her which were hidden deeply.

"She likes to think I'm Anthony," he cried one night in agony. "I could kill her for that!"

He struggled with himself for hours, and dark night covered his soul.

"Is this love?" he asked, "and does she suffer worse than I, seeing that that she-toad has her man? Oh, I'm sorry for her. My head's aflame."

The sleeping nurse never heard him laugh bitterly. He saw the pearl of dawn upon the sea from his southward window, and walked the room lightly.

"I must get out of this," he said, "before I do some mad folly. She's a divine creature and I'm a fool maimed in my mind. I used to be so happy and she burns me. I never thought of things that come up in me now. If I kissed her I should go mad. My arms ache for her. I ache, I ache. Not all the beauty in the world could cool me. I could pray to God if there's one this side of dawn and sunset. O God! O God!"

For his burning tongue there was no water. He bit his lip till the blood ran and beat his hand against the wall as his brother had done. The pain eased him and he laughed bitterly.

"I'll go to old George's now before I'm mad again," he said. The light of dawn grew; he searched for his clothes and found nothing.

"Naked came I into the world and in grave-clothes go out," he said; "there's nothing odd in marching in my night-gear. Good-bye, room, that I'd better have died in; and good-bye, sweet nurse. Sleep in peace; I'll nurse my own sick self."

But he could not get away after all without folks knowing, for he came face to face with Mary wandering in the passage in her nightgown with a shawl over her shoulders.

"Oh, sir!" she cried.

He was fierce as a thief at night.

"Silence, girl! Do you know where my clothes are?"

"You're not going?"

"Find them, or I'll wring your neck."

But she could not find them and trembled so that she sat down upon the stairs.

"I'm off without 'em. Say I went to old George's."

He marched down and she trailed after him weeping.

"Oh, sir! Oh, Mr. John——"

But he answered nothing, and opening the door went out into the cool, calm dawn that embraced his burning spirit like deep water.

"Blessed are those who can weep," said John; "I can see that. They'll think I'm mad, but now I'm as sane as a fish."

He hammered blaspheming old George Perran out of bed, and tumbled into bed himself, finding sleep out of reaction.

When he woke Greer was standing by his bedside.

"I thought I had escaped you," he said coolly.

"I came after you. You're a rash fool, Perran."

"I never was wise with my old brains, and with these that you've been patching what can you expect?"

Greer took his hand, and felt his pulse and looked at his eyes.

"Well, you're not so bad, or so mad."

"I tell you I'm as sane as any doctor cock-a-whooping on a pile of dead folks."

"You're mad enough. You never thought of the trouble you might cause at Morna. You never thought of Rachel."

"I like you, but you are a liar," said John, "for I can't think of anything else! Get out of this, by God, or I'll cut your over-wise tongue out!"

And Greer went whistling.

"Where's the old Jack Perran?" he asked. "Where does he walk and laugh now? Here's a strange conversation—he that stole ripe apples wants the moon."

III

MORNA COVE knew much and believed it knew more, and by ten o'clock there was not a soul in it who could not tell someone, who had another tale, what it was that had happened at Miss Rachel's house, and how it came that mad John Perran had walked a mile without a rag to his back. Some said that he was simply crazy, and had no reason for such outrageous folly. But others cried out that Mary Jose was the reason of his flight, for there were women who hated to think he might marry her after all. Others declared that Steve had said that John Perran was in love with Miss Rachel before his head was broke.

"And knowing as we do that a cracked skull makes mad men madder, 'tis evident he's wild about her, and she turned him out or said he was to go, whereupon he ups and quits, like any Perran quick to take a hint, as we know."

But whatever Steve had said when he was under the weather, and then he said as much as magpie in an orchard, he remembered now that John had cursed him bitterly when he suggested that he and Anthony were like as two peas, and that either out of the pod might suit Miss Rachel.

"And I talked and talked, like a fine fool," said Steve, "and all the time as like as not he had a notion to hunt her, and all the time Jose was hunting him. Well, if that was so, I did no great harm. And how did I dare talk about my dear young lady loving my king of fools, Anthony Perran? There will be a time, I can see it, when I shall take my liquor where I can get it, and shall go bold as a bishop up to Pentowan and tell that woman my mind. And I'll tell Mr. Anthony my mind, too. I hate folks who think they were born only for the purpose of getting to heaven. A proper trust in God might leave that little matter to Him. In the meantime the round earth's between our arms and our duty is to hug it."

He walked off to George Perran's, where he was

almost sure of something to drink, if Silenus was not silent beside his barrel, to inquire about John.

"I have taken Morna into my charge," he said; "I'm the butt and the Bishop of Morna, and its prophet and its sad example. I'm Balaam and his ass, and all that was his. I wish I was its Providence; it's a sad place now, and yet the death of Mrs. Anthony would make everyone smile but my dear friend John. For then Miss Rachel would marry Anthony, and she would be a queen and smile, and Anthony wouldn't hunt so for heaven when heaven lay within arm's reach, and I should smile and all the village would laugh. And yet no one cuts Mrs. Anthony's throat. I'll lay odds no one has even thought of it. No one will: such creatures live for ever. It's a silly world as I've often remarked before. Here's a poison fly in the eye of Morna and no one kills it. I've heard butchers talk about life being sacred, that I have, with blood on their hands. I could, if I were a poet, make a song about fools that would sound well in choirs and places where they sing."

He saw no John Perran at George's, for John was asleep under the last administration of a drug by Greer. But George sat in a chair in the garden, and save for sudden curses when his gouty foot caught him he was very reasonable and friendly and to be approached in the matter of drinks and a stray sixpence, even though he had been roused at early dawn by a half-naked man battering at his door. The two old vagabonds exchanged their views, and Steve sat on a campstool and cringed a little till he was brave with whiskey, for after all he was a beggarman, and not a holy wandering beggar of the East.

"We Perrans are mad," said George, "but now John will be the maddest of us."

"I did my best to warn him, sir. I kept my eye on Jose, knowing he was dangerous. When religious folks do well to be angry, they're hard to deal with, for they've God on their side, and go into battle mightily."

"He says, winking, that it wasn't Jose that did it."
Steve nodded.

"That's decent of him, that's fine. Oh, Mr. Perran, but I will say that nearly all your family have noble ideas in their hearts!"

"Why not all, Steve?"

Steve drank deep.

"I have my reserves, sir; oh, yes, sir, I have my reserves, and if they were all so good as you and Mr. John, earth wouldn't hold 'em. Mr. John will swear 'twasn't Jose, then? Well, Jose owed him one. And what happens now, sir, out of all this? Life's a fine chain, if we can see the links, and we're all blood brethren. I could have done with the death of quite a few rather than Mr. John. Will he sing now, sir, and smile on the women as he did?"

Old Silenus growled.

"Damn the women, Steve! I smile on none now, and don't care if John doesn't. I wish he wouldn't. He was never company when he was after one of 'em, and before Jose fetched him this crack there were signs upon him that he was after someone. And I guess who it is!"

"Aye, sir, you guess?"

Silenus snorted and reached for his tumbler.

"Why, it's Morna's beauty. I guessed it, and said so this morning, and he cursed me properly, so that I knew it was true. Oh, Lord, he's the fool, and so's the poor dear. John will bring trouble on her. Do you think she knows, Steve?"

"As like as not, sir, for women have eyes for love."

But he said to himself:

"Maybe she doesn't; I'll away down and tell her. I can see that if she smiled on John out of good-nature she might fire a mine. And he's been in her house this five weeks! Damn old Jose, damn him! Didn't I say we were all in a chain?"

He held on drinking with Silenus till he forgot his intention and then staggered down to Morna and preached a sermon to two old fishermen, a few children, and Mrs. Burt, to say nothing of the sun, and sea, and air.

"You are all good people," said Steve, "and I'm a

sinner, and that other sinner, George Perran, has been tanking me up. But I'm not tanked up and blind, as I've heard sea-farers say, but my eyes are open and I see how splendid a thing life is, and I see how you dear folks haven't the least notion of its splendour. Fetch me a mighty congregation, fill up the Cove and all the hills and come you winds and come you little birds and fishes, and I will expound. I will take texts, oh, Lord, I will take whole gigantic books, I will hold up the round earth in my hands, and show you little cheese mites how to think upon cheese. Here we have mad folks hammering other folks' skulls because boys will be boys and girls girls. And here we have religious folks to the full as mad. Religion's a fine thing, but let it be quiet in you. No man should know he has it, and if he knows it he should consult a doctor quickly. There's a wise doctor up at the Church Town; he and I are the only wise men in the country, and if he poisoned you all because you were fools, we should have a quiet time. But there's no need—you poison yourselves, and hunt for next season's apples when your barns are full. There are men who get out of the sunlight to calculate eclipses, so I'm told on good authority, and I can believe it. When I was young I spoilt my own youth by undertaking God's business, and as I die I see wisdom growing in me longer than my beard. You and all Morna and all the world belong to the dark ages; webs and spiders are the curtains of your bed. Don't be afraid of your poor little selves, my dears; God is a deal better than you think. I'd rather kill someone else than myself, and you chop yourselves to pieces. Come now and let us kneel down to the sea and perceive that it is wet. Verily I daresay some of you say it is dry. The air is meant for breathing, my children; breathe it and be wise. Don't be afraid of hell; hell won't hurt you if you are not afraid. Hell's a cowardly kind of creature; it's a sneaking dog, a yapper at frightened heels. Look for the light yourselves; don't get your preachers to hunt for the sun at midnight with a sulphur match. I may be drunk, but I'm very human and I don't go in for sorcery to get the best of the dark-

ness. And now I trust that I have cleared up your minds, and that you will henceforth stand on your feet like men, and if that's so I've done my duty and I'll get off my feet and seek a shady spot where I can shut my eyes and think how good the summer is. So good-bye to you, and may your throats never be dry and may you never lack wisdom such as mine."

And some little boys threw bits of turf at him.

"He's a sad disgrace to this Morna of yours," said Tryphena Burt.

IV

THOSE who let William Jose out of the grey stone house where he had lodged said that he was a lucky man, for they knew well enough that John Perran had lied when he swore that, whoever his assailant was, it could not have been the blacksmith. What Jose himself thought he told no one, but once more he worked at the forge, and when he met John Perran in the village he passed him with a bowed head. So folks breathed again since violence had passed out of him, and though there was always a sense of trouble in the village there was for a while greater peace, and all the processes of passing life renewed themselves. Fish were drawn out of the sea, and beasts were fattened, and the harvest grew up with poppies, and with poppies it might be that there were tares also. Winnie Perran wrought out what fate gave her, and they said she was quieter and less querulous and bitter. For now there was no need for Anthony to go to Morna House, and he bowed his neck to the yoke and the heifer ploughed with him. And in Mary a bitter harvest grew, and a sullenness came over her that was felt through the house, and her heart was wholly turned from Rachel, because Rachel had seen Anthony in his brother.

"What's come to the girl?" asked Martha. "She glowers at us all, and I'm sick of it. As if I hadn't enough trouble getting old, and with Rachel in this trouble of her mind. I could scream at times, I could,

and though I am old if I shake Mary I will shake her till her teeth rattle."

At another time the old woman was more gentle.

"Well, well, Rachel, what can you expect? She's a poor fool like all us women. And to have the man she wants lie here a month and never ask for her or the boy—oh, yes, it was hard, I'll swear. I told her he'd never marry her, and she's jealous of all women, knowing him. It was a mistake to bring her into the house at first. You'll mind I warned you. Trouble will come of it, somehow. But what's the use, trouble grows on barren ground: there's no such crop as woe; it's green in frost and it's green in drought. Salt won't kill its roots, and prayer is vain. My life has been a prayer for you, and there's times I say my knees shall ache no more."

And Rachel knew well enough that John's latest passion was for her. Her own full heart passed this by, for what did it matter? He was a man who knew passion, it might be, but of love he knew nothing, and without any reward his passion would fade. She saw the man as he had been, not as he was, and walked upon a path of danger dreaming. Steve never warned her, though his warning might have been vain, for he had a bad week of drunkenness after being at George Perran's, and he celebrated the advent of summer and lying out at nights in a wild long debauch procured with money that a daughter sent him.

So Rachel lived for a while in what seemed peace to her, and John was as mad a man as any in the country round. For he knew well enough where her heart lay, and not knowing that his own passion was vain, it angered him that she should waste herself upon his brother. He struck the truth when he thought upon him, or a bitter part of it.

"Did he come to see me when I was in her house? No, he came to see her."

Yet Anthony loved him, and he was unjust and felt he was unjust. He swallowed his resentment and yet chewed the cud of anger, and bitter herbs were his food,

for he had lost himself and his serenity, and his old harmony with nature was inappeasable discord. As he looked from his window he saw Anthony coming upon the road, and he went out to meet him.

"What's he going to do with Rachel?" he asked. "I'll find out."

Something liker happiness than anything he had known bloomed in Anthony's heart, for the knowledge of Rachel's spoken love was sweet as soft rain to burnt pastures, and that he had said "I love you" seemed no sin since nothing could come of it which was sin. For this was love spiritual, and in it the glory celestial burned as brightly as any lamp to any moth. Now when he walked alone he was happy, for the self within him rejoiced that Rachel for his sake would live alone, even as his spirit lived alone save for her. And her strange sweet violence of passion passed like a storm of night, as his soul greeted the dawn of sinless love which would endure in Paradise. So God's child walked upon the earth, and saw his brother of the earth coming.

John linked his arm in Anthony's.

"But for this scar," said John, "I hear I'm more like you than I was, old boy. Is it that we're both cracked? Who smote you over the skull when you were younger? Now I'm as mad as you."

Anthony smiled on him.

"You're not well yet."

He stopped and looked John in the face and sighed.

"Are you more like me? There's some change in you. I wish there was more."

"If I get much madder, I may pray to be madder still," said John, "and as mad as you, and I am crazy or I shouldn't have something to say to you."

He paused and stared anxiously at Anthony.

"No, I'm getting sane, my dear boy. I'm as sane as any cool fish in the sea. I have been mad, you know. I'm going to reform, Anthony."

He spoke nervously.

"You're married, Anthony, and I'm for getting mar-

ried too. Damn this wild life of woman-hunting that you know nothing of! I'm tired of it, full to the lips of it. I've someone in my mind."

His manner was strange, and Anthony's mind worked swiftly, now that he came out of his dream.

"Who is it? There should be one."

John burst out angrily.

"There you are again! Didn't I tell you I'd sooner have my neck broken? I got my skull cracked instead, and I'm quits with Jose. As for the girl, I'll do as much as any man who wouldn't hang himself to do his duty. I'm not so much like you as all that."

He never meant to taunt Anthony, but his tongue was over-quick. Anthony's face grew very dark, and the reproof angered John foolishly.

"I'll go my own way, if it leads to hell."

And then he was sorry.

"Forgive me, old boy; oh, I'll be fair. I don't care a damn about this sin you talk of. I wish you were a bigger sinner, even if it made me as cracked as you think I am."

"What do you mean?" asked Anthony, and his face worked as he walked on. "What do you mean?"

"What do I mean? I'll tell you. Do you know I've been over thirty days in Morna House?"

As he spoke he stopped, and Anthony stopped too, and the brothers looked at each other.

"By God, do you understand?" asked John in a strained voice of anguish. "I was thirty days in *her* house, and I've come out of it with a heart of fire."

Anthony saw another heart of fire burning that far off wonderful night so long ago. He felt his own burn, and peace went out of him as the chained passions of his soul leaped within him.

"She'll not marry you. She'll not marry."

He put his head upon one side as if he was listening to hear what he would say. But John was staring at him hard, and his eyes were swifter than words and carried more than any words. John caught him by both lapels of his coat.

"You're my brother, and I love you. I'll be fair with you. You're married; oh, you fool, you're married. That's nought to me; I know you love Rachel and that she loves you. Are you going to take her, tell me that?"

A thousand voiceless passions raged in Anthony, and he was speechless. What he said represented nothing of the strife within.

"Oh, here's my brother," he cried aloud, and then he ceased speaking. "God help me. Am I going to take her?" He caught his breath and struggled, and John tried to speak.

"No, no," said Anthony. "Wait."

He loved John and hated him; could have struck him down and wept over him. He had been a month in Rachel's house and now loved her.

"She loves me," he said to himself. "Oh, me, me! No other man!"

He turned to John again.

"Don't say such things. I'm married—and you know me. But she won't love you. Go away, John, go, I implore you to go. There's nothing but misery here for us, and why should you be in it?"

"I'm in it to my neck," cried John. "But if she's yours, or if she will be, I'll go."

He caught Anthony's hand.

"I'm like you, and I'm a man, I think. I'll make her love me, but it shall be by your leave. They say she loves you. If you'll take her, I'll leave Morna, leave it now, to-day."

He stared at his brother hard, and Anthony's face was rigid as death, and as pale as if he bled inwardly.

"She's a good woman," he cried, "a sweet woman, and if she loves me she's like steel. You can't turn her. Go, go!"

But John could not be shaken off.

"Is she yours, Anthony?"

"Don't say that, or I'll kill you," said Anthony, for his passions bayed within him like a pack of wolves.

"Don't say it. Can't you see what you're doing?"

He prayed to God.

"I've kept my heart down, O Lord: keep it down, Thou——"

And John cried out:

"Smash me if you will. But whatever you do, I'll know. Is she yours?"

Anthony's heart cried out, "She's mine!" and his lips said:

"No, no!"

"Then will she be?" asked John. "For if not, I'll get her, if it costs me my soul that you talk of. Isn't this fair and fine of me to be so good, my boy? I'm offering her to you and getting ready for life and death without her. But if you don't take her, I will."

"I cannot take her. Take your own woman and your child." And suddenly Anthony caught hold of him by the shoulder.

"My brother, go and leave us. Don't you see what we suffer; don't you see my heart and hers? Oh, I'm mad this day and hour, and every day and every hour."

But John laughed savagely.

"Then what's your wife and your God if Rachel suffers? I'll beat you out of her heart. Oh, if I loved any woman I'd go hell for her. But you leave her in hell and lay your bloodless heart before your God. You're not a man, Anthony, you're a priest-like thing, a mere image, a cold abstraction. I hate you! *You* suffer! You can't suffer!"

But he saw Anthony's face writhe and he knew that he lied. He lied again to back up his own soul.

"By God, you act it! I'll have her and make her forget you ever cast a shadow. Oh, do you cast a shadow? You've no heart. It's God's, and you go hunting it. She's got mine, and I'll have it from her. Oh, Rachel!"

He burnt with passion and Anthony knew it, and knowing him of old, he raged in his heart and the sky was darkened.

"Such love as yours, such love as yours!" he cried.

"It's human. It's a man's, and she's a woman. Oh,

she loves life and children. Have you heard her speak of little children?"

John had heard her speak of them. But Anthony had searched her heart.

"If you trouble her, I'll kill you."

"Oh, kill," said John; "kill! If I win her, I'll look out. And if I don't, you can brain me. I'd not give a hair of my head for a long life if she's not mine; but I'd give my life for an hour of her love. I can see her at my hearth!"

But Anthony had seen her at his feet, and he became a man suddenly, even in spite of himself. His voice was terrible and he laughed.

"Her heart's mine, you fool. Take her if you can. She'll be sorry for you, but not I. Get out of my sight, or I shall forget you are maimed and a madman and my brother."

And when John was gone he knelt behind a rock and prayed to God for help where no help might be, and for repentance for this passion. But John went on towards Pentowan, since a devil that had entered into his heart bade him take counsel with Winnie.

"She's a leech and will stick," said John. "I wonder what she knows. Does Anthony speak the truth—does he speak the truth?"

V

"I COULD have killed him," said Anthony, even as he prayed. "Oh, but I'd got a good peace, a calm in my heart," he cried, "and now I'm mad again. I called to John and what did I say? Oh, I said she loved me, and that he might take her if he could, and I laughed. I said, 'She loves me, me,' and that's true, but I said it! I burn now! To think he thinks of her, and may go to her! He's free, for all Mary: he's not married; he's not where I am. God help me, my wife's my bane and she'll bear a child; and that night, that sweet night Rachel held my knees, I was strong, but I was afraid,

for she was sweeter than air to the drowning. Her sight gives me eyes; the thought of her is food."

He marched blindly.

"God above, cool my heart and its flames! Her heart's a fire and draws me. If I had wedded her (oh, but that night in the woods comes back—I saw her sleeping!) I could have brought her to Thy service. Give her to me now by some unimaginable way of life or death; or give me peace."

The sky was peace and the wind's wings were folded, and the sea glowed with soft colour.

"He's my brother, but let him approach her, let him trouble her, and he's not my brother. But she loves me! That's bliss to think upon, and it's the fire of hell. I dream of her, and there's Winnie: I think of her, and there's Winnie. A meal's a sacrament thinking of her: but Winnie makes God's sacrament choke me. I had such thoughts of women; they were so fair, so sweet, such God's creatures. And some are, some are! Rachel believes in Him no longer, she says, but I know God believes in her: she's dear and great and has a heart to mother the world with. With her I'd have climbed, now I hang over the pit and slip; my fingers clutch and weaken. Where's my faith? I doubt, I doubt, and yet O Lord, I believe, I believe!"

He stood and faced the sea, envying its calm.

"I'm not calm, there's no peace in me. John said I cast no shadow, did not exist, was a cold abstraction, not a man. If I met Rachel now! I must ask her not to call to me, not to speak as she did. I hear her spirit at nights! Winnie said I laughed o' nights! There are men and men, and women and women! She's to be the mother of my child. It's ghastly to think on: I'm one pain to think of it."

And this same man went down into Morna, and spoke with men. But though they said Mr. Anthony was dark in his mind, none knew how dark he was: nor did any know that under the darkness lay fire. Only Steve guessed how it was with the man, and going up to Anthony he plucked him by the sleeve boldly.

"Do you remember, sir, saying some time ago, when you and Father Brant came across me, that I should be whipped?"

"I remember," said Anthony. "I'm sorry, for you're not a bad fellow in your heart, Steve."

Steve looked at him from under his shaggy eyebrows, and stared hard.

"Mr. Anthony, I'll take a whipping for leave to give you good advice."

Anthony eyed him sternly.

"Say nothing that you think should be paid for so."

But Steve threw up his head and snorted.

"I'm not afraid, sir, only I think, after all, the time's not yet. There'll be a day I'll come to you and speak my mind, and I'll go on speaking till you are of my mind, or tear my tongue out and go running from my prophesyings."

As Anthony walked away Steve called after him:

"There's as many flaws in your theology, sir, as there are holes in a ladder. Bless my poor dry soul, sir, you've a sad opinion of God, and if I were the Almighty I should resent it! I'm preparing a sermon for you. Did it ever occur to you that thinking only of yourself and God and your own miserable salvation is the selfishest thing a man can do?"

But Anthony said to his heart that he was thinking of the salvation of others and to help them walked in hell.

VI

JOHN had not been alone with Winnie once since he came back to Morna, and even the few words she spoke in the presence of others had been fouled with innuendo. He ignored the past wholly, and as he tried not to think of it, spoke clearly and cleanly to her as his brother's wife. But he never kissed her.

"Oh, she's unspeakable!" said John; "and here I'm going to see her. And what for? I love Rachel, and

my heart's so rotten with what I used to call love that I can't trust her clear eyes and her open heart. And Winnie's a liar. I'll have to sift her words."

That he could have done two months before, but now he was past it. Of old he had been swift and clear in his mind; now he was conscious of strange confusions and sudden turbidities. For all his ancient wildness he had had himself in hand; he drank, but drank too much very rarely; he never lost his temper or lost himself. He was his own man for good or evil; and no one influenced him. Now all this was changed; suggestions planted themselves in his broken brain and flowered; his passions were not subordinated; the ancient discipline of true health was weakened; the brute beneath the man mutinied.

He found Winnie in her garden, for she had a certain love for flowers.

"You've come to see me at last," she said, smiling.

She watched him with veiled eyelids; beneath them her eyes flamed lazily.

"Did you get what you deserved, John?"

"Part of it, no doubt."

"I've no grudge," said Winnie swiftly, and she stooped with some difficulty to pick a rose. "How did you get on with Rachel?"

She saw the flicker of his eyes, and caught him breathing a little harder. Her jealousy of Rachel went far—she herself had tested the weaknesses of men.

"She was very kind," said John coolly; but his coolness was over-acted and too late, and Winnie frowned:

"Of course you think I hate her," she said frankly; "everyone says that, and it's so foolish. We're not friends, but that's her fault and not mine."

She looked up at him and came closer.

"You've fallen in love with her, John," she said with an air of sadness. The past was vivid in her mind and clear enough in his. He moved away from her.

"No," he said, but there was a choke in his voice, and she said "yes" to herself, and followed him.

"I don't mind, John. I've forgotten the—old days. Was I so wicked? How is it that you make women fools?"

She turned away with an affected sullenness,

"Now you're different, and I suppose she loves you, and you've come to tell me that you're going to be married. Does she love you very much—as much as some others did?"

The suggestion maddened him doubly; but the deeper madness remained and his inward desires were agony.

"She doesn't love me."

"But you love her?"

"What if I do?" asked John. "She's not for me. I'm not what I was, Winnie; I'm not sane now."

Winnie held her breath, for she hated Rachel worse than ever. But a thought took root in her, and she was pleased with her swiftness and her subtlety.

"You used to be over-brave with us poor women," she said tauntingly; "folks used to say there was none of us could resist you. You made me suffer, but I'll help you."

That she offered to help was not strange to John.

"She's afraid for Anthony," he said, and sucked his dry lips.

"There's no chance," he said, lifting his eyes with an appeal of fierce suffering in them. "If there's a chance, tell me, Winnie. You're happy now, and I'm just mad. I'm not what I was."

"Why should I help her? I don't love her," said Winnie cunningly, and John answered to her lure as quick as any hawk.

"Help her? Help me, you mean?"

"Help her," said Winnie, "that's what I meant. She thinks she loves someone else. I could let her suffer—she was never sweet to me."

"You mean——"

"You know what I mean," said Winnie, and to any but a blinded fool her hate was fire to burn. "And you could take her away—if you had courage. But you're not what you were, John, I can see that."

The thought within her grew like grass in spring; it covered her with its shade. She was deep in an evil grove and smiled.

"You took what you wanted long ago. Oh, you think her far above you!"

John answered nothing, but stared at her.

"I'll have to sift her words." That was what he had said, and she sifted him.

"There was a time I couldn't have helped you," she sighed; "it would have broken my heart. But she and I used to talk of you and about things. When she was seventeen she liked you more than a little, John. I was fool enough to say I—I loved you."

She cast down her eyes, but knew he was shaking.

"And you went away, you see. And—and there was that other girl," she added. She broke a white lily's neck with her fingers as she spoke.

"The man's mad about her," she told herself; "what can they see in her?"

But John stood in a strange mad dream.

"She loved me then? Do you mean it?"

"Why should I tell you lies?" demanded Winnie. "What's it all to me? If the poor fool thinks she loves someone else, let her. And you can let her go on thinking it. You wouldn't have done it long ago."

"I'm changed," said John almost humbly. "She'll never look at me with Mary in the house; she's so proud."

Winnie moved closer to him and laughed. She put her hand upon his shoulder.

"Oh, are we not proud, we women, when our hearts are fools? She's no prouder than the rest of us. Oh, I know her! We talked in the old days. I could tell you things, John; there's no weaker woman in Morna."

She bore upon his shoulder, and whispered:

"She has a passion for children—of her own, John! If you dare kiss her and break her pride, she'd adore you again. She wept when you left Morna."

He had gone there to find out if there was aught between Rachel and Anthony. He meant to sift Winnie,

but she played upon him like any pipe, and made him sick with desire. And all the time he knew that Anthony's very soul was in Rachel's hands.

"He's like me," said John to himself, "and I went away. He won't take her; he'd think it damnable. And he's married."

He heard Anthony's strained voice saying, "Her heart's mine, you fool."

"I offered her to him!"

And Winnie watched him struggling.

"Oh, but she's fine and sweet!" said John; "there's not a soul in Morna that doesn't love her. She can't love me, she can't, Winnie!"

There was a strange humility in him, the humility of high passion which exalts and casts down. And Winnie, who had never inspired aught but base passion, laughed with bitterness.

"I could tell you things," she cried mockingly. "She's no saint; there's no need for worship. Ask Mary!"

She had played for this and for the moment, and she shook him suddenly.

"Ask——"

"Ask your Mary girl," said Winnie. "She told me something the other day. I met her in the fields by the brook and she was fierce and sullen (she loves you—Morna's full of fools) and when I asked her how Rachel was she looked to be asked questions and I asked them."

"What?"

She saw him trembling.

"She hates Rachel—now."

"Oh, but she's a mean little fool, and Rachel was so good to her," cried John. "Why—why?"

And Winnie plucked a rose red to pieces as she answered.

"Your lips should know."

She spoke dark enigmas and turned away from him as she spoke.

"My lips?" stammered John. "What do you mean, woman, what do you mean?"

"Has she never kissed you?"

"No, by God," said John, "no!"

"She has," screamed Winnie, "she has! Mary saw her. You were in bed, near death, and she bent over you and kissed you, and said such things of love, and her lips were fire on yours. And Mary told me with her face in the grass and her body shaking. 'Tis truth, 'tis truth!"

What was truth she told him, and the truth would have fired his blood, but she added hot lie on lie, and he was a-flame.

"You lay cold and she was fire."

She caught him again and put her lips to his very ear.

"She lies waking and sleeping in her wood, and calling on you. Do your lips burn, do they burn?"

And when he saw the sky clear again and the dark woods of Morna and the sea beyond them, he was alone.

VII

RACHEL stood in many groves, not only in the groves of her own dark woodland, and she heard the voices of Sibyls in caves by the sea, and her heart suffered and rejoiced as the summer drew on. She waited and could wait, but what she waited for she knew not. All that she was aware of was that a new hope built its nest in her soul, and she heard its song like that of the nightingale before the dawn comes up from the sea. So much love surrounded her that it clothed her like a garment, and she went among her people of the village, knowing well that they knew more of her heart than any told them, and did her best to make them happy. But after John left her house so strangely she thought little of the passion which seemed to have waked in him. He was a man who loved women; a woman he could not love. And her whole heart was his brother's, who came no longer to Morna House.

Yet there were times when they met by the verge of the sea, and on the wide wastes of the eastern upland farm, and they spoke together with failing tongues and sudden silences. And both were happy unhappy. The world

was a wonderful place, and the glory of the sun was in them, and the glory of the sea about them and the winds sang to them. And they never spoke of that midnight in her house, so that sometimes the splendour of the world was nothing when they remembered. In his heart his own house was death.

"I wait," said Rachel to herself.

And many voices of the earth asked for what she waited.

"He'll come some day," other voices said, and there were moments when she sang.

"He said, 'I love you!'"

She perceived differences in him now. He was more abrupt; less steady in his mind; sometimes he appeared reckless and defiant; he walked leaning towards her. Once he said suddenly as they parted:

"If I could do anything for you! If I could protect you——"

She feared none but him, because she loved him. One day he asked:

"Have you seen John since he left your house?"

She shook her head and Anthony frowned.

"He's mad, Rachel, mad, but not ungrateful. He angered me the other day. There are depths in a man—oh, there are depths. I—I could have killed him."

"Why?"

"I could have killed him," repeated Anthony. "Jose did kill him. Be wise with him, Rachel."

He said no more, for now that his rage and jealousy of John had died in his heart he was sorry for him, and very pitiful.

"He loves her, and she's not for him. I love her and if I reached out my hand—oh, mine's the worst!"

In the intolerable anguish of his desire of her love he said he would reach out his hand for her, and when he met her the gift of her presence and the humble majesty of her love were like cooling waters.

"To be with you is heaven, Rachel."

He walked at times on the moorland at night with her spirit, and looked with her very soul at the depths of

heaven, and in such hours his faith enlarged, and he became one with the deep universe.

“But she calls me back to earth!”

Man was mighty and of the children of the Most High; his spirit reached out to heaven, and he took the stars for his crown. He called upon the Almighty and All-merciful, and trod down the earth beneath his feet. But woman was of the earth, and was the child of the earth, and her paradise was earthly love, and dear children near her heart.

“Oh, man’s the greater creature!” he cried; “he’s stronger, nearer God. His place (and mine, O God!) to lift her up from the earth.”

But Rachel stood upon the earth firmly, and saw that it was beautiful in all the ways where love dwelt. God was not far, but close at hand, and when she cried out that there was no God she knew the spirit of God was within her, and that her true instincts expressed the will of Heaven, and that nature was God and nothing alien. She trusted herself and found no evil, though much evil worked about her, and the world was dark to many more than herself. And now it was strangely dark for Anthony’s brother, and he walked in darkness. For the poison that Winnie had planted in him grew very rankly, and he began to lay wait for Rachel, believing that she loved him. His desires whispered to him that it was natural that she should.

“I’m free, and if she loved me first—— And Anthony’s married. Winnie’s not so bad, poor woman. They’ll have children, and Anthony is a man to love them. I’ll try Rachel, but I’m different from what I was. Old Jose did his work—there are hours I wish he had finished me!”

He haunted the village and the woodland paths about Morna and the caves of the sea that Rachel loved. The village folk talked of him, and Steve kept his eye on the man, for he saw that he was altered and might be dangerous.

“I was wrong. Miss Rachel will never change; there’s no change in her and she’ll hang to Anthony Perran till

death. I mistrust John Perran now and hope Miss Rachel does. But Sigurd's always with her; he's a dog and truer than any man, and he that insults her might die no natural death with that big beast's teeth in his throat."

He met Rachel and Sigurd that day on the verge of her woodland.

"I like to see your dog with you, Miss Rachel," said Steve. "A dog's truer than a man. I've never heard of a dog ceasing to love without bitter reason, but men often do, being men. Keep Sigurd close to you; danger follows beauty closer even than the hour when beauty is not. Have you seen Mr. John lately, Miss Rachel?"

"Not for days."

"He wanders round Morna House," said Steve significantly, "and he's ever in the village now. He's ceased to drink; they say it maddens him. He's mad already. When he speaks to you, be careful, and speak him fair but coldly. Why were men made as they are? I'm glad I'm old and past all love that's no more than a glow in the sky when the sun's down. Men's love is a sun at noon; it scorches fair cheeks over-much. I could speak out, but I'm in a shake, which serves me right. I earned it. John Perran's no safer but less safe than he was. Of old he never robbed orchards, but took what hung over walls. He'll climb walls now, or I'm a skew-eyed skate of a man and see crooked."

But Rachel heeded nothing that he said and walked in the aloof security of her dreamland.

"John mad? Who's madder than I? Martha watches me and talks of my mother, every word a warning. Anthony loves me—he said so."

She lived upon the warm remembrance of the hour when his love gave her soul permission to speak.

"My heart spoke. It was as though someone in me cried out. When shall I speak again?"

She knelt on the needles of her pinewood and put her arms about Sigurd's mighty neck.

"When shall I speak again, Sigurd?"

And the big dog licked her hand and whimpered lightly, and then barked aloud, for he saw John Perran

walking in the wood, coming towards them. And Sigurd, knowing that it was not his old master, did not go to meet him, but stood in the path and greeted John as one who had cold leave to enter Morna House. Rachel rose to her feet.

"I'm quite forgiven, then, for leaving you at midnight?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Rachel, smiling. How like he was to Anthony! And yet the dancing circles of sunlight on the ground beside her were as like the sun itself as John to him she loved. But he made a picture of Anthony when she half closed her eyes, and then the world was sweeter; it was a wonderful day and she could dream foolishly.

John Perran was tongue-tied, for he, who used to speak so well, found words with strange difficulty, and he leant against a pine, wondering at himself.

"I used to have things to say," he cried at last, "but since I left your house as I did I wonder at nothing."

Through a narrow aisle of the woods Morna House showed a warm white in the glow of the sun.

"I was happy there," he said, with a touch of sullenness. "I'll never be happy again."

If she had said that, surely all the world would believe it. But for him it was folly. The likeness between him and Anthony faded, and her dream grew cold and the lighted wood sombre. She played with Sigurd's sharp ears as the great dog leant his head against her, and she sighed a little mournfully, looking at John as she sighed.

"Don't say that," she murmured. "There are too many sad."

His own heart was softened, not only by the warm breath of summer and the voices of the wood, but by his sorrow, and the strange folly of men and the world, and the changes in human hearts. Once no doubt he had waited for Mary, believing he loved her. How could such a man love, since love was as steadfast as the ancient earth, and as immortal as the stars?

"I'm mad with myself," said John, in a troubled voice. "I was a fool years ago."

What Winnie had told him had become truth, and what she said was but a corroboration of his instincts.

"She kissed me!"

And yet underneath his mind there was some knowledge of the real reason she had kissed him.

"Oh, yes, I'm like him, like Anthony!"

He put the thought away from him.

"I wish I knew your heart," he cried suddenly, and she looked at him wide-eyed and alarmed.

"I'm afraid of you and of myself," he said, struggling.

He gripped his hands together, and she saw him shake. Sigurd looked up at him as if he scented something strange.

"I want to speak, Rachel," he cried, in a strangled voice. "I want to speak, and I can't!"

But his eyes gleamed and he came nearer to her, so that Sigurd growled.

"I heard something about you in the old days," he said at last. "You—you liked me better then. You're in trouble now, or you think so——"

She clutched at her bosom and the ivory thing she carried there, and her heart was bitter. Did she think so then, did she think so merely, or was not trouble growing blood-red all about her? And John reached out his arms to her.

"I—I love you, Rachel, I love you! I'm mad, blind, foolish, and I love you!"

But for Sigurd's great interposed body he would have taken hold of her then.

"O God, if I could speak," said John, "if I could only speak!"

The red fading scar on his left cheek grew scarlet, and he staggered.

"Don't speak," said Rachel wildly, "don't. I will not hear you."

But the words came to him, and with words a mad belief in what he wished to believe.

"I'll wait," he said. "I understand. I've been that which I should not. It's natural you should almost hate me. But I know, Rachel, I know, now that I see you!"

He spoke in such passionate triumph that Rachel quivered.

“What do you know?”

“I know your heart, I can see it. I loved you years ago, but you were so young and I went away after doing folly.”

He lied with fervour, for he believed what he said: there was a passion in his voice which showed it.

“I came back—for you! When Jose struck me I was coming for you. I knew all that was in me when I saw you at the gate that day I came first. If I’d known what had been in yours, I’d have kissed your feet!”

She heard him speak, and such words even from him drew strange echoes from the high solitude of her heart. When he reached out his trembling hands she drew back saying to herself:

“If they were Anthony’s,” and yet was sorry for him even as he triumphed so inexplicably.

“I know you love me,” he cried aloud.

He saw her grow rigid and fierce. A dark cloud swept over her, and she turned away from him.

“Are you indeed mad?” she asked, “oh, are you mad?”

Now what Winnie had said was not something told him. In his mind he saw himself in her house, and found her lips on his.

“I know better, Rachel, my darling, my darling.”

There was so great an accent of conviction in his voice, which with softer words found its ancient music, that she trembled like one who meets an incredible accusation without defence.

“You’re mine, I know it!” he said, triumphing. “Oh, I know what your heart was when I went way. I was foul and your love shall cleanse me. I’m your slave and your king. Rachel, Rachel!”

She clutched at Sigurd’s collar as for help, and the dog turned towards John, and growled deeply.

“Growl, old boy,” said John, “oh, I could sing!”

He shook and his eyes were injected, and Rachel was afraid.

"'Tis natural you feel so," he cried. "Oh, what a beast I've been! But I'm a man and can give you all things a woman needs."

But her fear left her and rage got hold of her. Her brow was dark as night.

"Don't come near me, or I'll kill you!"

She felt in the bosom of her dress for the crucifix. And John laughed like one insane.

"Oh, but you are fine, and a fire of flame. There's no such woman as you in Morna, or all the country round. Your heart's a forge to melt me. Oh, but you wrought me into steel that night, Rachel!"

He threw up his arms.

"I'm steel of love, steel engraved. Oh, that night in the house of yours!"

She turned again upon him.

"Are you mad? What night?"

There was no such thing as Winnie now. The man knew. He had not been told. He could have sworn that he remembered.

"What night? what time? what hour? I can't tell you, but I recall it. Didn't I say I was steel engraved? My lips remember. My God, but yours were fire!"

He clutched at a pine, and held it shaking.

"My—my lips?"

"Your lips, Rachel! Your lips on mine and I not dead, but alive and motionless; not able to speak, but not deaf. I heard your words of love. Kiss me now!"

She was as white as a wreath of snow, and she shook dreadfully, and her eyes burned with shame.

"I never kissed you!"

She had kissed Anthony when she put her lips on this madman's brow.

"Say so, my sweet, say so! Oh, but it's natural. You'll be mine. God help me and you, but I'll win you if I break myself and you, since you've kissed me. I heard you—words of love in the dark that fired me! You told the truth then!"

There was that fierce hostility of passion in him which conquers such women as love, but still fight. But it made

Rachel shrink, and the motion that she made and the sound of his voice roused Sigurd to swift anger.

"You lie!" said Rachel. "Don't speak to me."

"You're proud now," cried John, "you'll be the sweeter. My heart can win you."

Fear of him merged in sudden fear for him.

"Go, go!" she said. "Can't you see you've angered Sigurd? In a moment I can't keep him back."

As she spoke the dog leaped forward furiously; and she only held him by clutching a pine sapling with one hand while she gripped his collar with the other.

"Dog in a leash! Oh, that's my heart," said John. "He hates me; he's male too. I'm no dog-fighter with this arm. Oh, don't be ashamed of love, Rachel, I did wrong, but I'll make amends. You kissed me!"

"I can't hold him. Go, go!"

He went laughing and a-tremble, and left her with Sigurd, who presently gave way and begged for pardon with his great head at her feet. But she stared through the wood at the hurt man, and as fear, sudden and awful, went out of her, an infinite pity soothed her soul, and made her almost shed tears.

"Hearts of men and women; hearts of men and women! Where's Anthony, where's Anthony?"

But John sat talking to himself by the cliff-road.

"She kissed me! I can feel her lips—it's her pride: what should women do with pride? I'll take her; I'd steal her from an army. What a woman, tall and fine; there's a glory about her. Oh, if that boy had but been hers, we'd have played in the happy wood and I'd have sung. I'd have sung of red lips, and her heart and a child of hers and mine."

He was drunk with passion and staggered as he went down the road. There was a dim echo of vile words in his soul:

"She lies waking and sleeping in her wood, calling on you."

"I'm fire, I'm fire," said John. "I could cool my heart at a blown forge."

VIII

THE anger and fear in Rachel's mind turned too soon to pity. The sense of tragedy that was in all passion overwhelmed her heart; not only did she suffer, but all the world was in bitter travail. She grieved for the man who had spoken strange things to her in the wood, and seeing that he was no longer himself, no longer the bright creature of a happy day, she forgave him almost with tears. The sense of love offered that she could not accept, that she fled from, gave her, at the very time of her flight, pleasure that was pain and led to pain. The little peace that had come to her fell away: she called upon Anthony in her soul, and the storm once more renewed itself in her. There were hours which came to her heavy with a sense of fate: she perceived death in the woodland, death at her unlocked door. The passion of her remembered dreams was sowed with salt tears: she suffered and yet was strong because death itself seemed half as desirable as life, and who should come riding with death but Anthony.

"Years ago Steve mocked him, saying he rode a pale horse, and was like death."

That touch of passionate virility in her adoration of her lover and in her desires which gave her love its compelling quality was now in high rebellion and looked for help in despair.

"She's well and fair, and will live for ever," she cried, "and then——"

Ah! besides all this Winnie would have a child and hold the man for ever.

"What did I know, and what was in me when I cried to her that it would never be born? It was as though I knew. I'll wait."

Now she did little work, and restlessness got her by the neck. She sat with her books an hour, reading nothing, and then walked in her garden and her pines, leaving them for the sea, which said inscrutable things, which mocked the hot folly of man. And while she was

in the house Martha followed her and offered her service. And the old woman's heart was heavy, and something that was almost terror of Rachel grew up in her heart.

"It's her mother walks the house once more," she said; "what peace can there be for such agony in death? My darling's bones are in the windy churchyard on the hill, but here she suffered. There's another soul looks out of Rachel's eyes. She's no girl now; she's ripe for love or death. I could pray for that fool Anthony to break God's law. Oh, fool that he is—fool!"

She went to Rachel once in desperation to console her.

"I'm afraid for you, Rachel. But your good time's coming. I know it will; it shall, it must! There's no such heart as yours. If I were a man I should be mad about such a woman. Oh, my darling, I'm old, but I shall see you happy yet. I see things that you don't."

"What do you see, Martha?"

"Some would say I was wicked. I believe I see what you desire coming."

She caught hold of Rachel and whispered:

"Your mother—she suffered—oh, I've held her in my arms when her tears were of blood, and I said to her that her day would come."

Her own tears fell.

"And did it come?" asked Rachel.

"That crucifix knows," said Martha. "She flamed like a star. Oh, it was cruel, but she had her hour. I'm a wicked, weak old woman, but I can see things because I'm so old. They say those near death get wise."

"Then you're not wise, dear," said Rachel; "what should I do without you?"

"Oh, that you could," said Martha. "If I saw you full-hearted and sweet as harvest! But you'll be happy, dear, you'll have your hour. 'Tis as much as any woman gets. That's true, sad wisdom, so I must be old, very old."

She smiled and kissed Rachel and went away to work and weep, since her own hour was long past, and Rachel's might never come.

"The crucifix brought mother happiness and it brought her death," said Rachel. "There are hours I could thrust it into my own heart."

She went out into the shadow of the wood.

"There are hours I could thrust it into Anthony's. I'm alone. What's my suffering to his?"

As she looked out across the half-hidden village she saw Anthony come walking down the road into Morna, and though he was far away she knew him. And she too went down to Morna, and they met on the beach. Most of the boats were at sea, fishing, but Sam Burt's was there, and Sam was getting her ready to go out.

"You're late, Sam," said Rachel.

"I'm not for fishing to-day, Miss," he answered. "I'm going across the bay to the River for salt. You came with me last time, Miss; will you come now? 'Twill be a fine sail. It's a sweet day, and my new boat sails as sweetly as a gull on the wing."

She saw Anthony's face twitch, and he looked at her swiftly as though he would have spoken. But he said nothing.

"I'll come," said Rachel, and her face was dark.

"Mr. Anthony's coming, too," said Sam.

As she turned again to Anthony her face was wonderful.

IX

THE day was a splendour and a glory, and though high noon was past there was still a touch of morning in the freshness of the northwest wind. Though the sea under the grey and cold cliffs was windless, the strong easterly flood broke in foam and in dull thunder beneath the high wall of the land. The song of the sea was a continual melody, and even the harsh cries of wheeling sea-birds made no discord in the natural music of the hour. Morna lay in the full sunlight; its white houses glowed; a burning band of madder-coloured weed clung to the beach, and heaved with the glowing waters. Beyond Morna

Rachel's house showed through its trees; beyond it again were sloping pastures and lifted uplands burning with gorse and with grass yet unbrowned by the young summer. Hills and tors beyond the upland lost their earthly material solidity—they became atmospheric and blue as the sky itself.

Sam rowed the boat out of the Cove, for there was little wind in its sheltered waters. When they felt the lift of the sea beneath them and heard the echoing cliffs on either hand, he laid in his oars and hoisted the lug, and grinned with the satisfaction of the seaman in beholding the wind do his labour.

"I could set and do nought for hours," he remarked sublimely, as he handed the sheet to Anthony. "I could set and watch this boat go for—for hours. Tryphena don't set about much, not she."

He lighted his pipe and contemplated the day with quiet satisfaction.

"I'm best out of the house, she says," he added many minutes later, and then he had shot his gun and was as silent as the full sail. Yet he thought slowly of those who were with him.

"Folks do say they're set on each other, fair mad. I don't owe his missis aught, and I never liked her. She's a thing, she is, that I wonder he took. And I've never seen Miss Rachel look so wonderful as she do, setting there by his side, for all she's reckoned the most beautiful woman in the country. Tryphena says that's true, and she's not the one to say so much of any woman easy—not easy. She'd be less easy if she knew all I don't tell her. I did think when I was courting Tryphena that no other girl could get so much as a look out of me. I don't blame Mr. Anthony none. But I'm sorry for poor Miss Rachel, if what they say is true."

She had no pity for herself, and had need of none, as she sat beside the man she loved. This was an hour stolen out of eternity for a creature of swift remorseless time to rest in.

"The world is beautiful," she murmured.

"Aye," said Anthony, as he watched the curve of her

cheek and saw where the live red-brown of her neck melted into her bosom. "There's beauty in the world and the sea and beyond."

This was no hour for him to rest in: for passion smote him, and he quivered like a harp-string.

"Here I am, O God, with her, and we are innocent. Incline my heart to keep Thy law!"

But Heaven itself could not keep his eyes from her or hide the fierce hunger of his passions. His heart leapt like the boat beneath the wind; his thoughts were as deep as the deep sea, and yet out of passion he built a palace for his soul. He looked at her and saw the frail tenure by which the strongest held to life, and the quality of his thoughts made life not so much the prelude to immortality as its first great temple.

"We are immortal now, we have put on immortality here."

But she was a mortal of the woods—a woman of the house of man's love.

"I had strength that night," he said; "oh, how bitter the soul's strength is to the body! I can be with her and fear not. She shall be with me some night in Paradise."

She lapped her hand in the cool embracing sea, and the warm earth seen across the leaping waters was paradise enough. She saw her own tall trees and her home shining. Pentowan Farm lay hidden in a fold of the uplands, and she who lived there was hidden. Her eyes sought Anthony's, and in them she saw home shining, and grief and joy as well.

"We have been given this hour, Rachel," he said softly. And the passion of his heart was calmed; he looked strong and brave and tender.

"I can guide myself as I steer this boat," he said. But the wind was fair, and Rachel's soul then was as sweet as the wind.

The cliffs behind them lost their sharp projection and melted; the uplands and the trees were now tender grey. But in the sunlight the sea was azure and heavy tropical blue; it lifted wonderfully, and on each rising sinking shoulder of the waters foam-flowers grew and died. To

the east of south the far curve of the bay showed more clearly each moment; white villages bathed in the gleaming water; fishing-boats came in with the flood and would drift west again with the ebb. To the far south, in the fairway of the channel, tall ships showed their sails to the southward sun; dark trails of smoke ran eastward from steamers bringing far-brought merchandise. And presently Sam Burt turned to them as they sat in silence.

"This wind ain't going to last for ever, sir," he said. "It will maybe die at the top of the flood."

And Anthony looked back to windward and nodded.

"There will be enough for us coming back with the ebb under foot," he said; and Sam agreed with him.

"It's no matter to me anyhow, sir; I can set and see this boat sail for hours. Tryphena says I can, and she says it's laziness. I say it's a proper feeling for the sea, sir. Some of us are born to the water. She's an inland woman, she is, and don't see the use of it."

But Rachel said to herself: "I could sail for ever, for ever, for ever!"

Beyond this sea there were strange lands that beckoned; ships sailed to them and anchored in golden ports; the winds spoke of the great round world beneath the horizon.

"We sail too fast," said Rachel. For they must come again to Morna. "Why don't you speak, Anthony?" she asked him.

"I'm too happy and unhappy to speak, Rachel."

She could have told him ten thousand things, but her own silence was as vocal as the dawn of day. Birds sang within her heart, and yet there were dreadful premonitions of labour and the sorrow of the night.

"Can you be here and behold the glory of the world and sky and not believe?" asked Anthony.

"I believe I am here," she cried. "You are so strong."

"I'm weak," he said. "There's something I must say to you."

"Say it," she whispered; "say it."

She saw his hand grip the tiller so that the fine muscles ridged themselves.

"Oh, where's the glory?" he asked, "where's the glory I spoke of?"

He turned to her and she saw in his eyes a dumb anguish that hurt.

"That night, Rachel," he said, "I remember it. It's in my heart. But this must be the last; I'm not so strong."

"I'll be strong," she said.

"Since then I've had no peace. Here on the sea, which is so sweet and clean and holy, we must say good-bye."

He looked at her again and saw how she clouded and grew wan as the colour went out of her and out of the bright day.

"You'll be strong, Rachel?"

"Oh, as strong as death," she answered.

"I said I loved you. That was wrong; there's—there's my wife. If I left her——"

He tried to speak further and for a long minute failed.

"I know myself. If I left her——"

Again he was silent.

"What, Anthony, what?"

She heard him breathe, in words that burnt:

"I should go back—back to her."

As he spoke he was white as death.

"That's written in the sky for me—written in my bleeding heart; I can see it written in yours that I should murder your soul and get nought for it."

But she had no soul that was not his, and drew no breath that was not his. She spoke in accents of deep unutterable passion and contempt:

"My soul!"

Here her sweet body anguished, and her spirit, never so maternal as when she beheld him suffer, knew the foul bitterness of his house. He lived hoping for paradise, when her heart was his true home and her true body his body's true mate.

"If he ever comes to me he shall not go back!"

She put her hand to her bosom and felt the crucifix she always carried there. She plucked it out.

"Here's a sharp blade, Anthony. It killed my mother. See what's written on it, see. It means, 'I come not to bring peace but a sword.'"

"To fight evil, to fight ourselves."

"There's no evil in you—none. There's no better man alive."

She believed it in her inmost soul.

"That blade's in my heart," he said. "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him."

"I believe in the hearts of men," she cried passionately. "We are not all evil; there's little evil in us. But there are devils!"

He put his hand upon her arm.

"Oh, hush, hush! There was One who said to a sinner, 'This night thou shalt sup with me in Paradise.'"

But Rachel's spirit anguished for the warm earth, dearer than any dream. And the tears ran down her face.

"If I could but die with him!"

They spoke no more till they came to the River, and ran up it to the village that shone by land-locked waters. And though it was but a few miles across the sea from Morna, they were strangers of whom little was known. But many had heard vaguely of Rachel Marr. She drew the old men's hearts after her like Helen of dead Troy, and many young men were bitter with their own women after seeing her.

It was four o'clock before they started homeward, and the wind had fallen lighter. There was a grey haze in the sky, and the warm sun looked colder.

"This weather won't last, sir," said Sam. "There's a look of change about it. But what we have will do us. We'll stretch out to the south'ard a bit, and get into the true ebb out o' this eddy in shore. With the ebb under foot she'll walk up to wind'ard like a sea-bird going home."

They had talked little at the River, for Anthony had his business to do, and Sam had loaded his boat with eight "hundred" of salt. And even now they spoke but little; they were going back to Morna—back to Pentowan.

"I've been happy these hours," said Rachel to herself;

"when half my pain's gone I'm in heaven. How sad he looks now!"

But he held himself quietly and smiled upon her when she looked up at him. Once he laid his hand upon hers and she saw his lips move, blessing her.

"I'm happy—I'm in heaven," she murmured.

As the swift minutes passed the wind grew lighter still and the sea glittered without a break of foam. But the tide drew them onward, as it swept in a wide circle round the great bight of the bay.

"There'll be no wind presently," said Sam. And as he spoke he wondered what would happen if they stayed out all night.

"There'd be trouble at Pentowan, if half they say be true."

But Anthony looked at the sky, and being at least as weather-wise as any of the fishermen, he spoke with certainty:

"There'll be wind enough by-and-by."

His heart knew that if there were too much wind for their boat he cared not for himself. And Sam nerved himself for a great sacrifice.

"If you like, sir, I'll put the oars out and row her home."

As he spoke he sighed.

"Why should you? There'll be a breeze as the sun goes, or before. There's something brewing in the south or east."

They swept westward slowly, while the lug-sail flapped as the boat rose on the smooth rounded swell. And Sam lay smoking, with his head on a bag of salt.

"I could sail west for ever," said Rachel.

But Anthony never answered; he looked shoreward in a dream. For ever was eternity; they were on the tide of time.

Now at last Morna's Cove opened and they saw the far white houses on its strand. Between the trees of Rachel's wood her house shone in the setting sun.

"How far are we?" she asked.

"Three miles," said Anthony. Then Morna's crab-

claws closed and shut in the village. Pentowan Valley opened, and Rachel's face darkened as she saw the sweetness die out of her dear lover's eyes. Then the sun bit a gap out of the far western land, and standing for a moment like a star drew down into the baths of ocean.

"Where's your wind, sir?" asked Sam. "'Tis an Irish hurricane, straight up and down! My pipe smoke's overhead."

"There'll be enough," said Anthony; "we'll be in by dark."

And the ebb swept them westward as steadily as the stream of a river. Anthony and Rachel spoke but little, for Sam rose from his hard bag of salt and sat near them.

"If Tryphena was here, she'd have had me rowing," he said. "She's not one to set about, and she hates salt water, she does. I was born with the taste of it in me. My mother says it blew wonderful hard from the southward when I was born, and she was quite tolerably indifferent, as all Morna's boats were in. But many was lost that time, many was lost."

And still they drifted.

"'Tis an iron coast, sir, that's a fact," went on Sam; "there's little shelter. If we get blown to the westward, what is there for us? And eastward safety's a long run, bar the River. Was that a lick of air out of the east?"

He wetted his forefinger in his mouth and held it up.

"I did think it was, but now there's no breath of it."

He filled his pipe again, and as he lighted it they grew conscious that the sky was darkening.

"Night will be on us," said Sam. "Oh, that's wind, sir, out of the north-east."

And presently over the land the breeze came lightly, and the waves lipped at the boat's bows as she stood in shore. But the wind was not yet strong enough to walk them over the tide.

"It 'll strengthen," said Sam, and he added half-nervously, "I've seen it blow quite a lot beginning like this."

And thin filaments of mist and cloud blew out from the land like fine smoke. Sam pointed to it, and Anthony nodded.

"She'll stand it, Sam!"

"Oh, sir, she'd stand anything," said Sam. "All I'm thinking of is Miss Rachel—and the salt. I don't want her to be wet."

Even as he spoke the wind came to them and the sail filled strongly and the boat lay over.

"You'd better reef the sail," said Anthony. But Sam shook his head.

"She'll stand it, Mr. Anthony. The sooner we're out of this the better."

And they ran in towards the land till they heard the distant roar of the cliff-breakers. Then the wind grew a little lighter.

"We'll be home in an hour," said Sam. But even as he spoke they heard the wind coming, and the night was on them before the storm. Anthony threw the boat into the wind, and without a word Sam scrambled for'ard and reefed the sail. When he hoisted it again it was to the full as much as the boat could stand.

"Take the tiller," said Anthony.

"Oh, you're as good as I," cried Sam. But all the same he took it, and Anthony sat down forward of Rachel as she crouched low out of the driving spray. She laid hold of his arm.

"Is it going to be a storm, Anthony?"

"It will blow," he answered, and he felt her hand quiver and grip him. The world was dark now and the foam leapt up, white dogs of the sea beneath a whip, and the shriek of the wind among the cliffs was unearthly.

"Oh, sir," said Sam, but what he wanted to say he said not, and Anthony did not reply since he understood.

"It's Morna Cove or nothing," said Anthony, "or—nothing!"

They came under the dangerous lee of the high land, and the wind screamed down the sloping funnels of the cliffs and struck them. Thrice Sam saved her by throwing the boat into the wind, and thrice he loosed the sheet when a second blast came and smote them as she ran up to the gale and quivered.

"We'd best go about, sir," said Sam. And Anthony lowered the sail and shifted the tack, and they ran out to seaward again when he hoisted it. The night was thick about them, and sharp rain mingled with the spray, and the sound of the breakers on the land was lost, and with that went the uneasy chorus of the sea-birds disturbed in their nests upon the ramparts of the land.

And Rachel was with the man she loved and death was close and her heart cried out to him, and she embraced his knees and laid her head upon them.

"I want to live," she said, and again she said, "I could die with him!"

And within him was the desire of death that his nature fought with, for the warmth of her hands and the strength and softness of her body fired his nature so that the man wanted life, and wanted it dreadfully.

But the land was lost, and the sound of it, and the sky came down upon them close, so that the world was not. And Rachel cared nothing that another than her lover was there, and indeed Sam Burt said:

"Oh, but I'll never see Tryphena again, or any of the others, poor dears, and I'm main sorry for myself and Miss Rachel. As for Mr. Anthony, he's a poor fool, and may look out for himself."

But he set his teeth and watched the lift of the seas and marked the sound of the squalls upon the water so that he knew of their coming. And not once, but many times, he saved himself and those with him by a hair's-breadth, and even Rachel knew it. But she held Anthony close to her.

"Shall we die?"

And the man said "no," but his voice was strained.

"We shall die," said Rachel. And he did not answer her.

And now they were well off the hidden land, and once more went about and stood in for Morna; but the nearer they came to the land the greater was the danger, for the cliffs broke the wind and made it unsteady, so that it came in fierce and fiercer gusts after dreadful lulls.

Through the anguish and flying foam of the sea came

the sharp scream of gulls, and some like ghosts upon the wind wheeled about the boat shrieking, and shot into the resounding cliffs again. Under the mighty wall of the land was the boom of waters, and air driven into caves roared strangely, and overhead the sound of the wind was terrible. For it seemed that over them the gale was a living tide, and left them sunk within it. And then a gap of the barrier opened and the wind blew down the funnel of the cliff and smote them, so that a smother of foam fell upon them, and it seemed that they were sunk. And Anthony thrice lowered and raised the lug, and he baled the boat desperately, and Rachel watched him shivering.

“Oh, why do we fight?”

And when he knelt down by her again, she said:

“You love me?”

“I love you.”

“Kiss me, Anthony.”

He kissed her, so that Sam Burt laughed bitterly to himself.

“He kisses her now—when the sea’s ours, and we are the sea’s. I’ll never kiss red lips no more.”

Tears that were salt mingled with salt spray for this man who loved life and saw it lost. And it was lost for Anthony.

“This is heaven, dearest. Oh, my life—my life! Thank God for death! I’m yours now, now. I can kiss you. Here’s the warm land close, but we’ll never walk it, never touch it, never be buried in it!”

“Can you hate now?”

“No, no!” he cried.

But she could hate still.

“You’re happier now than at—home?”

He answered nothing, but she felt him shake.

“You’re happier.”

Then the wind over the cliff roared horribly, and Sam cried out, and Anthony let the sail come down with a run, and beat it under him in the squall. And for a long minute it seemed the last of their lives, and Rachel threw herself along the boat and reached out so that she could

touch Anthony, for in that there seemed not safety so much as salvation.

"Oh, sir, she stood it," said Sam in strange astonishment. "She stood it! She'll stand aught. Oh, this boat's a witch; she'll crawl home like a conger for its rocky hold!"

His voice was a thin scream upon the wind, but the courage that had never left him wholly came back to him now.

"Up wi' the sail again, sir! We'll live yet, we'll live! Oh, there's kissing yet for good and bad!"

And inch by inch and tack by tack they beat up by the cliff first inshore and then out, and the wind roared and lulled and lulled and roared, and the sea was dark as a grave and as white as carded wool, flowing with foam and beaten down.

"Does he think we can be saved?"

She asked it, but Anthony answered fiercely:

"We shall die."

And he said to his heart:

"Oh, my lips have been on hers and can I feel the earth again and go to Pentowan? Her body's in my arms; I feel her heart; the sea's beneath us, and no more an anguish than I. Here's our two lives—our two bodies given to God and in His hands. Have we sinned? Oh, she's pure-hearted, clean-hearted, a true soul of a woman! As for me, I'm a wretch! Help me, God, help me with death before I fall! What can I do with love? If I die I'll live and love. Oh, love's as strong as death; many waters cannot quench it; not all the seas can quench me or the fire of me. If I touch land again I shall break in flame——"

He turned to her and grasped her wrists.

"Rachel!"

He put his mouth to her very ear and called to her through the storm.

"If we die, it's well. But if we don't, Rachel, have pity on me. If you call me—at nights I seem to hear you—if you call me I shall come. And the rest is written in my blood—in the nature of me. I told you."

But she triumphed.

"Oh, say you don't love me!"

She put her arms about his neck.

"That you can't say—you can't unsay it. I'll call you when my heart says call. I know what your life is—I know it——"

She found no pity in the strange music of this night. What she found was bitter strength, and a picture of his dark soul and its anguish.

"I can call him out of it, and there's my heart for him, my heart!"

And as she held him she heard Sam call to him:

"Oh, sir, we'll do it! Did you see a glimmer there through the smother of the sprays and the night? There's candles lighted in Morna, maybe Tryphena's. I can smell a blown-out candle in my nostrils, and I shall smell 'em again, I hope. Oh, we're not dead yet!"

In him there was the strange and fierce intoxication of the struggle.

"Oh, sir, oh, Miss Rachel, I'm a'most drunk, that I am, and me as sober as water! Oh, but it's dark, and the live sea's white, and the sound o't is terrible. My boat's the girl; she's the woman; she can carry, she can carry! There's no graves ready yet in the pit of the sea!"

And Rachel cried out:

"Don't, don't, Sam!"

"Oh, Missy, bless you—I'll not have you drowned; you're the bright candle for all Morna, that you are. Now, sir, we'll about again. Dip the lug and we'll shoot into the Cove as easy as going to church."

And as they lay over on the other tack Rachel said in a strange voice:

"Is it true? are we saved, Anthony?"

But Anthony did not answer, and she shook him angrily.

"Are we saved?" she cried again.

Anthony still answered nothing; and then Morna Cove opened like a mighty gate, and Sam cried out:

"The wind's beat, and we're alive all three and the boat beside. Oh, but it's been a night!"

He ran the bows of his boat into the beach, and Anthony got over the side, and lifting Rachel in his arms carried her to the shore.

"Oh, are we saved?" he asked of God.

And he knew that he was not, for his heart was aflame, and he kissed Rachel as he carried her, and the solid earth shook beneath him.

Then Sam took hold of his arm and said strange things.

"I'm a fool, sir, and if I take liberties fetch me over the head with the loom of an oar. But I can tell you there's land the other side of the water, fine land, so I've heard. You could sail to it, you and them that love you. But I've heard nought this night, and seen nought, Mr. Anthony. I'm a man too, and a fool too, and beauty's a poison to me, as old Steve says. And to make things equal, so that you can make it hot for me, I'll tell you that if Tryphena's my wife, she's not the only one that would have cried if I'd been rolling over among the congers, sir. She's not the only one, and mebbe there are two, if she cried at all."

And Anthony heard him out dully, but only understood as he walked up the beach with Rachel towards the pine-wood path.

"Good-night!" said Rachel when she reached
"Good-night!"

He caught her in his arms.

"Be merciful, Rachel, be merciful! Don't call to me at nights. I'm in hell when you call!"

"Not only when I call. I was close to death with you."

He let her go.

"We're alive now, we're alive. Oh, God!"

"I'll call you," she said suddenly. "I'll call at eve and midnight and at dawn."

She ran from him into the thick sweet wood.

"Anthony, Anthony!"

He hung upon the gate that led into warm darkness, and heavy sweat ran down him.

"Yes, yes!"

But all she said was—"Good-night!"

He heard light twigs crack under her feet, and heard parted brush.

“Anthony!”

He did not answer, for her voice was far away.

“Anthony, Anthony!”

Such sighs might have been the wind's, for now the wind was falling.

And “Anthony” sounded in his ears as he walked homeward, and he heard it in his dreams, and waked to hear it above the near breathing of the thing he hated.

X

It mattered nothing that Sam Burt said little, even to Tryphena, of what had happened when the wind blew upon the sea and death was close, for that Rachel and Anthony had gone sailing together was sufficient for many, and more than sufficient for Pentowan.

“There's nought in it,” said Sam faithfully. “Why should they not? Who 'ud know so well as me if there was aught betwixt them? I give in, clear give in, and reckoned I'd see Morna no more, and they was calm as could be. If it was as some say, she'd a' been in Mr. Anthony's arms, and she wasn't.”

And Sam was caught outside by Steve, who greeted him kindly.

“If I was rich and you had a mind to be drunk, Sam, I'd fill you to the back teeth with golden liquor. Oh, man, but you are a splendid kindly liar, and by no means so big a fool as I always thought you, for women (one or two) have educated you. But someone took word to Pentowan that they went over with you to the River; and Mrs. Anthony's fierce, I know, as a handled hawk or a trapped owl. I wish I knew who told her.”

But the one who told her was Mary Jose, for Winnie held the girl on a string, and flattered her folly and her blind hopes, and made a slave of her and a slave of her-

self. And yet she said nothing to Anthony, and was so sweet to him that his heart was sick.

"She knows I love Rachel, and she's kind to me, as kind as she can be," said the wretched man. But if Winnie laid her hand upon his shoulder she felt the muscles of his body grow rigid, and she fell into a silent fury.

Next time John came up from her father's she was scornful of him and laughed. For he was changed once more from what he had been in his hour of mad exultation with Rachel.

"You—you, oh, but you are a poor creature, and you were so strong. Did you ever make love or ever believe that a woman was worth it? Now you whine like a child."

"She doesn't love me, she loves Anthony," he said sullenly.

Her eyes flamed.

"She hates me, you fool; and Anthony is as weak as you. But it's you she loves. She went over to the River with Anthony to anger you and anger me. Oh, you are changed from the man I knew. Come in, I'm weak and can't stand the sun."

When she got him inside she drank some wine and grew bolder even yet.

"Your poor head won't let you drink? Or will it? Are you a man again? Oh, you used to drink with father and sing; do you sing now? What's father say when he drinks and roars and you sit mumchance, water drinking?"

John sat crouched in a chair and followed her with his eyes.

"I could drink fire. Oh, Winnie, what's your heart?"

"Drink and I'll tell you," she said. "Or dare you? Do you think spirits would give you spirit and set you asking Rachel for a kiss? I half hate you now, John, since she kissed you."

He jumped up and went over to the sideboard.

"I'll drink with you. Winnie, you're a devil, I hate you, you play on me."

But he poured out whiskey and drank it. The dying scar on his cheek reddened angrily.

"She's in the wood every night when the sun goes down," said Winnie; "she lies dreaming of love. I know her; how we girls talked, saying things, giggling! Then she hated me when you—when you loved me. Do you remember the moonlight? Here I'm married; isn't it strange, and she still hates me because you didn't look her way. If you had you'd ha' been tired of her now and after me—as like as not. But she's steady-hearted; Mary told me things; Mary has eyes; oh, she's jealous of her because she has eyes."

"What things?"

"I'd tell a man, but what are you, John? Go over when the sun's down. Will you marry her, John?"

She saw how he was moved, how the poison worked, and yet saw him struggle. Then she took him by the shoulder and twisted him round.

"You said—what's your heart? I said I'd tell you."

Her hot breath fanned his face, and her eyes of flame held him. She struggled with her words, and acted, played to him.

"I'm ashamed,—I'm married, and I hate Anthony. I always loved someone else—"

She let her words drop and fall into a whisper.

"I want you to be happy."

He believed her.

"Poor Winnie! Oh, I've been a beast."

"I'll tell you the truth. Mary told me something; something that proves it."

"What is it?"

"I'll tell you—to-morrow!"

"Oh, now!"

"I won't," said Winnie. "I won't. But if I prove it and you go down to her in the daylight like an uplifted fool, and ask her, she'll refuse you; don't forget that I and your old days are the enemies. The wood at night, when she's dreaming under her pines!"

In her heart she said—

"She'll think he's Anthony!"

"Come and see me to-morrow in the afternoon. Then I'll prove what she thinks of you. Has she ever carved your dear name as it's carved here?"

She let the tears fall down.

"Go—I'm a fool. I want you—to be happy. She'll love you again, or show she always loved you. I'm giving you up to her that I don't love."

And when he was gone she sent word for Mary, who crept away from Morna House at sundown.

"I've something for you to do," said Winnie. "You've no courage to court your faithless lover. I'll do something for you."

"What is it, ma'am?" asked Mary with downcast eyes.

"You know the pine tree that your mistress sits under in the wood?"

"Yes," said Mary, "she calls it hers. And they're all hers."

"Aye, she's rich enough, Mary. Go there to-morrow and carve 'John' in the bark low down to the ground."

"Why, ma'am?"

And Winnie burst out upon her angrily.

"You fool, you miserable little fool, do what I tell you. Do it, do as I tell you, or I'll let Miss Marr know you came tale-bearing to me. You'll be cast out then, and there'll be none for you but your father who loves you so. And come and tell me to-morrow when you've done it."

And Mary crept away in terror. But Winnie called her back, and took her by the chin.

"Do you really love him, girl, or would the next man do?"

"I love him," said Mary, choking.

"Love's a damnable disease," said Winnie fiercely; "it's as bad as hate, it's as good as hate. Will Sigurd follow you?"

"He often comes out with me," said Mary.

"When you come to-morrow be as late as you can, and bring him with you. There's a friend of mine wants to see him!"

And when Mary had gone, Winnie struck her bosom hard.

"Hate's my friend," she said; "I'll chain up her dog here. The pinewood, my lady—the pinewood, my woman, and the scent of the flowers and a mad lover with a mad brain and hot thoughts growing. You'll love my husband, will you? Oh, but his child is mine!"

And that she chanted to herself savagely, for life was strong within her, and her time drew on.

XI

THE kiss that Mary had seen given to her lover had almost slain her little soul; she had the gift of revenge without the bigness of mind and heart of her poor old father. She never thought of him with any sense of sorrow, and though she knew he only waited now for some sign of repentance in her to take her back to his lonely heart, she passed him in the village with averted eyes. She had adored Rachel, and yet had been envious of the greater woman's greater beauty. Now she feared and hated her, and believing all things against her she delivered her treacherous soul to Winnie.

"But for her he'd ha' been mine. Oh, but he loved the boy, I could see it. I'm his boy's mother and she kisses him in bed, and Mrs. Anthony says she loves him. She's bad through and through!"

Yet if she feared Rachel she now feared Winnie even more, for she knew she was in the woman's hands, and could no more fathom her mind than she could plumb the sea or Rachel's heart.

"She has a scheme and I'm to work it, and if I don't she'll tell Miss Rachel what I say, and I'll have to starve or go back to father!"

So she stole from the house at earliest dawn next day and carved "John" upon the red bark of Rachel's pine, close to the ground.

"My man's name, and what for? Now I've done it I've a mind to cut it out. Oh, Mrs. Anthony's bad, I know."

But she feared her, and now was sunk in the mud of some deep trick that she wondered at.

"'Tis to hurt Miss Rachel! I hate her!"

She went back to the house and took breakfast with Rachel and Martha, and said "Yes, Miss," and "No, Miss," and was as meek as milk and humble. And when the day's work was over in the dairy she slipped out and called Sigurd, and ran with him to the brook and across the field to Pentowan. And Winnie saw her coming and met her at the gate of the barn-yard, where Sigurd's old kennel was and his chain lay rusting.

"Did you see you coming?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did you do as I said?"

And Mary answered "yes" sullenly.

"Then chain up the dog here," said Winnie, and her eyes were bright; "chain him up, the growling beast."

Mary chained him up and then turned.

"Oh, why do you want him? You'll let him go soon: before it's too late."

"I'll let him go. You never brought him, mind; if there's any trouble I'll say I caught him here and chained him. Go home quick."

And as Mary ran back across the deep fields she saw John walking against the setting sun on the high road to Pentowan.

"I'm i' the dark," said Mary. "I misdoubt I'm a fool. They said things of Jack and that she-devil at Pentowan before he ever held me in his arms."

She went upstairs unseen, and came down as if from putting her boy to bed. She was a white thing to look at if Martha's eyes had been good that night. For John was with Winnie and she trusted no one.

"You've come then," said Winnie. "Come in. You and Anthony are not good friends, it seems, but he's away to the hill farm. I wish I knew why he and you were two. If I knew I'd know more."

"You know too much," said John. She saw his hand shake as he laid his stick upon the table.

"Is it true what I heard, that you can't taste things any more since you got sent to bed?"

"That's true enough," said John; "but the pity is I can see, or hear, or feel."

She went to the sideboard and fiddled with the glasses there.

"What, don't you wish to see Rachel?"

He answered nothing.

"Or your name carved in her heart—and elsewhere?"

"What's this about carving?"

"Does a woman carve a man's name lightly, and what name should your woman carve but yours? I can tell you."

He rose from his chair and took her by the arm, nipping her soft flesh.

"You play on me, Winnie, and I'm mad enough; don't play too much!"

She laughed low and wrenched away from him.

"She's in her woods when the sun goes down, and at the foot of her big tree that's an idol to her, and a shrine, and on the foot of it there's a new carved name. I saw it myself when I crept into her wood. Whose name, John Perran, whose?"

The sweat stood upon his brow.

"Mine?"

"Yours. Here, drink, 'twill calm you."

He poured a little brandy with shaking hand.

"Water, if you like," said Winnie, and she handed him water that was half pure spirit. "Water it, if liquor makes you mad, and go over and see her now as she kisses the bark of a tree. Oh, your lips are better than that! Go, go!"

The liquor took hold of him, and her words were wind in flame, and her imparted thoughts were flame in a summer wood, and he saw Rachel and felt her in his arms.

She pushed him from the room, and he went with blood-shot eyes, believing in his own desires—insane and happy.

“ Oh, God, it's true! My name on her tree! It that's true, 'tis all true; my fingers in that name, and I'll kiss her eyes till she's blind. Oh, my love! my Rachel! ”

He went down the path to the brook, and saw the warm pines on the opposing slope, the sun setting and the ripe world glowing.

“ If she's mine I'll fill Morna with happy folks,—set them dancing. If she's mine, if she's mine——”

And Winnie watched him stagger as he went.

“ Flame has hold of him and fire's in his blood. Oh, white gin's fine water for a thirsty lover. I'll laugh at fallen pride. My God, what pride hers is for all her suit of Anthony! I know it—she'll drown herself this night or kill him! ”

She ran to the sideboard and took some of her doctored water and poured the rest away.

“ Now I'll sit by Sigurd, the grey devil, and think how he's not with his fine mistress to save her. Oh, but there's sweet hot pleasures in life! Her dog's mine, chained; and Anthony's mine, chained; and I've loosed a mad dog on her in her wood, and Mary that she friended is her foe and a little Judas. Thank God, Rachel and I have always been foes! My score is clean, she knows what to expect. She'd not drink in my house, not she. Will she know 'twas me? Oh, if she lives and I tell her, then I could die. But I'll live, and that within me shall live.”

She went out to the barn-yard and found Sigurd trailing uneasily to and fro on the chain. When he saw her he growled and backed a little and looked at her with something that her mind turned into scorn. She sat down on a big block of hewed timber within ten feet of him.

“ You scorn me, you devil; but I've got you chained. What of your mistress? She's i' the wood, doggy dear, where you mostly lie with her and she fondles you. Oh, I could fondle you, I could! ”

At the sound of her voice the hackles rose on Sigurd; he bristled all over and stood like a carven dog of slate. And then she mocked him with her tongue out, and made fool's faces at him and he barked savagely.

"You beast, you scared me when you were loose. If I'd poison ready, and you'd eat, I'd feed you."

He ran out the length of his chain at her, and for a moment she quailed.

"Oh, you're anchored tight, doggy," she said. "I've seen you of old try to break adrift."

But now the chain was older and the dog was heavier by more than a year's growth. Sigurd stood three feet at the shoulder, and was as massive as any Great Dane that ever pricked cut ears.

"Bark, you beast, and who shall hear you?"

The day's work was over, and all the men gone but Simon the carter, who was with the women. And Winnie stood up and angered Sigurd more and more.

"You're Rachel's guardian, Beauty's guardian, and I've got you. If you were she and she were you, I'd get a whip and lay it over you. I hate you!"

She stooped slowly and picked up a stone and threw it at him, hitting him upon the head. The devil within the dog burst out then, and he leapt out so that chain hurled him backward. And the liquor that was in her and hatred of the dog made her crueller than ever and bolder than she had ever been.

"Do that again and I'll whip you!"

She struck him on the jaw with another stone and Sigurd foamed, and tugged at his chain so that the collar nearly strangled him. And Winnie's hate of him and her hate of his mistress flowered in bitterer rage even yet.

"I've got you; wait!"

She went across to the harness room and took a carriage whip from the rack. Her cheeks were white save for a red spot; her eyes of flame blazed cruelly, but she came back with slow deliberation.

"You're her dog and should be mine!"

She reached out and laid the lash across him, and the sting of it was red-hot, for she had the strength of rage in her, and she lost her head. And the sounds that she and the dog made were bestial, for he was a beast and she became one, and she lost sight of the farm and the uplands and the distant circling world. And as she lashed at him

the noise he made was so dreadful that the women and Simon ran out from the kitchen wondering.

“What is’t! what is’t?”

Simon ran across to her clumsily and cried out:

“Missis, missis!”

But she heard nothing and saw nothing, and still she lashed Sigurd.

“’Tis Miss Marr’s dog,” said the women. “Oh, she’s a cruel beast! If he gets loose he’ll kill her. Where’s Mr. Perran?”

“Missis, don’t, don’t! if he breaks loose——”

He ran in on her and caught her arm. But when she turned upon him he fell back from her.

“Mr. Anthony should be coming! Run and see,” he cried, and one of the women ran and the other stood screaming:

“Stop her, Simon, stop her! We’ll be murdered by the dog. He’ll break loose!”

And over the sound that he made they heard the woman at the front cry:

“Help, help, Mr. Perran!”

And there was the sound of a horse galloping upon hard turf, and Anthony rode into the yard and saw his wife at her work. And by an evil chance for him he came in time and flung himself from his horse within three yards of her as the tortured beast at last broke his old chain and sprang through the air at the enemy who had shown him what mercy there was in her. And as Anthony ran in Winnie screamed awfully, and was thrown upon the ground with the great dog right upon her body, seeking with half-blinded eyes for her white throat. But Anthony leapt at him and caught the maddened beast by the collar, and struggled at first for her life and then for his own, as the woman lay by them and beneath them, and he saw her face as quiet as sleep.

But Sigurd lost sight of his master, and found a man, and being unable to catch that throbbing white throat leapt for a brown one and got Anthony down upon his knees, but with both knotted hands set in the collar, so that the dog’s mouth, open and foaming, was above his

wrists. And those who said that Anthony Perran was stronger than any man in Morna, since old Jose was past his strength, were justified, for no other could have held one who had lost his tame nature and came out of civilisation's kennel as red-hearted as a wolf of the snows, even for one short minute. For Sigurd was of steel, and but that he lacked a dog's encouragement which is his deep nature, and lies in the chorus of the pack or the voices of those who set him on and are the pack as they cry, he would have had his old master like a bloody rag at the first great grip. And the women stood by shrieking, and one made foolish lunges at her fainting mistress's skirts as she lay in the whirlwind of dust that they made who fought above her. And the other woman beat Simon, who stood gaping, and bade him do things, and make an end of it, as was a man's place, seeing that his master was over-matched. But his brain was as slow as mud, and his wits as thick as the dregs of mud, and he held his jaw with one hand and said nothing with sense in it, nothing even so pertinent as a cry for help. And Anthony, feeling his muscles crack, looked at them over the dog's head with a strange white look, and with drawn lips so that his white teeth showed, and then he wrenched Sigurd sideways and got his head on the ground, and at the same time he called out the dog's name, and the name seemed to touch Sigurd somewhere, for he faltered a little and went over so that Anthony had him with straightened arms right under him. And as he held him there he saw that Winnie's face was bleeding from a cut across her mouth, and he knew well that in the fight he must have struck her with his boot, and though he hated her he was sorry, and his mind said pitiful things as Sigurd rose again. And then he saw one of the women come running with a hay-fork, and thrust it into Simon's hands, and he saw Simon's lips go curiously as if he tasted doubt, and then he made a savage little run, and at the same time Anthony forbade him with deadly eyes, for he had no speech left. For this was Rachel's dog, and he had been maddened and there was no true fault in him. And Simon saw that he was forbidden, but the weapon in his

hand was too much and he drove at Sigurd with it, and pierced him with both points, one in the shoulder, and one the flesh of the back, and the dog howled and flinched, and once more Anthony got him over and this time choked him down. And all the courage went out of Sigurd then, and when Anthony spoke to him again, loosing him, he crawled upon his belly and whined, and lifted up his wheeled head for pardon and for pity. Anthony rose from him and drew a great breath, and bent again and looked at his wounds, and turned upon Simon of the bloody fork.

"You saw I meant you not to hurt him?" asked Anthony.

"Aye, sir," said Simon, shaking, "I saw that!"

They carried Winnie into the house, and as they carried her Sigurd growled and turned away for the gate and ran lamely for home. For he knew it might be that someone was calling him, and Rachel for him was mistress of the earth and the heart and voice of the ghostly pack which hunts with every solitary dog. And when he had crossed the low valley and the brook and the evening light was fading and the starry heavens shone over the meadows, he ran faster in spite of his wounds and his dripping blood.

And Anthony came out of the house again and called to Simon.

"You saw I meant you not to hurt the dog?"

"He'd ha' killed you, sir," said Simon; "he'd ha' killed you, for sure!"

"Here's what I owe you, and something over, for saving—what you saved," said Anthony. "Let me see you no more."

He rode fast to the Church Town for Greer. And now Sigurd too galloped, for he heard a voice, a wild and fearful half-choked cry, calling to him out of the middle of the pines, where midnight came at lucid eventide and darkness stood witness and abettor to the drugged passions of a broken fool.

XII

THAT day had been serene, sweet-breathed with a west wind, and every hour had hinted, like the ghost of a last year's scent revived in the season's memory, at summer's ardours. Rachel knew the far faint call of summer and listened, for since that storm upon the sea strength came back to her, and with strength peace, and with peace pity. Whatever happened now, whether Winnie lived or died, or whether her child lived or died, she had had one great hour with Anthony, and both had spoken their hearts; they had lived, had died together, and had come back again to something like immortality. For long days passion, stretched to the full, rounded like the moon, died down in Rachel's heart; it died down like a sweet root in autumn, secreting a new year's larger growth.

At nights she dreamed of the storm and the white teeth of the sea and the wail of the wind. But ever and ever, as she sailed, Anthony's brave hand was in hers, and no threatening ghost, flying upon the gale, hurt or alarmed her. What folks said was nothing; folks cried like sea-birds on their cliffs; they were ghosts, poor spirits, fleshless follies with no hope of re-incarnation. She herself lived warm again when the cold white terror of death in solitude went away from her. Portents she drew from this their sea adventure—if they died, they died together; his soul was hers; he had cried it out aloud, and she knew that he heard when she called at midnight. The intense and equal ardour of her astonished heart fed like fire on the great confession of his love; she marvelled and was satisfied until other storms blew about her, wailing in her woodlands.

“If I call, he will come!”

And yet he had declared with the sea that swallowed up all lies and all falsehood and all pretence, that if he came he would yet go back. This was written in his heart, but she was a woman and believed in the power of her own womanhood, which in its secret citadels laughs to scorn the power of man. If he came he would stay

and would take deep root in her fruitful earth, and grow to be a shelter beyond the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.

Yet as she walked in this fine security of faith in her own soul and her beautiful body, there came, like faint thrills of air which threaten frost, faint fears of other dangers encompassing her. Her spirit, for all its security, perceived darkness beyond, and in the darkness human terror and strange forebodings. The inextricable tangle of living passions, in which she had her habitation, made nets for her feet, and it was as though spiders spun gossamers in the darkness and their webs and filaments floated across her as she moved. Anthony, become less human and more human by the extreme utterance of the passions which the sea accompanied with great and awful music, lived with her soul as a warm and terrible shadow. And in his very shadow crawled dim beasts, antagonistic, ancient, the prehistoric souls of such as the woman who bore his name. These, and there were many of them, crawled about her woodland palace and citadel in which she was secluded, and instinct in her raised strange alarms to which she listened. And she went in fear, for the voice of the flesh was true prophecy and warned her. And once again she feared not, for her sweetness assured her that men were not beasts, nor was any creature so cruel as her instincts cried out. She lay in her dark palace dreaming.

As every season of passion harvested means again a winter, now she cooled and retreated within herself. And there she found such things as had pleased her of old, though everything was changed, as the man grown finds the very aspect of his ancient world of childhood other than he dreamed when far away. Here too were rods with which she had been whipped or had whipped herself; she took hold of poor dead faiths, and being angry with them no more, covered them up pitifully, as she had covered dead birds with leaves when she was a child. The older gods faded; their immortal attributes were death, and died out of her garden. She perceived a deeper spirit than that which any creeds hid in nebu-

lous words. Many times in her bitterness she had denied that there was a God, and now, with a little happiness which was rather a motion of the blessed soul than that happiness which comes from without, it seemed to her that God lived. Here she knew the truth and proof of God; His revelation was happiness, however reached. There was no remorse within her; this was the path of the promises of God. He was within her—within the burning bush, which was her soul in a white flame, scented, pure, and ardent, and most natural.

And strange beasts crawled in the garden of her pines where her heart dreamed and her body lay in peace.

There was light star-flame in the sky, the silver of the moon lay unburnished in soft clouds, the wind was a wandering air and kindly, the quiet of the evening lapped the world like sweet water. The pines spoke with each other in faint whispers, aspens chattered lightly; some birds already were in their nests, but the energy of others yet unexhausted broke out in high ecstatic music. The song of the distant sea was quietest melody, as faint as that of the happy blood; the brook spoke low and Morna sat within its houses. And far over the valley over against the south-east air was the sound of a furious dog that ran through the warp and woof of peace like a savage thread of scarlet in silver cloth. But deep thought, deep beyond thinking, deafened Rachel's ears; she heard the song of the blood that youth hears, though her youth was tired in passion, and to its lulling she fell asleep.

This was no paradise, though every tree bore fruit of strange old knowledge; yet here a thing crawled, once a man and now a fool, steeped in rage and wild desire and the wonder of his drugged world. How natural it was for him to climb the bank and enter the dark wood!

"Oh, many's the wood I've met love in, but here's my love!"

She, who beat the chained passions of Sigurd to fury, had whipped the unchained passions of John Perran to a bitterer madness.

"Rachel's for your taking. That's her nature!"

John nodded to himself.

"I'm wise about women. God's truth, that's the nature of many! If it's true my name's on her tree I'll set my mouth on hers."

What Winnie said and what she had poured out for him rose and reddened in the soul's abandonment. His drugged soul cried faintly to him, but he was far.

"She's to be mine!"

His passion ached within him and strained his heart and set him trembling.

"Oh, is she in the wood? If she's here it's heaven. I'll storm it!"

He ran lightly and yet staggered, clutching pine saplings. He went down on his knees.

"There's a break in the tree-tops. Shine through, stars and moon, shine and show her to me! Her red lips, her bosom! Oh, but I'm mad! If she loves me!"

She slept sweetly, quiet as happy death—quiet as a sheltered flower. Dear happiness, sifted from life's prodigious gifts, lay at her heart like a blessing; she was with Anthony, who by some immortal alchemy was pure gold of love and nature. And his God was hers—a God of love and the quick world's fertility.

John leapt to his feet, and leapt so lightly with his blood aflame, that he made no sound. He clutched his own hands and hung over her.

"Oh, she's beautiful! My God, a wonder! Could I have loved her of old? And I went wallowing! Oh, but it's true she loves me, she must! Anthony's not for her. If she loved him, I'm his likeness. I'll feel at the tree for my name. It should shine, it should shine! God, if it's not there, carve it with your lightning ere I kneel and ere she wakes! Here's paradise—here's Eden, a wedding bower. Oh, she loves life, life her own. She maddens me with her curves and her cheek on her hand. I'll hunt my name!"

He shook with an ague and his eyes were burning and blood-shot as he crept upon the ground to the tree.

"'Tis her own tree. Where's my name, my immortal name?"

With a shaking hand he searched the cool bark for the fire of his name, and ran in upon the letters, and, reading them with blind, informing fingers, fell into outrageous madness and such delight as marks hot hearts stricken with Spring's swiftest arrow of desire.

"Mine, mine!"

This was no man but a mad creature, fooled by lies and corroborating circumstances at one with desire. He fell upon his knees and set his lips upon hers, at first lightly so that she hardly stirred, and yet under the touch of them she sighed.

In her bright dream, in some far island of the blest, Anthony, her renewed and perfect lover, set his lips to hers! God help her if she returned his kiss. And she returned it and woke in sudden terror that was at first delight, for she thought of Anthony in her woodland. But this was so fierce and hungry a beast that in a moment she knew, and with every instinct flaming she rejected his wild gifts, and found herself choked, strained, and speechless.

He murmured dreadful assurances of his love, and his late knowledge of her old love for him. And as she fought with him, and felt her strength was vain against one nigh as strong as him against whom she would not have fought, a dim horror of all red and white passion grew in her. Yet nought but equal passion could save her, and as she prayed for mercy to the winds and the tides of unanswering madness, black rage within her at the immeasurable insult of such a deed sent her shaking hand for the weapon in her bosom.

"You love me, you love me!"

"I'll kill you!"

Others in far countries had said that. Under a hot sun one girl had stabbed him and then kissed him, binding up his wound that could not bind her own in her yielding heart.

She got the crucifix out and he hurled it from her into the darkness.

"Could that stay me?"

He knew not the blade that was hidden within it, as he

knew not the heart of the sweet of earth that struggled with him.

She cried "Help!"

But her strength failed, she felt her consciousness failing, and saw the stars betwixt tree-tops waver. But this was worse than death, and she drew back from the waters of sleep and cried out in a choked and strangled voice of lamentation:

"Sigurd! Sigurd!"

The dog was safe, he said.

"She's for me. My name you carved; your name's in my heart!"

And then her heart failed, and the white stars crackled in a red sky, and the sound of a great wind which was the sound of her blood overwhelmed her, and yet she heard the bush break and heard Sigurd leap furiously and hurl John Perran from her headlong. Then she fainted and lay unconscious for long, long minutes, so that when she woke the evening glow had passed out of the deep immeasurable heavens, and the night had come.

She came back from the great gulf of unconsciousness but slowly, and only slowly she recalled the horror that had sent her into its depths. A sense of infinite fatigue drowned her senses, and yet she knew that she had escaped something too hideous to dream of. She stirred and moaned a little, and Sigurd did no more than sigh, and yet struggled, and coming nearer licked her hand. Then she knew and woke utterly, and sat up and saw the dog, and reaching out to him touched him and found him wet. And she knew that he was wet with blood, and she caught her breath and shivered, looking for the satyr of her woodland, expecting a torn and bloody rag. And she saw him in the lucid darkness lying quietly upon his back, with a white face at which the moon peered. For a moment she thought that he had stabbed Sigurd with the blade of the crucifix, but when she snatched it from the ground she saw the weapon was in its sheath and no blood on it. She fell upon her knees and felt Sigurd over, and found his wounds. He winced as she touched

them, but licked her hand, and could not move when she implored him.

"Who has done this?" she said. And Sigurd lay down very quietly, until he heard John Perran stir, and then he barked faintly and made a weak motion towards this enemy of his dear mistress, for the dog had lost much blood and his strength for the time was out of him. But for that he would have rent John limb from limb when he had hurled him against a tree.

"Lie still!" said Rachel, and with the open dagger in her hand she stepped over to the fool who lay so quiet, and yet was waking. He groaned as she came near.

"Where am I? What's happened?"

He sat up with his hand to his forehead.

"My head's a wild ache!" he murmured, and then he saw Rachel.

"Get off my ground, out of my place,—don't let your breath poison the air," she said with dreadful passion. "Get up, or I'll set the dog upon you."

John scrambled to his knees and clung to a sapling. The fire was out of him; he was ashes, he was humble. He remembered, and cried out lamentably:

"You don't love me?"

"You foul thing! go, go!"

She shook all over, and her voice was terrible.

"Oh, God, that such a man should be his brother!"

The accent in which she spoke gave him the truth in one swift moment. He cried out:

"Winnie's a liar! she's made a beast of me, Rachel. Rachel, I'm ashamed!"

He staggered to his feet and threw his hands in the air.

"Why did you carve my name, then, why did you? The thought of it, oh, the touch of it, was madness for me. I've been mad for you since I was in your house!"

"Your name——"

"It's on your tree; there, there!"

She stooped and felt it.

"I never carved it. Who told you?"

"Winnie told me."

"Did you try to kill Sigurd, you devil? He's been stabbed. He's bleeding to death, bleeding now."

She knelt by Sigurd, who growled yet licked her hand.

"That's Winnie, that's that devil," said John. "I'm a thing, a crawling beast that was a man. Rachel, Rachel, shall I kill her for you?"

She answered nothing, but pressed the clotted hair close on the dog's wounds that now bled little. John poured out a passion of words.

"If you'd loved me—ah, that was madness! She filled me with lies; I believe she drugged me. She poisoned me with words."

He cried out:

"Forgive me, Rachel, forgive me!"

But she could not speak. He threw himself before her on the ground.

"There's no such cur as I on earth. What can I do for you, what can I do to help, what can I do that's right? Winnie's the beast of the earth—she's a vampire, a blood-sucker. She's Anthony's hurt, his flame to burn. I'm nothing. My life's yours if you'll pardon me! Rachel, I'm in an agony of shame. Till this night I had some pride—I was a man!"

Such an unutterable, half-uttered abasement shook her.

"Be a man again then," she cried in a very rage of angry pity. "Get up and do what's right, if there's any right on earth."

He rose and held to the sapling.

"I was a man, I was a man," he said, and he went with his head down. "Good-bye, Rachel, good-bye. If I see you no more I shall love you till I die!"

The darkness of the woods closed over him.

"If I had the strength to kill that woman! But I've no strength; there's nothing left in me but pain."

He passed Mary at the upper gate and never spoke to her.

"He's been with her," said Mary.

But when Rachel called her she smoothed her bitter

face and went down to the village for Sam Burt, who helped them to carry Sigurd into the house.

"He'll not die, Miss," said Burt; "but who did it?"

And Mary's face was as white as death.

"Was this what she wanted him for?" she asked; and but for John's having passed her that night she would have told Rachel the truth.

"There's something between them. I'll go to Pentowan to-morrow."

But she did not go either the next day or the day after, for Greer was at the farm all night, and in the early morning Winnie gave birth to a still-born child.

XIII

OLD SIMON brought the news of Mrs. Perran's disaster to Morna, for though he had been discharged he slept that night at Pentowan so that Anthony might think over what he had said. But when things fell out as they did and Simon saw his master set and white and fierce, he was afraid to speak to him, and went away mournfully to the village. The old man's heart was sad within him, because he was leaving a place he had worked in for seventeen years, and because he had hurt that which belonged to Rachel Marr.

"If it had been the missis I could ha' stood by and seen him devouring of her," said Simon; "but 'twas the master, and sack or none he's a good man, and the dog'd have eaten him for sure. But that it was Miss Rachel's dog do make me sorrowful, and if any can get Mr. Anthony to take back his word 'tis she."

So with his cap in his hand and his eyes full of tears he went early to Morna House, not knowing that he had things to say that might alter the world for those who dwelt there. He was met by Martha on the doorstep, and she looked at him curiously, wondering what brought him.

"You're early from Pentowan, Simon!"

"Aye, ma'am," he answered humbly; "I be come to

beg pardon in the matter of Miss Rachel's dog, for the master has sent me away after serving his father and him for seventeen years."

Martha stared at him.

"'Twas you hurt the dog? Oh, it's not good for you to be here, then."

The old man held up his hand.

"'Twas saving Mr. Anthony, for the dog had him down," he urged, and Martha bade him speak. The story came out dolefully and with foolish confusions and much lamentation about seventeen years of service.

"And so the missis whipped the dog and he nigh killed her, and the whistling doctor's there and he came out on the step and whistled—to be sure. And they do say she's ill before her time and that the child be born dead."

And hearing this Martha ran straightway to Rachel, leaving Simon standing in the yard. She had not yet seen her mistress that morning, and she found her with Sigurd, who lay on rugs by the fireplace in the book-room. When Martha's eyes fell upon her the old woman threw up her hands.

"You've been with the poor beast all night?"

For Rachel was as wan as death. And yet her colour was not due so much to vigil and fasting, though she had watched without food the whole night through, as to the rage of shame and anger that smouldered within her heart. For John was Anthony's brother, and she had been kind to him, and he had lived for weeks under the hospitable shelter of her roof. And when she found deep wheals upon Sigurd's brave head it had come to her that there was no living creature in Morna or near it who could have done this thing but Winnie. And the dog carried an old collar and a few links of broken chain.

"You've been with him all night!"

There was a strange look in Martha's face, and Rachel saw it.

"You've something to tell me?"

"Oh, aye," said Martha, "there's news, there's a parcel of news, and there's devils on this earth, and to my

mind a God that mocks them. Come and see old Simon, standing gaping and sick within himself in the yard. He's the man that nigh killed Sigurd."

She clutched Rachel's rigid arm.

"There's no fault in the poor old devil. Oh, but if I'm wicked the Lord must put up with it. There's good news for you from Pentowan, good news, or I'm a fool!"

She whispered in Rachel's ear, pulling her down. And Rachel held her hand to her heart.

"He's mine," she said.

She fell upon her knees by Sigurd and kissed the dog's head, and he lifted himself up a little and licked her hand. But when she rose Martha cried out:

"Don't look so like the dead I loved!"

And Rachel smiled.

"She tied up my dog, and whipped him!"

She went out to Simon and bade him speak, and the old man told his tale, while she never spoke a word. But Martha looked at her and not at Simon, though now he spoke better, and put a certain hatred of Winnie Perran into his words.

"And, oh, Miss, I was sorry to hurt the noble dog, but I feared for Mr. Anthony, and I seemed to think them that loved him would prefer the dog to die rather than him. It was a terrible fight, and I never have seen such in my born days. But I knowed well that Mr. Anthony said with his eyes that he would fight it out himself. But after all a man's a man, and a dog's a dog, and I had to strike. And so he said, 'Lemme see you no more,' and there's no one but you that he'll listen to, and if you would speak for him to take me back, saying that you forgive me, he'll do it."

He added simply:

"'Tis common knowledge, Miss, that Mr. Anthony will do aught you ask him!"

And Rachel asked in a curious voice:

"How do you know I forgive you, Simon?"

"'Tis knowledge as common that you are just and kind-hearted, Miss," said Simon, "and I served Mr. Anthony and Mr. Anthony's father seventeen year, and I'm

over-old to hunt a new place. And there the horses know me, and my heart would break to plough a new furrow for any furrin farmer that doesn't know my ways. And as to your forgiveness, Miss, I see it in your face."

But what he saw in her face was something more than he knew, though Martha knew what it meant, and why she smiled.

"Wait," said Rachel, and going into the house she wrote for the first time in her life to Anthony, telling him that Sigurd would not die, and that she wished him to take back Simon. And as she wrote tears fell upon the paper, and at the same time she was glad, and her strength came back and mastered her, and in strange illegible script she added at the end:

"It was *I* that she chained, and *I* that she whipped, Anthony. I'll call to you at midnight!"

And she took out her crucifix and kissed it. Then she went back to Simon and gave him the letter.

"This is for Mr. Perran only," she said, and she saw Martha's eyes upon her.

"You look strangely, Martha," she said when Simon was gone.

"I looked to see what was in your mind, Rachel."

"And did you see it?"

"I knew what was in your mother's," said Martha very soberly; "and her I loved no less than you!"

The old woman went about her work again, while Rachel sat with Sigurd, and every now and then she burst out saying:

"I'm a wicked woman, as the world would say, but I care only for her. What she wants she may have, if it was gold dishes out of a church, or a man out of matrimony."

But Rachel said to herself, smiling:

"'Tis common knowledge, Miss, that Mr. Anthony will do aught you ask him.'"

And while she blessed the dog, Winnie cursed him, and Greer whistled and said, quoting:

"Damn civilisation! it makes cats eat their kittens, sows eat their young, and women send their children out

to nurse,' and it makes us wise physicians save those we should bleed to death."

And Simon told his news down in the village, which by some chance had heard nothing, and old Steve cried out to the world's surprise:

"By God, sirs, I begin to have hopes!"

But when folks inquired what it was he meant he said things which were irrevelant according to the universal opinion.

"What I have hopes about," said Steve, "is a private matter which may be public, and if it is some will hiss like geese on a green when a man goes by. Here's Mr. Perran gives a dog to our Miss Rachel, and Mrs. Perran ties him up, and being a notable lady for a high temper, as her maids say, she gets a coach whip and wales him. And he breaks his chain and she is knocked over as stiff and cold as a three days' dead skate on the beach. Thereupon Dr. Greer comes along, and the rest we know, and some we don't know and some I suspect, but then being the fool of the village I'm a wise man. And to go off on a side issue, and to beat to windward, 'tis odd how the women always do the courting. The poor things entice men, as nature bids 'em, without knowing it, and half the devil's tricks of the flesh are unknown to them. Ah, ah, but the cradle's in their poor silly minds, and the sound of it is music. I tell you the cradle's in their minds, singing strangely. The unborn is king, and we're slaves. 'Tis fine to think how things work together. Did you say, Simon, that the dog had part of a broken chain on him?"

"That's true," said Simon.

"Tut, tut!" said Steve, "he's part of a chain. Who's forging it? Who's God's blacksmith at this forge? And speaking of forges, puts me in mind of Jose, and Jose reminds me of cracked skulls, and cracked skulls make me scratch my own head and remember that John Perran is usually good for a drink about now. 'Tis all a chain, good people; we're all chained, and go clanking, talking seriously of free will and grace and such things, all of them as contradictory as I am of myself when I call you fools and talk to you wisely."

He went drink-hunting, for the sun was high; and though the village folk understood him not a whit, they felt as heavy in their hearts as those who had more bitter need of wisdom.

XIV

THAT sense of the working together of all things about which Steve spoke to deaf ears, that only heard the foolish side of wisdom, came home deeply to Rachel now. And a bitter-sweet feeling of joy took hold of her, and the world was bitter-sweet. The rage within her at the insult put upon her by John Perran faded as she considered his strange madness and the reason of it, and now that she knew that Winnie had chained up her dog something grew within her that put the one thing and the other together. The construction of the plot that rose in her mind extinguished her rage against the man, for in her sprang such reasoned and just rage against her adversary that he was but a little thing, a mere incident, less than a dog who was set on by vice to do murder.

“If I but knew!”

And, even as it was, her heart was free to urge her as she desired, for this woman of Pentowan had done so cruel a thing to Sigurd. Anthony, too, was chained at the farm, chained by his folly, and what whips she used Rachel only guessed. She remembered he had cried out: “And this woman is my wife!”

The marked inevitable irony of tragic circumstance dealt out Rachel's acts to her. She could give herself life and give her true lover happiness. Whatever he had said at sea under cover of the tumult of the elements was truth so far as she desired to know it. What he said else was false; it was but his religion speaking. How could he go back, if once he entered into Paradise, if once he left hell even for the pleasant fields of the dear green earth?

And yet again, as she moved, pushed onward more insistently by the passions of love and pity and a noble

hatred, towards his due deliverance from so dreadful a marriage, dark signs within and around her, dim portents as dreadful as those which came from dark oracles, bade her linger, bade her fear. In all things dwelt tragedy; even sweet life was leavened with it, and overflowed at last into the dark pool of death. Children themselves, the sweetest fruit of life, were but postponements of the end; age and old age and the natural decay of the bright fire of the living soul were as sure as death itself. She dwelt at dark hours in strange fierce agony at the thoughts of such denial of immortality. The soul's life was a white thing, a bloodless thing, a fiction abhorrent, incredible, even when it seemed possible to her that such life was real. And yet in her torture there arose along with her passion for Anthony a growing passion for quiet death itself. For the dreadful and exact opposite of passion drew her on; she conceived death as a high deliverance if only she were not alone.

"I could kill him!" she said again, and she remembered that before this she had had such words upon her tongue. Such remembrances became portents; she had a fear of her own hands, and trembled, for she recalled her mother, and her mother's grief and her mother's end.

And what she remembered was for ever in old Martha's heart.

"I'm afraid, oh, I'm afraid," said the old woman; "we're going down into the pit—there'll be a dreadful end to this!"

Till Sigurd was surely out of danger Rachel sat with him each night, and instead of sleeping read in her books, and walked the room, and if she slept at all it was only for an hour or two after the long night was done. And the night that she first had all to herself after this long vigil was one that Martha slept not at all, for Rachel moved from her own old room to her mother's, and could not be induced to alter her fixed mind.

"What's in you to do this?" asked Martha.

And Rachel did not answer.

"I ask you not to. Don't, my darling, don't!" said the old woman. But Rachel sat down by the window on

the old trunk which still held ancient gear and bright-coloured clothes that had been her mother's.

"Why should I not?"

And Martha was as white as the wall.

"You're over-like her, girl. Here she died! And here she lives," said Martha, shaking, "here she lives!" For as the darkness of the evening fell Rachel's face was like the dead woman's strangely.

"Come away," said Martha, tugging at Rachel's sleeve; "it's a sad night of summer rain, and clouds are dark, and if it thundered and there was lightning, I should die to think of you here."

But Rachel was unmoved.

"You are foolish," she said. And she stayed where she was till the night fell deeply over her woods and the moaning trees dripped heavily. Martha came in when she was in bed and sat down by her, and Rachel stroked her hand.

"It's dark, very dark," said Martha; "are you not afraid?"

"Of what, Martha?"

"Of death."

"I'm not afraid," said Rachel. "Are you afraid? And you are old now, Martha."

But the old woman feared the dead and the living who were like those on whom green grass grew.

"I'm nought to you," she said bitterly; "you need someone to tell your heart to. I see it breaking day by day. Can't you tell me, your old, old nurse, what's in you? I could be all you wish. You've no mother, but you've me."

"You're very sweet and an old dear," said Rachel, "but I can tell you nothing. I wish I could!"

She spoke so wildly that Martha sat upon the bed and took her in her arms.

"Speak, speak!" she said. But Rachel, though she held her closer, said nothing.

"Her heart's breaking for the fool I spoke to," said Martha, "and I can't speak to her. And she can't speak. Oh, why are women dumb when there's God's help in

speech, and wild words are better than tears? If I could only tell her my own old grief and offer her my own dead child to nurse at her sorrowful heart! But I'm a dumb thing, and shame's hot even in an old witherling like me!"

And kissing her she went away, and sat in her own room without undressing.

"Fear's in me this night! And strange things work about us. She doesn't tell me anything. Will she sleep this night?"

She took down her Bible and tried to read it, but thrust it aside with strange and bitter impatience.

"Wherever I open it, there's a dreadful word for me. Twice I've opened at the Witch of Endor, and thrice at blood, and once where jealousy was cruel as the grave. 'Tis a lie to say there's always consolation in it. There was nought for me long ago. Oh, I'm old, I'm old, but my heart can bleed!"

She walked her room uneasily, and heard the soft falling rain and the light sound of wind in the trees.

"I could live in the open, where there are no trees. Wood they make coffins of—my heart runs on death. If I dared go down to Rachel! But I dare not; she'd be bitterly angry and bid me go. But she loves me, my dear loves me. She has so much love for all and can spare me mine, for all that bitter fool soaks her love like sand and gives back nothing."

She opened her door and listened in the darkness to hear if Rachel moved.

"Is she quiet, or was that the dog? The house cracks at midnight; it's as if feet were on the stairs. My dear's feet are on a bitter path; they bleed, they bleed! Ah, what's that?"

She strained trembling over the banisters, and over them saw a white thing, and her heart failed her so that she cried out lightly, where, without fear, she would have screamed.

"She's walking in the passage, poor thing. I'll go down to her. I must, and yet I tremble."

She crept down stairs and found no one.

"'Tis dark; I could ha' sworn——"

But as she spoke she saw Rachel walking.

"Rachel!" she cried weakly, but Rachel did not answer.

"She's in her sleep! Oh, oh, this is how she sleeps!"

She crouched down upon the steps in terror.

"My God! it's not her—'tis her mother," said Martha. "Here's dead passion up again out of the uneasy grave. I could ha' sworn 'twas her, and now I know what the end is! Now I know!"

And once again Rachel paced the passage, and it seemed to the feared watcher in the shadows that her eyes were open.

"Out of her mother's death room into the passage those dear dead feet walked! Oh, it's cruel, it's cruel; there's nothing in man, and God's cruel as man that worships. Oh, I fear her. If her eyes looked on me I'd die, if she touched me now my flesh would creep. My bones are cold, my marrow's water. I'm a poor thing to help, but I'll do my best again. Send her back to her rest, O God! And give the dead peace, and give it me!"

She ran upstairs with frightful nimbleness and got to her room and closed the door against her she loved most in the full world.

"I'm a coward, that I am! God, listen, and give her love or give her death. I've had neither, neither! It's bitter, but she's as strong as a thousand and her heart's gold, and her soul loves children, and You can forgive her!"

She knelt shaking at her bedside, and prayed, wrestling with a silent God and with terror which had voices in every drop of rain and every sound of the hollow night.

But at dawn she crept down once more and found Rachel in her room sleeping with a smile upon her lips.

XV

FOR Winifred Perran all agony of body was much abated by the belief that she had triumphed through her poor

instruments. She suffered and grinned, and when relief came at the last she smiled in comfortable languor and hugged such solace as her soul delighted in to her bosom. She nursed no child, but at her breasts unnatural joy fed, and there was that in her face which made Greer damn civilisation and the knowledge which assuaged and ended her torment. Yet when her pain was over, and life became desirable again, she had her fears of Anthony. If he learnt what she had done, and he might learn it, she saw her hold upon him would be loosed, for now the child by which she held him closest was that which was not; and she grieved not for the child, but for this and this only.

"And he knows I beat that brute," she said, "and he gave it to her. What's she like now? Oh, if I could but see John again!"

But John lay at George Perran's, and was a broken man of shame.

"If I could see John! But I'll speak to Anthony—he's my husband. When she's done for he'll forget her. I'll hold him! 'Tisn't over yet, but she'll not get him! Is she howling now?"

She sent for Anthony and he came at the second message, but was so stern and strange and white that she trembled.

"He's bitter, but—we're married!"

He stood away from the bed, and his heart was loathing, conceived and living, within his bosom. And the concealment of his loathing wrenched him, for his just wrath was too fierce to loose upon her as she lay ill, and yet a dull fire burnt in his eyes, and when she thrust forth a white hand he bit his lips and looked over her. She saw his lips move, and her uneasy mind half guessed his agony.

"Here in my wife's room I think of her, think of Rachel. I see this wedded woman, a cruel thing—I'm her husband—oh, fool! Help me, God, here in this pit, among these thorns of fire. If Rachel draws me, here I am repelled. There's no soul that's clean on earth for me but Rachel's. God and man and my own ignorance have put me here to try me. Till I was married I'd lived

alone; I knew nothing; I'd beaten down desire and checked it. It grows, it grows, and out of her cruelty this wife of mine has slain her own child that was mine. God, hear me and forgive, when I say I'm glad of that. I was one living pain to think she should bear me a child; I was one wound, one aching scar."

She whimpered as he stood there, and he brought his face to some composure.

"What is it you want?"

As he spoke he said: "She told Rachel I and she laughed at nights because she loved me! But she's my wife—oh, God!"

"I've been very ill," said Winnie.

"Aye," said Anthony

She cried out:

"'Tis my own fault; I was wicked, Anthony. You'll forgive me?"

It was not wholly acting. She feared him, and, according to the low endowment of her soul, had a passion for him which was not all jealousy. But as she spoke her double mind worked, and she smiled secretly, knowing that to appeal for pardon was to strike him in the weakest place of his strong nature. He looked at her with bent brows.

"Forgive you!—for what?"

Aye, for what? The agony within him worked again, and she saw that he appealed for help where she found none, and asked for none.

"I've been a beast," she said. "I was angry and cruel, and my anger got the best of me."

Tears came easily to her and she wept softly.

"You'll forgive me?"

He stood amazed at the difficulty of his own soul that loved mercy.

"I can't forgive her," he said to himself. "Here's heavy thoughts in me and dark hatred, and I loathe her. Oh, she was cruel; there was a red beast in her heart—I've seen it before. Oh, I can't."

He struggled visibly. Passions moved across his soul like storms on a waste of sea; he choked, and his breath

came in gusts, as rage rose and was beaten down. Now he lost sight of her and stood opposed to God, and in great argument appealed for justice, and justice only. But he saw God in the clouded mirror of his heart, and saw that which was not.

“My duty’s to forgive.”

She watched him, and played with tears. The inward tears he shed were blood, for natural justice yet lived within him, though he had strangled it as he had strangled the brave heart who might have freed him.

“To be hard; to leave her; to cry out, ‘This is just!’ and there is Rachel waiting! Some would yield. My heart breaks! She spoke to me that midnight in words that were fire. And on the sea we lay in each other’s arms and death was close! We smiled on death. Sin’s in my heart—I did wrong! wrong!”

And Winnie sobbed.

“You’ve always been so good—it’s easy for you to be good!”

He burst out into violent speech, speech that was torn out of his bosom; for against his very heart lay Rachel’s one letter.

“Oh, God! don’t, don’t say that! I’m as great a sinner as lives——”

She flinched—was it then possible——?

“——as lives, for I that should forgive—find it hard. Oh, woman, you don’t know——”

He struggled hard to speak.

“What don’t I know?” she asked; “what don’t I know?”

“The heart you torture,” said Anthony; “here, in me, like a living thing! You’re my wife, and I, if I could speak——”

He stood over her with clenched hands and the veins in his face were like knots.

“Oh, if you were well——”

He turned away to the wall and said nothing. But he prayed.

“Because I am Thine, O Lord, and because I could tear her with my hands, and because my gorge rises at

her, and because if I forgive her, I shall for ever renounce the great gift of love and live solitary but dedicate to Thee, I do forgive her."

Through the window he looked across to Morna, now in shadow. On the far hills beyond lay the shining benediction of the sun.

"I do forgive her!"

As the shadow darkened in the room and in his own heart, he turned to her. His voice was faint and yet austere, and there was in it the quality of pity, and a touch of the fatal benediction which lay upon him.

"Say no more; I do forgive you!"

He laid his hand upon her brow, and that which was good within her was moved to pity and that which was evil rejoiced.

"You are good," she sighed. "Oh, Anthony, you'll never leave me? I should die."

"How could I leave you?" he asked harshly. "Are you not my wife?"

She heard his footsteps pass down the passage.

"Wherever he goes—I'm his wife; wherever he goes I'm his wife."

She lay back upon her pillows.

"What's Rachel now? She's a crying lost thing, and shame will eat her heart. I know her. She'll not live. She set herself against me and I've won!"

She thought again of Anthony and smiled. And on the morrow she sent for John, but got no answer, for the man was sane and his heart was broken.

XVI

OLD George Perran had fine work, as he swore, with John; work that made him more sober than was now his wont; for he was well on the slope of alcohol that leads to the pit. And but for one thing he might have been there by now.

"Company saves me, love of company saves me," said Silenus chuckling; "and as lonely drinking leads to quick

intoxication, which is no such amusement as the very dry may think, I never drink so much and so steady as when I've a fellow at the bottle. But now Johnny is a devil of a chap! One drink makes him mad, so he won't take even one. And here we sit, and I'm sulky and he walks up and down groaning. I did think when I shunted Winnie on to a new track at Pentowan that I was bound for the haven of rest. But, truth of God, I might as well have a lunatic asylum here as John."

The fine streak in John's character showed itself now, when he was broken, wrecked, and desperately unhappy. He perceived that he had been played on like any pipe by the woman at Pentowan, and he saw into her nature as he had seen into it of old. He cursed her to her father.

"That daughter of yours," he said; "that daughter——"

Old Silenus grinned uneasily.

"Her mother was too good for me, and I suppose she is my daughter. What did I say to you—or was it to you? He's a brave man that has daughters. I knew about her and about you, my Johnny Rover. I hate her—never was easy with her in the house. But what has she done to you now?"

"Oh, if I could say!" cried John. "If I don't believe in God, I can in a devil."

"You know enough women," said George. "Oh, there are she-devils if there are no cock-birds of the infernal breed. It's a proper terror to think a man may love and be the father of hate. This is the damnablest world, and you won't drink and help me forget it. 'Tis time you got out of the country. Go, my son, go."

"I'll go soon," said John; "I've got a notion. Don't laugh, George, old man, but I've a notion to do right once in my life."

George Perran stared.

"Why should I laugh? By God! I don't laugh at good people, nor at the repentant. If I don't repent myself, it's because I've nought to repent of. Do good, my boy; do the right thing and make everyone damned unhappy. That's the truth of things—if you do wrong

(what is wrong?) nought goes right, and if you do right everything goes wrong. It's the maddest world, and old Steve and I are the only wise men in it. When you've gone I'll have him up and we'll drink ourselves to death. I'm sad you're going, Johnny; I'm a miserable old beggar, I am; I could shed tears."

He looked at John fiercely from under his shaggy brows.

"If I did you'd say I was drunk."

"Not I," said John; "I know you love me, old boy. I could shed tears myself. Your damnable daughter has made me hurt the one thing I love—that's the truth of it. What kind of a man did old Jose make of me? When I look back and remember how I laughed and was happy I could think I died and am now in hell!"

He stared at his poor old bestial friend.

"I was a wild chap, I know, but for all my racketing, George, I never laid traps for women. I laughed and they smiled, and when the moon went behind a cloud if they cried they were soon comforted. There's a lot of nature in them. But now I've hurt a soul, and not only my own, if I had one. I never thought to do what I thought wrong, but I've done it. And it hurts like fire. And Winnie played on me—she knew my weakness. I'll swear she drugged me."

"Ah," said George, "did she? I can believe it; I could tell you, and she's my daughter. Once I forbade her to go out ('twas when you were away), and she mixed gin with my water and made me as drunk as any fiddler's trull. Then out she went, the devil knows where. Is it true they mostly drown shes in China when they're born? If it's true I wish this had been a damn sight further east or west. You don't tell me what you did."

"I never will, but—I did nothing. 'Twas the wish in me, and now the shame. I'm red with it."

He went into the open air and wandered.

"Love me! Oh, that was a lie. She loves Anthony of course. If she kissed me it was Anthony she kissed, poor girl. What can I do for her to ease my own heart? If I could give her Anthony I would now. By God!—"

He stood and stared at the sea.

“Anthony’s mad about her and she about him. Yes, he can suffer, and shame has cooled my blood. I wonder, I wonder——”

He bit his lip, and the scar upon his face which was growing pale now flamed.

“If I could pay Winnie for this! Or is she now too set? Perhaps she has a passion for Anthony; it’s in her nature to hold what hates her and to play with it. She whipped the poor devil of a dog; she may use whips on him. For she used to want the dog and was never good to anything she wanted. I’ll try, by the Lord, I’ll try, and if I fail I’ll do the right thing and go.”

He laughed with bitterness and slapped his thigh.

“I’ll take her if she’ll come, and I’ll leave her planted ten thousand miles away. I’m rich enough, and she knows it. I’m worth twenty times what Anthony is; I can coin money, or could, and she loves it. Oh, if I could only see Rachel once more and be sure she’s forgiven me. I was a madman, an unimaginable beast. Poor old George, too. I begin to believe in sin, or in the malignity of nature itself. Now I can see heights—Rachel’s there and so’s poor old Anthony. And he thinks he’s a bad man to love such a woman. It’s salvation to love such and be loved again. I must see her once more, but I’m ashamed to face her eyes in daylight.”

The day was fine after two days’ rain, and he walked upon the cliffs till he came to a hollow of smooth turf, sweet and fine. On the edges of the hollow bracken was newly unfurled and gorse flamed bright as burnished gold.

“Here I used to meet Mary. Poor little treacherous devil—she went tale-bearing to Winnie. But I suppose she loves me as far as she can. Her love’s a puddle to the sea of such as Rachel. But the sea’s not for me. Perhaps the puddle is, after all. The boy’s fine and healthy; I might love him—he’s been in Rachel’s arms often enough.”

His head ached, and he lay down quietly and after a while fell fast asleep and slept heavily. For since he had

met Rachel in the wood he had had a quick fever of wakefulness upon him. It was after sundown when he woke, and he went back to George's house and ate soberly with the old man.

"You're off soon?" said George.

"Soon!" replied John; "any moment, it might be."

"I'll never see you again, Jack!"

And John reached out his hand.

"What of that, George? what of that?—I'm worthless."

"You're all I've got," said George.

And the old man and the young one sat together in silence till it was nigh upon nine.

"I'm going down to the village," said John; "I want to see someone. I shan't go down much oftener."

"I shall go once more," said George. "It's on the way to the churchyard."

The night was dark for the time of the year, as John went down to the Cove, for heavy clouds had come up in a calm and there was the brooding heavy melancholy of a thunder storm in the air. The sea inside the claws of the Cove was as calm as a sheltered pond, and in it rare stars, discovered by the shifting devil's dance of clouds, shone like flowers in some magic mead. A thin new moon drifted in the west, tossing like a keel in dark waters; beneath it shone the faint afterglow of evening, melting in the purple blue of thunder weather.

"Whether it breaks or no, there's what the men call a thunder planet hereabouts," said John. "I feel the storm in my head and in my nerves. I to have nerves! It's strange. What's a man? Here's old Jose forging another perhaps."

He looked into the shop and saw Jose blowing at his bellows. The fierce white light danced upon the ridges and hollows of the man's worn face, and made him look unearthly. John spoke lightly:

"You served me a fine trick with that hammer of yours, Jose. I don't know who I am or where I'm heading. If it's any help to you I don't mind saying I believe in the

devil now, if I don't in God. And the devil's a she, Jose; she's feminine."

And Jose let the fire die down. When he was in darkness he spoke.

"If there's bad there's good, sir. I'm sorry now I struck you."

"I wonder whether I am," said John. "I see things through the crack in my skull that I never as much as suspected."

He marched off towards Morna House and went in the back way as all the world did, and asked Martha if Rachel would see him.

"I'll ask her," said Martha. But when she came back she shook her head.

"She's shut up with her books and the dog, Mr. John, and she'll not come out or let me in."

John leant against the doorpost and nodded unhappily.

"Has she ever told you what she thinks of me, Martha?"

"She thinks as the rest of us do," answered Martha sharply. "You're a might-have-been."

"How's Mary?"

"She's a bitter trial to me. I wish she'd never entered the house."

"Shall I take her away?"

"Take what you will, sir. I can't stay talking."

"Good-night, Martha. I'll take myself then."

But he never left the grounds, and knowing that Sigurd was sick and in the house he went fearlessly, and sat in the wood, under Rachel's pines.

"My place of shame," he said. "How could I have been so mad, so much a beast—aye, and so much a fool? My face is hot when I think of it, and Jose's mark burns."

The night brooded heavily over the earth, and the tension of the threatening storm tried his heart and brain.

"If I could only see her once! But I've no courage. What a fool I've been, and what a fool poor Anthony is. There's something gigantic in him, something monstrous. Oh, to think that she adores him, and he's in the claws of

that she-devil. White rabbit, poor old George called her! She was pale and now she's red. She's a blood-sucker: I could believe I might come back and find her bloated like a she-spider with Morna's corpses in her web. It's his religion holds him. God! There's more religion in a true woman's bosom than in all the books which could be crammed into the deep sea! If I go, what will happen? If I stay, what? If I stay I shall drink with George and go up and strangle Winnie, but if I go Anthony and Rachel will meet some night in the wood, and his heart will crack. Such a man can't last out, there's such a magnet in her that she'll draw, she'll draw! Look at me, and she didn't love me! If she'd loved me I'd have walked a red-hot world through to bring my scorched body to her. I'd have swum seas, climbed the dark skies. There's no crime I'd have stopped at; I'd have used crime like a tool; I'd have riven walls asunder with my nails. Will he last with his religion? There's steel for you; there's martyr's hooks; he's racked and won't scream. But he will, unless I go courting to Winnie and get her to go with me. I'll try, but she won't; she hates Rachel too much. I must do something for Rachel. Oh, this is a mad wood, a mad world of passions. I'm all of a shake and my brain's boiling like crackling fat in a pan. There's thunder and lightning. Come, storm, come! A storm's as good as a great drink to me. It's God's hammer on my skull. I see things, I see things!"

He rose and staggered as the thunder pealed. But no rain fell.

"A dry storm and short," said John. "I'll look at her window—kneel down to her house and perhaps she'll look out. I want to see her once more. If there's an atom of good in me it's hers. I'll nourish it with tears after this."

In the dark house there was no more peace than out of it. Mary went to bed early, driven out of the kitchen by Martha's bitter tongue, for now the sweetness in the old woman turned to acid easily and she grew fierce.

"I thought our dark hours were over when my poor

darling died," said Martha; "when she took her soul in her hands and leapt to God knows what. I thought there'd be peace, and that I should wither quietly while Rachel grew as sweet as any. Now she's not sweet; she walks at night and smiles so. There's a steady deep smile in her face now which was her mother's. I could scream at it. And here's the month that her mother died. The month—oh, almost the day, when I looked through the door and saw the poor dear's blood run. Mine ran cold; it's cold now, and here there's thunder crackling. There are times I wonder if I'm alive—if this house is real or something that one dreams of. God help us! this is a house of love! I could wish there was no such thing as love in the world: it's a fever—it's a disaster. Oh, that mad fool at the farm! Here's Rachel praying, and dark things work about me: I fear the passages and the wind and the sound of rain."

She sat late by the dying fire.

"By this time I might ha' sat here with her child and she pale and happy, and that Anthony man looking like a king. He has good eyes and a fine mouth, and the look of a man. I could ha' sat by her and held her hand and said, 'Here's your child, darling; oh, it has a fine look of its father,' and she would have laughed so sweetly, and her pale face would ha' been rose when her man came in. Mine's dead—mine's in the sea, and my babe is mould. I could ha' lived again with hers. She'll nurse none, and my dry old bosom will never cherish her heart's blood. It's cruel, it's cruel, and I'm an old woman. I could rest, I could rest!"

The dry storm raged afar off upon the sea, and the hot glare of lightning split the darkness. But the thunder was low and only muttered, rolling in the vast opaque obscurity of the renewed night.

"She'll not fear it—I'll to bed," muttered Martha. "It's over-late and I need sleep and I get dreams. They crowd about me now, as I lie, they crowd and say things. I see *her* at nights, and my own dear dead man comes crowned with death weed o' the sea. There's no such ease in being a Christian woman as there was, when such

dreams come. Can one pray to God when one's icy with old fears?"

And outside John Perran stood in the garden under the shadow of the trees that edged the outer pasture. He looked up at a room in which a feeble lamp shone.

"That's hers," he said. "My far-off woman, my delight! The beast of my heart seems buried now; I could kneel!"

And Rachel looked out but did not see him, for even when the lightning gleamed he was in the darkness. She paced the room ceaselessly, and the stream of her thoughts was like a ceaseless flood.

"I'm young, and so old. Why is it? Beauty dies out of me, and the pain of its going tears me. Yet after that night at sea I was beautiful. He held me close, close. If I'd died then!"

But against death her body even yet revolted with incredible passion.

"I want to live, and I see things now so clear. I see him and her. I've no dimmest thought of mercy for her now. I know she set John on me—I can hear her. And the poor dog! oh, my heart bursts to think of him. And he might have killed Anthony—might have torn his throat out. I'll know the truth and tell him. She had shame laid up for me, and played on a wounded madman. I can pity him. There's no thought in me against any living creature but that thing of Pentowan. But her child's nothing; she'll remember that. I'm glad, I'm glad! It was fire within me to think his child would lie in his arms, and make him love it. Any child on earth but one I could love—but that I could have laid in the frost! Oh, Anthony!"

She paced the room again, and as she went by the table took up the crucifix.

"Was it this night my mother died? And even then I loved him, and he used to come and talk to me. He smiled then—I remember he laughed. I've not seen him smile since he wedded that woman. Marriage is unholy sometimes; here's the proof of it. Can a man wed and never smile and the state be holy? I'd have warned his

heart and warmed my own that's cold. I'm a wretched woman! Mother, I'm wretched. I know I came to you in grief and you never smiled on me. There's a dreadful thought: if her smile had touched me I might have been all I am not—I might have loved all gentle creatures as I do now and have been gentle. She set me out in the frost, and there's hot fire within me. I'll call to Anthony! He said I must not; he said he could hear me across these wide fields. He shall hear me, if it's across the world—across a grave! Oh, there's room for many graves in one of my fields, and one little grave will hold my body, and all my heart that's big and bursts! He's suffering; he's in agony. I was so happy in his arms and the sea a grave beneath us. Now he'll be with her and his heart will shrink. Oh, oh, is there any disgrace in me to love him and pity him? I was his long ago and she stole him. I'll call, I'll call."

Holding her crucifix in her hand she ran to the open window with all her soul aflame. And as she reached it a golden shimmer of sheet lightning filled the firmament, and her great garden of deep shadow was a flame of soft and wonderful light. In the middle of the light she saw a dark figure and she cried out in accents that filled the returning darkness with lamentable and joyful music. He who was within the shadow cried:

"Rachel!"

And she answered, "Anthony, Anthony!" but even as she said the word that lay nearest to her heart, the lightning again played upon the darkness and she saw that it was his brother, and in an access of anger and despair she threw up her arms, saying:

"Go, go!"

And as he turned away in grief unutterable she heard a movement behind her, and turning she saw Martha in her nightgown, and when the old woman saw her she screamed, and ran to her crying out strange and dreadful things about the dead.

"Is she in the house and does she cry out? Put that awful thing away—there's red blood on it, dripping blood upon it!"

And Rachel, remembering how her mother died, held the old woman close and shook like a leaf, for she was clad in black, and the white cross was at her heart, and Martha's hands were as cold as the hands of death.

And an hour later Anthony himself stood in the garden saying:

"If this is earth, O God, how shall I fear hell?"

But if she had called to him he never called aloud to her out of his garden of agony.

XVII

WHERE two blades of grass live there may grow the red flowers which make Gethsemane. Anthony had his solitary hour of anguish and went back to what the world called his home in the calm which comes to believing hearts, what time their humanity dies down within them, and they see visions beyond the horizon of their daily faith. Nourished by his blood white lilies grew, for the man had a great heart, and he pitied what he hated ere the dawn came. But for John's hour of infinite pain there was no recompense. He was more of the earth; his old self flourished in his new heart, and he had no pity for those who now seemed to him more bestial than the beasts.

"Oh, yes, there's sin," he said, "it's hurting others, it's being cruel, it's being unjust. It has nothing to do with Anthony's God. Sin's a human thing; it's the score one marks up for one's own paying. But there's nothing cruel in killing the cruel; nothing unjust in tricking liars. If I have half the tongue I had once I can fool Winnie. Once she was as fond of me as her blood let her be. She's grown subtle, but she loved ease, and I've money. That she loved always. What's her love for Anthony? Now I know it's hate for Rachel. Oh, such love!"

He spent that day in the house pacing his room. When old George came to beg his company the young man raved. And then in an access of pity he put his hands on George's shoulders and said:

"Old boy, old boy, can't you see I'm bad? Be good to me and let me fight it out alone."

He went up to Pentowan Farm as the sun went down, for he saw Anthony, whom he had not met face to face since they quarrelled upon the high cliff going to Morna.

"I'm doing much for you, Anthony," said John. "Oh, much if I succeed. Did Jose knock all my cunning out of me? Now it's hard to be cool. Once I laughed at anger; now it makes me grin like a savage. I'll try!"

He found Winnie on her couch, and she stared hard and eagerly at him. But for answer to her questions he threw up a careless hand and turned its palm uppermost.

"Do you think I'm mad, Winnie, my love of old days? Well, I'm not now, but I was when I was here."

"You've nought to tell me then?" said Winnie sullenly. "You failed?"

"No, I succeeded in finding out my own folly, my child," he answered lightly; but the red scar burned, and his eyes were hard as steel. "I can't abide women who love other men, Winnie. I get cold as ice when I hear a fond name murmured. If Venus came out of the foam as fresh as a heavenly oyster, I'd offer her pepper and vinegar, but not my love if she talked even idly of another demigod like me."

"Did she talk?"

"Aye, my white sea-gull," he murmured, "and of whom her fond murmurings were you know, though you fooled me. Anthony's more to her mind than John. Oh, Winnie, but you've grown clever since the days I'll not talk of. And yet you're not so wise. Anthony's a poor fool and will be poor all his day, tied to a plough, muddied in a furrow. Why didn't you wait till I came back, all golden as I am? I used to dream of you in a golden country!"

He sighed and she stared hard, half-believing, half-incredulous. But she went back upon his words bitterly.

"She spoke to you of Anthony?"

"Aye, and my heart froze—I went clear cold. God, what a fool you are, Winnie, to care for a man that loves

another woman and hates the sight of you. You that ate my heart are his poison. And it makes you vicious! Lord, you that are so soft and sweet, you tell your mad old lover lies, and all the time Mary carved my name——”

“Do you know that?” she cried; “how do you know it?”

“I guessed it. It’s as plain as Pentowan Head, as plain as my nose. Look here, Winnie, listen and don’t think of your hates. What’s Miss Hecuba to you and you to Miss Hecuba? You hate her and you don’t love poor fool Anthony, and once, once, you did love me. Listen! I’ve money, I roll in it and can make more. I’ve farms you could put Pentowan in a thousand times over. If one stole such as Pentowan from me I’d not miss it. I’ve had my madness and it’s over, and I’ve come back to you. Come with me!”

But for the coldness which came out of his loathing for her he acted well, and put some of the old fire into his face, if not into his voice, and she listened, charmed at the hot thought of her own enduring charm. It was sweet to be courted and the thought of Anthony added sweetness to it. Her cheeks grew red, her hands were moist.

“Oh, the beast!” cried John to himself. “Here’s a thing for me! To take her even a swift thousand miles will be carrying weight. My knees will crack. And my heart——”

But if she could not love, and love she knew not, she could hate, and to leave Pentowan was to die, to make the others free. But in spite of that her cheeks had a rose colour in them, they flowered.

“Is the door shut? You can kiss me, John.”

The play and swagger of his outside mind died down. Here was a most monstrous thing! This woman, or this no-woman, this succubus, this “white rabbit o’ the bracken,” offered her red kissed lips, and he had but to take them it might be to win the game he played for Anthony’s sake and the sweeter sake of Rachel whom he loved. He knew this, saw the adulterous eye and the

red flag that meant surrender to come, and could not budge. His heart was incredibly sick; his gorge rose, his entrails moved within him, and all the while his mind bade him do what his body loathed. Jose had smitten a soul into the man; of old he could have laughed, would have leant over her mouth and laughed. Now his mouth was full of hatred, burning like acid; he was controlled, beyond himself, and saw the opportunity slip and slide out of his grasp, because his eyes of steel were wounding, bitter, full of gross and inconceivable insults that a dull beast would have felt. He saw she woke out of her desire for ready love, saw her face fix and the colour go. The flag went down, her cheeks were white; she looked at him in strange suspicion, and swift as he was, for she had grown swift of late, she touched upon the insolent truth and was amazingly hurt by it. It was incomprehensible if he had not always been a lying beast, a laugher, a mocker, a fooler of poor women who were weak. She started up, and resting on her elbow stared hard, and he knew his assault was done for, because the fort was warned and she discerned his unutterable disgust.

"Touch her lips! Oh, God, I'd rather rot in any ditch!" said John.

"You—you are lying to me," said Winnie.

There was red, there was scarlet in his scarred face. The sudden relief that the way was barred, that not thus could Rachel be helped, and that her own salvation must come from herself, if it came at all, let his heart go, sorry as he was for his brother and for her.

"God, I'd like to speak the truth to you," said John suddenly. The room reeled; he felt dizzy. "I'm looking for words to tell you, looking for words that are fit to clothe you with!"

And Winnie quailed.

"You're mad. You asked me——"

"I asked you," said the man, "I asked you! Here's a thing! What was in my heart to ask this incarnation of the vile to come with me? What was in my heart?"

He stood over her, and his voice was low and fierce; it

stung like a whip. She knew she was under the hands of one little less than mad, for she had estimated his nature and his new self since his hurt, and had played upon him.

"You liar, you harlot!" said John, as he wiped his forehead; "where are the words, where do they rot, in what puddle of filth, that I can hang them on her doomed carcase like dead weeds?"

He struggled with himself for speech, and looked up wildly as she shrank from his hot breath.

"I know what's wrong," he said; "something's wanting!"

"I'll shriek," said Winnie; "go, you fool, you beast!"

"You'll shriek!" cried John; "why, that's it, that's the very clue. I want someone to tell about you. I want someone to hear of you. What's the use of telling you the truth? you're so rotten that you'd laugh. You'll shriek, will you? I'll call!"

He ran to the door, and opening it, called to the nurse, who came running at the sound of his extreme passion.

"Come in," said John. And then he closed the door, and pointed to Winnie on the couch, as he held the wondering nurse by the arm.

"Look at her, woman, look at her," he said. "I'm speaking some truth to her. She wanted you, wanted your help. She thought it might be that I'd foul my hands by touching her——"

"Sir, sir," said the nurse, but John was beyond any power of control, and raved.

"This is the vilest woman, nurse, you ever handled. There's no comparison for her. Don't think I can kill her. This is a creature that outlives good people. She'll be fat and ruddy when we are dead. Look at her mouth! If it could speak of itself it would confess such things! She's a common woman, she's a liar to out-lie Sapphira, she's a traitor, a plotter, a traducer; she hates the pure and would put them in her own ditch. There's such vile cruelty in her; she beat a dog and brought you here; she's a thing to drug men. She drugged me the other night. Her poor old father told me she ginned his water so that she could creep out at midnight on some errand

you can guess at. Great God, and outwardly her flesh is white and pink and has some soundness in it! But she reeks to me and to any man that has a thousandth part of a soul—she reeks, she rots, she rots before my eyes; oh, God, I see her dissolve and steam! Oh, that's the thing she is, and coddle her now; mop her up and go out and buy a wash for your mind. Wash it clean. Oh, oh, if only I could wash my own!"

He flung the door open and went out and on the threshold turned again, pointing at her with his finger. His lips moved, but he said nothing, and so said it that no curse and no bitterest thought left to the last could have been half so intolerable an insult. And Winnie screamed as he went, and her fear and passion choked her so that her eyes made the nurse quail and the woman knew that there was some dark truth at least in what this man had said. She quivered as she touched her, and Winnie almost struck her.

"Leave me and get my husband. Where is he?"

While John talked fear had hold of her, mere physical fear, for there was proof in the aspect of the man that anything was possible. Now the insults that burned (and there was no human hide they would not scar) wrought her in her temporary weakness to a loose rage she seldom yielded to. Her instrument of revenge had failed—had broken in her hand, piercing her flesh, and she could have tied John up and flogged him as she had flogged Sigurd.

"Where's Anthony?"

She desired to give pain, desired it urgently; a very orgasm of desire worked within her. For once, truth spoken to her before a stranger was like burning pitch on bare flesh.

"I'll have him killed. Anthony, Anthony!"

And when the man came at last and stood stern and white and wondering beside her couch, she hated him as she hated his brother. Her uneasy and unholy passion for him quenched itself for the while wholly in rage.

"He and Rachel have brought this on me!"

He bade the nurse leave the room, and then she screamed at Anthony what John had done.

“ He wanted me to go away with him——”

There was a strange spark of flame in her husband's eye, and he trembled, saying nothing.

“ You don't care! He insulted me, poured insults upon me when I cried out shame upon him. He said—oh, he said—good God! speak, Anthony, won't you kill him? ”

She shook with the extreme of passion, and some pity in the man moved at last:

“ You're ill——”

“ He said I couldn't die, that I'd outlive decent folk. Oh, there's no reason, he's a foul thing. You don't care, but if I said what he's done to others, you'd rage, you'd rage! I'll tell you——”

She sat up and grasped his wrist, and pulled his reluctant face towards hers.

“ He laughed at you, man; mocked you, said you were a fool. And he said you were welcome to someone now if you'd take her! ”

She felt him shake and saw his eyes burn beneath his drawn brows. He put out his hand and nipped her wrist with fingers that were steel.

“ You say——”

She spat her words at him.

“ I'm your wife! He swears you—you are running after that girl at Morna——”

She felt the anguish in him, felt her very claws at his heart and struck them in.

“ I'm your wife—you'll be true to me, I know. But he said you could take a thing he's no use for. He dared to come to me after that——”

She heard Anthony speak, and his voice was as the voice of a stranger. It was strange to himself and very dreadful.

“ After what, woman, after what? ”

She took him by the collar and pulled him down and spoke. And Anthony groaned.

“ In the wood, in the wood,” she added, panting; “ in the dark o' night that evening of the dog. He made Mary bring him here, enticing him—ask her. I found

him and would ha' let him go, but he growled. John was with her then in the pines. He laughed and said so; he laughed!"

Here was a liar speaking, that he knew; but there was some truth in what she said, some instant foul corroboration. He had wondered at Sigurd being on the chain that day in his old home. And John was mad. He heard his brother's voice ring out: "I was thirty days in her house, and I've come out with a heart of fire!" "If you trouble her I'll kill you." He heard his own voice and heard John's: "I'd give my life for an hour of her love!"

"Her heart's mine, you fool!"

That was what he said, and he said it laughing wildly. Now—now—oh, but his heart would burst, his brain go. There was such a sudden change in him that Winnie quailed.

"My God!——"

"Is this truth—truth?" he cried.

"That woman heard. Call her in."

And when the nurse came in Winnie screamed to her furiously:

"Did that man say horrible things—did he?"

"Oh, sir, 'tis true."

"You hear, you hear! Go, go!" said Winnie. But Anthony wrenched himself from her and threw her back upon the couch and ran like a madman across the darkening fields to Morna.

XVIII

OVER the eastern wood, hung so beautifully upon the slope of the hill, the moon rose roundly, white of silver, and the sunk day shone in the sun's great afterglow. So might some foundering galleon heave aloft for one last flaunt of pride her golden and crimson shining flag to the mirror of the seas. The insurgent stars themselves, at day's signalled departure, broke out in heaven; the land breeze moved upon the waters, breathing soft; peace, like

a homing dove, settled upon the quiet world, and the shadows of night unfolded their wings, and the murmur of the night was music, and it seemed that all things were good in the sight of Him who made them. "He giveth His beloved"—peace.

Such monstrous peace as Anthony Perran had clothed himself withal he now flung down. His peace had been endurance: he had sweated blood, and making a desolation of his soul and body had called it peace to God. His tortured soul in rebellion renewed its ancient, its inherited qualities. He had been swift in instant service to his bitter duties, but here the man gave way; he cried aloud in agony both for Rachel and his own lost control. He had suffered, had endured, had built walls against himself; had piled pyramids to point to the skies and to heaven; had written books upon his heart; had been a martyr in the arena, had overcome lions and been crowned. A thousand times he had seen Paradise, a thousand time the Pit, and had struggled onward to live by the creed and the law and the spirit, yielding no jot, no tittle, to the craving flesh, or to the piteous heart that cries aloud in man. In this conflict, this living pain of abnegation, he had used himself utterly; there were no reserves within him, none to call to, and now at the last there was less of agony than fierce delight in the abandonment of himself to passion.

"I will kill him," he said; "if this is true, I'll kill him!"

The fibres of his heart thrilled; there was so strange a relief even in this agony that his body rejoiced, for body and soul were disparted in a desperate disease. He ran in bodily exultation; his soul was sick for his beloved; his hands were on his brother's throat; his soul mourned for Rachel.

"My dear, my beautiful dear! Oh, oh, oh, my heart bursts! I'm sick—I'm dead—here's damnation! Oh, if I'd taken her, if I'd trusted God, trusted Him to bring her out of the path to hell—we'd have been hand in hand now for Him. That devil—if he's hurt her—harmed her—if he's spoken aught of shame! I see red stars: a bloody

moon that was silver: there's a red autumn on the unknown hay!"

He breasted the quietly opposing slope out of the valley and raced with emulous devils of wrath. He marked no gate, but, going straight, burst through the quickset hedge where it was thin and came into Rachel's garden. Running open-mouthed he panted heavily, and Sigurd heard his footsteps and his breathing, and raised a faint alarm. For now the dog was better; he lay in his own kennel and came back hour by hour to his complete strength; and even as he barked he whimpered, for he knew that here was Anthony. But hearing him whimper fetched Martha out, and Anthony almost ran into her as he came round the corner of the house.

"Oh, sir——"

He caught her by the arm.

"Speak, quick! where's Rachel?"

"In the garden—the rose garden—oh, sir, I'd like to speak with you!"

He left her, and she stayed open-mouthed, wondering, afraid.

"What's this, what's this? His face was white as lime—white, and he runs!"

He burst across a flower-bed and came on Rachel seated on the steps of her quiet house, opposing her own deep loneliness to the full company of heavenly stars. Against the gate by the wood, new since John's blood had stained it, leaned Mary, whom he saw not; over the wood hung the lamp of the moon, all beaten silver; there came one gleam from the deep pool of the Cove, a gleam as of some great silver fish caught in the net of the night. It was a haunt of peace, and the scent of roses filled the air as she who tended them sprang to her feet and cried out to this her lover. He ran in upon her headlong and caught her in his arms. Such sweetness lay in revenge, and such was she, so sweet!

"My girl, my girl!"

His voice was broken music, but in its undertones lay something of such fierce menace and such fire that she

quivered in his arms and strained backward to find his eyes with hers.

“Anthony!”

But before she could speak he cried out:

“What’s this? Is it true, true, true that my brother did aught to damn him utterly, to make me—oh, what?”

However he knew it, now this attempt to shame was published, and even in the moon-glow he saw her cheeks were scarlet and saw them white again, and whiter than they were before, when her blood ebbed. In the aspect of her, in her eyes which he met, he found corroboration, and she knew it; and seeing that her face had confessed, she feared it had confessed more than the truth, and she hung upon him saying—in deep shame:

“He did no harm—the poor fool was mad!”

“Thanks be to God that I am mad too, then,” said Anthony; and as he kissed her, he saw her turn in fear to Mary.

“That girl——”

He ran across the flowers and seized Mary by the wrist.

“Here, sister to Judas, come and kneel.”

And Rachel caught hold of him. He shook her off.

“This is the sister of Judas, Rachel; this is your house-traitor. Speak, girl, did you lead Sigurd to my house and chain him?”

There was so great a power in him, for now at last Rachel saw the passions loosed that she had reckoned on, that she stood back even when she heard this most incredible thing declared to her. This poor creature had been for years part of her life, and part of its high tragedy rooted itself within her quailing body. Was this then a traitress, this a leak, a gap?

“Great God! no!” said Rachel; and then Mary, wallowing in the trodden mould like a cut worm, answered like any poor thing of fear, and let the truth out.

“I took him, sir; oh, sir——”

He whirled her up and backward, and bent over her with spoken curses.

“Throw her back into the ditch, Rachel, throw her

back. This creature—and what you did for her! And my brother——”

She who knew loosed passions in her own heart saw the storm in him with horror. He had been as a rock, as a thing unmoved, and now he was like the driven sea intolerably shaken. That he loved her with a passion that only strength like his could resist, she knew; and to that she clung. His love for her was the very mark of him; without it he was so strange a thing that she feared him. And now he was as one who loved not, for love was swallowed up within him, swallowed in rage that had that touch of the elements which makes human things, in all excess, most cruelly inhuman.

She took hold of him, and felt her not; she called out and he heard not.

“My own brother! God, give me his life——”

She heard him whisper it, and she kissed his neck and writhed up against him, holding him against disaster, and calling him such sweet names as lovers use, while the surge of his heart was like the hammer of the infinite sea. Sweet names upon her lips were sighs of the lightest air to him, for the moon was a bloody rag in a red sky and the hay unmown might steep fair feet in dreadful red. He hung upon the very sacrament of murder in his praying heart. To expel his brother from the world—“Oh, oh, to hurt her—my Rachel!” He threw Rachel from him, for she was a phantom, and staggered, and then ran fast and faster down the slope. She saw him go and called to him and he heard not, and she stayed, caught in the thorns and briars he had pushed through; and she screamed, so that Martha came into the garden and the hollow night lamenting. She fell across the crouched body of the sister of Judas.

“What’s this?” she cried.

Then Rachel, tearing herself from the thorns, came to them swiftly, and in her eyes was strange fire, and for once her gentleness went out of her, and her voice was a scourge.

“It’s a woman I helped when she had a nameless child at her breast,” she said; “now it’s a nameless thing that

takes word of us to those who hate me. Martha, she took my dog to Winnie Perran's, and if I knew what I can only guess, I could set Sigurd on her to tear her."

She leapt at the truth with her mind and saw it brokenly, saw it reared like a black pile in darkness, and out of the contradictions in it took this other truth, that any contradiction must be made worthless if she knew the part that Winnie acted. She bent breathless over Mary; and the instrument that any played on lay like a broken pipe upon the grass.

"God help us!" said Martha feebly. And Rachel caught Mary by the neck and her arm and set her on her feet.

"'Twas Mrs. Perran!" screamed Mary; "'twas Wini-fred Perran! Don't hit me, Miss, don't hit me, and I'll tell you everything."

Her lower lip hung down, for she was frenzied with terror, and Rachel shook her into silence.

"You fool, there's no time! If you think anything of John Perran's life run to old George's, and tell him to stay in the house, and say that his brother will kill him."

She took her to the gate herself, and all the way Mary sobbed and said inarticulate things; things that were wandering lights to Rachel to light the strange darkness of the web in which she stood.

"I'll run, Miss—she wanted the dog—'twas me that carved his name on the tree—she made me—she said you'd hate him and he'd marry me—I'll run."

And Rachel pushed her into the woodland path of darkness and came back to Martha, asking—

"What's that about his name on the tree?"

She took Martha in her arms.

"If John comes take him into the house and bid him hide there, for my sake—that's for Anthony's——"

She left the old woman quaking.

"Here's strange fear and death about! What is it? Now she's running over the fields! Who's mad this night, oh, God, or do I dream?"

And Rachel followed where Anthony had gone, meaning to get between him and old George's house and speak

to him if he came armed. But as she went upon the dewy grass her limbs failed and the strength went out of her, and she fell upon her knees, and saw the very firmament of fixed stars swing loose. And the round moon flattened and bulged and was gibbous and took foolish unnatural shapes, and her blood roared like a wind in her ears, and she fell flatling on the quiet earth, and the full moments passed her like shadows that were of no account.

But Mary ran labouring to George Perran's house and found John and the old man in the garden, and she came up to them saying:

"Oh, sir, Miss Rachel——"

And again she said, "Oh, sir, Miss Rachel——" so that John jumped up and caught hold of her, and spoke with such violence and brutality that she lost hold of her very thoughts and stood stammering.

"Stop shaking her, you idiot!" roared old George; "you'll get nought out of her else——"

But John thrust her away furiously, so that she stumbled and fell, and he ran, crying out as he ran:

"I'll see what it is, George!"

But as he ran he said:

"What is it? What have I done? Or is it I?"

He came into Rachel's garden and there found Martha, for when she saw him the old woman called to him out of the darkness.

"What's wrong with Rachel?" he asked fiercely. But Martha took him by the arm and tried to lead him to the house.

"She's run out into the field, sir, and she said you were to hide in the house till she came——"

"Hide, hide?" said John. "By the living God, are we all mad this night? There's Mary and now you——"

But Martha hung upon him.

"Come, come, sir, Mr. Anthony will kill you. He came here mad enough, and he's run home——"

"Anthony kill me!"

He ejected the words through his clenched teeth. And then he understood.

"That's Winifred! by God, that's Winifred!"

He stood as if he was rooted to the earth; and Martha, set in her broken mind and feebly fierce in her intent to do as she was bidden, tugged at his rigid arm. But as she tugged he felt nothing, and was only dimly conscious of her weak influence, which was no stronger than a feeble motive disregarded, and yet regarded curiously, in the storm of a man's dark mind. The round moon swung over the trees and poured her silver on the flowers and the dewy grass. He saw the beds were trampled, and noticed the burst hedge, and trailing roses on the ground. And then he saw Rachel come through the gap. She moved wearily and as one foredone.

"You here!" she said; and then Martha ceased pulling at his arm and wailed.

"Why not?" he asked.

But Rachel took Martha to the hedge.

"The moon's bright, Martha. See if he comes riding!"

She went back to the man who stood among the ruined flowers by the verge of the wood, and stared him in the face.

"Someone has told him——"

"Let him kill me," said John stubbornly. "I'm not fit to live. This is his wife's work. I talked to her this day, Rachel. I said great things to her, and even she finds the truth red-hot. Oh, I'm glad I spoke—she screamed at me!"

"Come into the house!"

"Your house? No!" said John. "You were good to me, and I've been worse than any beast. I'll face him!"

But now her strength came back, and she took him by the shoulders.

"If he kills you, man, if he kills you—what of him and me?"

Then she called to Martha.

"Does anyone come riding, Martha?"

And Martha wailed:

"I see no one—no one!"

"What of him and what of me?"

She spoke plainly, and her face was an anguish to look

upon. John's hands were clenched behind his back. She saw him struggle with himself, and beheld the muscles of his throat contract.

"Then there's no mistake; you love him, Rachel?"

She answered simply enough, but with a backward glance as if looking for him who rode a pale horse, or as if listening for the sound of galloping.

"I love him."

"And his heart is yours," said John, choking; "he told me so, Rachel. If I was wedded to any sweet saint I'd leave her to get one kiss from you. Oh, Anthony, what a monstrous fool! He wastes, and sees you waste and pine!"

As she stood in the silver of the moon her face was white as any flower beneath the moon.

"To get a kiss from you!—Is it true, Rachel, that you kissed me as I lay in your house?"

And Martha, standing in a tremble by the hedge, called out quavering:

"There's something moving on the road from the farm, Rachel. 'Tis a dim rider; he comes fast, oh, fast!"

"How could you know it?" asked Rachel. "It was not you——"

"Mary told me. She saw you. Did you bless or poison me? 'Twas Anthony you kissed in me. Oh, if I were he!"

He spoke wildly, and Rachel grieved.

"What can I do for you, my dear?" he asked, "what can I do?"

"Leave me, leave us," said Rachel. "Martha, do you see him now?"

"He's in the dip o' the road. There he comes fast—'tis the white horse he rides, Rachel. He's at old George's crying out and waving his hands; he's plain to me in the white moon, plain as death."

"Go now, John," said Rachel. She pushed him toward the pinewood.

"And not meet him? That's hard. I never refused——"

"Oh, that's for me," cried Rachel.

Martha spoke again in a high treble.

"He's riding fast, fast from the little house. 'Tis him and the white horse, I say, and now he leaps the hedge and is on the grass. He comes like a hunter, girl, like any madman!"

"Get into the wood, John."

"It's dark," said John, "but no darker than the path in front. What will your path be?"

"There's darker woods than these!"

"He's in the field below, Rachel, and across his saddle there's a gun! He's bare-headed!"

"Kiss me that should have been your brother," said John. And Rachel kissed him and thrust him from her into the heavy shadow and stepped out into the light of the great moon as Anthony leapt into her broken garden.

XIX

As he rode across the peace of that moonlit valley a red madness flowered within him. This was his body's revenge; for he had been victorious over the flesh, had trampled his true and sweet desires beneath his feet, and cried out to his God in the bitterest triumph. But the red flesh leapt up again, changed and fierce instead of sweet, transmuted, blood-coloured, and aflame. Instead of love, natural and devout, he lifted up an unnatural and debauched heart to the altar. This was the body's revenge and the mind's, for the force within him had to flower, had to do its work. Though he wrenched his very soul under and got it down, it came back to him clothed in madness. To kill seemed natural; those men of God who slew in the old times were no more men of God than he. His brain worked madly; he prayed as he rode; his thoughts were smoke, his few words jagged flame.

"O God! Thou who livest, here is death! The wicked shall be cut down. Of old Thou didst smite them with Thy thunder, with the fire of heaven. Oh, here's my brother—my brother that was—he's now a thing of death, an abomination. My heart's riven—he hunted my white

love in her wood. But mine's the cross, the cross of shame—my unnatural wife! There's a Calvary for every man—oh, my unnatural wife! There's a Calvary for every man, O Christ!—I ride, I ride, here on the road that's white dust, red dust. I ride against the red moon! Here's dewy grass and flowers, and my bursting heart's hot fire! Here's moving water, blood-red water. Her wood hangs like a cloud under the moon! There I saw her sleeping—saw her in the heart of the wood; saw her bosom as she lifted her arms to the sky! I ran, I ran in the wood, and there that devil tracked her laughing—her, my Rachel!”

He leapt the burst hedge, and saw her in the moonlight, still and strong once more in the presence of need. Deep in the wood behind her was his brother leaning against a dark tree and sobbing. Old Martha clung to Rachel's arm and trembled. His horse stood with heaving flanks. But the night was still, and not a breath of wind stirred any feather of fine grass or any lifted plume of the quiet pines.

“Where's the thing I hunt, girl?” asked the rider. “Did he run this way? Did you see him?”

She went to him swiftly and took his horse's mane in both hands.

“Anthony!”

He looked down upon her with the eyes of one whose soul was steeped in an alien and intolerable passion.

“Aye,” he said, “what is it? Did he run this way?”

She took his hand and found it burning.

“Come off your horse, Anthony!”

He loosed his hand from hers with a strange patient impatience, and looked into the sombre barrier of the wood.

“There's someone in the wood,” he cried swiftly, pointing; “there's someone in your wood, Rachel. Oh, but beasts crouch in such woods. I'll hunt it out.”

He spurred his horse from her suddenly, and old Martha, wrought up to intolerable terror, cried out dreadfully to the man within the wood.

She ran to the night trees and shrieked:

“Run, run, he’s coming!”

And Rachel caught her and cried out:

“There’s no one in the wood, Anthony!”

But Anthony was in the wood, and he called to his brother, and said strange things to him, and the two women held each other and went down upon their knees, and prayed to God in heaven, and to the inexorable deities who give men their passions. They heard Anthony’s voice, and there was the sound of crackling branches; and the sound died away and they heard one running; and waited trembling till the night was silent yet again.

And still within the renewed and awful silence they heard imagined terrors, and the thunder of galloping horses and the fierce cries of men. They hung to each other and went deeper into the wood and came Rachel’s own tree. And there they sat and waited.

“Oh, oh,” wailed Martha, “men are dreadful creatures: they are dreadful!”

But Rachel answered never a word, for she pursued the monstrous epic of the flesh, and saw the passions of human hearts stand up in the night, each separate, awful, and implacable. And a cloud drifted upon the silver moon and a light breeze rose and whispered. And as it whispered it was as if men talked low behind trees, conspiring murders and bitter rapine and inconceivable crimes. Deep in the wood was the depth of the world and the deeps of the ocean of human history, and the wan light of the wan moon was the light of death upon a field of the dead who had suffered. These loved and died; these red hearts grew quiet; children were born of dear love and cold duty, and again they suffered. The very gods died in pain and grief, of strange and most bitter neglect. She cried out at last:

“What’s doing now over all the dreadful earth?”

The old woman came close up to her and held her to her heart.

“You love him dearly, Rachel?”

“What’s my love?” said Rachel; “what’s my love? Can I do aught or change aught, or bring peace or a blessing? There’s no help in love.”

The heart and its passions wrought themselves out like fire. Human control of the fire was a vain thought of vanity.

"But you love him dearly?"

"I love him," said Rachel; "my heart's an agony. He's mad this night, and it's I that have made him mad. And I'm a woman and can do nothing but set fire to fire and burn and see others burn."

Here in this deep wood she had dreamed and had waked to find Anthony beside her. Here she had known joy, or a lovely shadow of it. This was the bridal chamber of her pure heart. Now men's passions wrecked its peace; her own grew till her heart burst.

"If you could only weep," said Martha. "I'm sore for you. I'm sick in my soul. Can I do nothing? Does he love you, Rachel?"

Rachel knew this dreadful madness of the night was his passion turning to another shape.

"He loves me."

That was sure, sure as that the round world hung beneath the sun, as sure as that life bred upon its surface and was blasted from it hourly. His love, grown in concealment, in the dark, was now beyond hiding and strove to the light, so that men might see it. It was a passion that could not be slain; though he threw it out as some wretched mother might expose her nameless child, it lived and cried aloud in the night and thrived upon bitter dew and the growth of dark woods.

"Oh, this love's so deadly a thing," said Rachel; "it's no sweet thing; it's a fire!"

She hugged Martha in her wretched empty arms.

"I want to speak; perhaps he'll die this night."

"Speak, Rachel, speak!"

A thousand times this lack of words had choked her, and a thousand times the nature of woman, for whom silence is ordained, had kept her words back. A thousand times the very torment of her wordless heart had gripped her throat. And all the human barriers set up against the soul, till the free soul exists only as a dreadful miracle, held her in bondage.

She wrenched herself from the old woman's arms and threw herself upon the brown scented carpet of the pine-wood. She lay upon her face and clutched at the earth and struggled. She turned again and drew Martha down to her, and spoke at last in a flood of words that were an agony to hear and a most bitter joy to use. She told her of the times when she was a little girl, and even then she loved him; of the days when he came to the house, for then she loved him; of the hour when she knew that he would marry. And even then she knew not what love was. Of all that happened in the wood she spoke swiftly, for she was not speaking to the old woman, but to the god of the wood, which every heart believes in from the time that men hunted in woods with beasts. She told the god about Mary and her child, and of her first reading in the dreadful gospel of the flesh, and of the path that women tread with its grief and joy. And she told the god (and his withered priestess) how she had dreamed in his wood, and how in that sacred dream she had been so happy with her full bosom and her sweet full life. Here such sweet ghosts had played; here her visionary children had delighted her virgin body and her heart, which in no woman is virgin, and the tears at last flowed, and she choked in a dark silence. And Martha did not speak.

Then quick rage, flowering suddenly in Rachel's heart, broke out in her.

"Oh, oh, you can't understand!"

She wrenched herself from the old woman's encircling arms and lay upon the ground. Now the wind sobbed faintly in the woodland, there was the sob of the sea on the shore. Overhead the peering moon looked down through the oriel branches of the wood. And Martha groaned aloud.

"I—I can understand——"

But Rachel said:

"What do you know of these things? What can an old woman know?"

And Martha held her own knees and rocked herself to and fro and spoke:

"There's happy mothers and unhappy, Rachel. Rachel,

don't break my broken heart. I could tell, I could tell——”

She sobbed bitterly, and for her also speech was hard. But Rachel's heart softened, and she took her in her arms again to comfort her.

“What is it? Have I hurt you?”

“I'm a woman,” Martha cried; “and here, here, is a grave.”

She struck her bosom and spoke with passion.

“Here's a grave! You think I've no heart to know, and that I can only listen and hear and speak cold wise things that other hearts use to comfort folk with. I've no such thoughts, my heart's a grave! I've shed tears on fresh earth and over long, long grass. Rachel, I'll tell you, now you're a woman, now I see your heart!”

They lay in each other's arms upon the all-nourishing earth, and Martha whispered to her, weeping:

“Oh, I'm old, I'm old, and my heart's so young! I've loved you, darling, and your mother. But here I was a girl, and a sweet fool—oh, and soft, for there's no help for the soft but love. And he loved me, and he followed the sea on the coast, this bitter coast of iron. And we were to be married; that's sure as death, sure as his, for he died. I can think now of my young self (I was brown, but I was a beauty for him), and the day was coming. But a wind blew first, before the day, and he lies among the weeds of the sea. And I was left, left as I should not ha' been, Rachel.”

And Rachel held her close, closer still, and all the time her agony was for him who rode so wildly. As Martha spoke she saw him riding, and wondered if he would return, and how he would return.

“I went away to a place where I wasn't known, and my child was born. But I cared nothing for what folks might say. It was sweet, sweet, and my dry old bosom aches this hour. Do you think I don't understand? Oh, God! I know; I've sinned and 'tis wicked, but this hour I'm not sorry but for its death. It lived three months, and I was alone, dear, all alone. I'd nought of his, not so much as

a hair, and his child was gone, and he was under the sea, the sea I hate this day."

And Rachel kissed her. The rider rode upon a pale horse. Oh, but the night was dark!

"Forgive me!"

"Forgive you!" cried Martha; "oh, you are that which lives for me as my baby. Haven't I held you to my bare bosom? haven't I sung to you when you cried, aye, and when you stared forlorn at me with your great eyes? Forgive me! Oh, that I'd strength, my dear, my baby, my own Mary's child, who gave you me. And you are wretched! I'm mad to think of it! There's no such beauty as you, my darling! Oh, so tall you are, so splendid; and you're pale to break my heart, and I'm so old!"

And Rachel said that for which she was sorry, for Martha seemed so old.

"You'll outlive me!"

"God forbid," said Martha, and she clutched Rachel tight. "You're not thinking of death, Rachel, tell me you're not?"

"I want to live. But where's Anthony now?"

"You don't think of death?"

Rachel pressed her to her heart. Would Anthony live?

"What's that?" she cried suddenly.

"'Tis nought, nought," said Martha, "only the wind in the cliffs. The wind rises. 'Tis time we went in. It's over-late."

"I thought I heard—oh, my heart's water! If I don't think of death, there are those that do. Where are they now?"

They stood together in a patch of the white moonlight.

"I hear a horse galloping."

"No," said Martha. "John's safe, he's cunning. What's all this, Rachel?—you've never told me."

"It's wheels, Martha! Who should drive so late?"

"Come in, come in! I hear nothing."

But Rachel heard truly, and when they came out of the wood even Martha heard someone drive furiously upon the road which led to the upper entrance to her house.

"Every sound is like a knife in my heart," said Rachel.

"Will they stop here? Who is it? He drives like a madman!"

She ran clear of the house and heard the wheels rattle on the hard road.

"There's someone singing," said Martha. "There's someone madly merry this evil night!"

But Rachel caught her by the arm.

"That's John Perran's voice, Martha! What should he be doing driving?"

"'Tis better than being driven," said Martha. "I thought he'd never walk or drive again."

The man was roaring a song, and the sound of the song came on the west wind loud and louder.

"Oh, he's loud and mad! He's coming here, here!"

They heard the wheels stop and heard the gate clang, and then the horse came on a gallop towards the house.

"He's been drinking, Rachel," said Martha. "Now they say he's mad when he drinks. 'Tis mad to be so merry! Men are dreadful!"

Rachel knew that he was mad when he was sober, and she knew that his madness was not all an evil thing. But she stood trembling, for John's voice was so strangely merry, and the hearts of women are not uplifted in the presence of bitter danger, as strong men's are. He came round the corner with a swing and pulled the horse upon his haunches.

"Here, here!" he cried; "oh, here I am alive! Here's the fox that was hunted, and the hunter's far away! Is that you, Rachel, you, Martha? Here, old girl, hold the poor beast's head. I've a moment to stay and a thing to do here. There's been hunting, I can tell you! Ha, it's made my blood run free again. Anthony's the fine hunter, but I laid a trap!"

He staggered as he stood.

"I'm not drunk, Rachel! I've had no more than a nip with poor old George! He's weeping drunk because he'll see my face no more. See him when I'm gone. It was his daughter made him what he is."

But for Rachel this was folly.

"Where's Anthony?" she screamed at him.

"God knows, his God! I met Steve when I slipped my dear hunter at the village. Steve set him wrong. He'll ride himself out, and then he'll go on his knees. I know him of old—what the boy is, the man is, save when the man's been brained."

He talked furiously and laughed, and Rachel shrank away from him.

"Hunt him, hunt him, Rachel! I did my best for you. What do you think? I went up to the farm this day to make love to Winnie, to get her to run away with me. I promised her great farms and gold, and she had half a mind, half a mind. I wanted to do something for you—to set him free."

He laughed hoarsely.

"Then she said, 'Kiss me!' and even for you, Rachel, I couldn't. Oh, she saw my mind, and I said some scalding words! I boiled! Kiss her!—faugh!"

"Is she like that?" asked Rachel.

He put his hand on her arm.

"She's not fit to tie the shoe of the poorest-hearted harlot living. I'll tell you, you don't understand!"

He stood a moment, wild-eyed, nodding.

"Martha, the horse is all right. Go up and wake Mary and the child."

"What for, sir?"

"What for? I want you to!" shouted John. "Tell her to put her fool's head out of the window so that I can speak to her."

He laid his hand again on Rachel's arm.

"I'm in earnest, so bid her go. I'm going to do the right thing, Rachel dear, Rachel, my soul, my love! Oh, let me speak; you'll see me no more after this bitter night."

"Go and call Mary," said Rachel; "go quick!"

"I'm going to do the right thing!" cried John, "the thing that will make no one happy. That's the way of earth. I'll do what I ought and curse my folly. Mary will be proud and curse me later. Well, there's the boy, the boy! Oh, but about Winnie. Rachel, take your dear white, white face out of the moonlight. Your eyes burn

me, and I'm mad enough. Turn your head away and I'll speak behind you. You should know what's she capable of doing!"

He put his mouth to her ear and whispered, and as he spoke Rachel stood like one turned to stone, and when he was done with dreadful words she shuddered.

"That's a she, that's a thing named woman! The women here should tear her. 'Twas not I, Rachel; don't believe it! Don't believe it of me. She poisoned my poor brain. And, knowing that, she wanted my lips. Tell this to Anthony, Rachel; tell him all. Perhaps he'll be different. God knows he's a mad fool. But he's a man in spite of it. I wish I wasn't!"

They saw a light burn in Mary's room, and John shouted:

"Mary, Mary!"

And the girl came to the window.

"Girl, here's a chance for you, here's a horse and trap, and some miles away there are steel rails that run to the end of the world. I'm a rich man, Mary, my sweet, I've got great farms and fields bigger than Pentowan, darling. Put on your cloak and bundle up Johnny, and we'll be married in the morning and never see Morna any more. Think of it, and think quick!"

"I'm the merry wooer, am I not?"

And tears ran down his face and down hers.

"Oh, I'm the merry wooer! Martha, old lady, get the bride ready. Here's a moonlight going! There's a hunter after me, and I'm set on a wild marriage and a trip across the ocean, leaving some things behind me."

He turned again to Rachel.

"It's something for you. She's a little traitor, damn her! I'll take her away, Rachel, and you and Anthony can fight it out. I've told you of the Pentowan thing. That's something. Take Anthony from her, Rachel. He hates her and he loves you like madness. We nigh fought about you on the cliff. He was dreadful and threatened me. Where's that damned girl, is she coming?"

But Mary was crying, sitting on her bed, and Martha called to Rachel.

"Fetch her down if she wants my name," said John; "bring her in her nightgown. I want no dower. Tell her I wallow in gold when I'm abroad; say I eat off it and have a million head of cattle for her to eat with me. Say I'll give her rings, and silks, and all the wealth I can give where I love. Oh, I'm mad, Rachel!"

He marched up and down the path in the moonlight and wrung his hands.

"I'm a fool, and it's right. Why's it right? There's no such thing. What rights have these women to anything they can't take and keep? And these are creatures of the bracken, as George says. My heart's sore; I'll never see Rachel again. Would I'd never seen her, never had a man's passions. Oh, I ache!"

And Rachel ran indoors and brought down Mary and with her the wondering sleepy boy. John seized Johnny and held him aloft.

"Are you a wise child? I'm your dad, my son. You'll be a man like enough and live to regret it."

He caught hold of Mary next.

"Will you come?"

The girl wept bitterly, for her little mind was broken. She had been handled fiercely that day and her soul was bitter with itself. She knew that what she had done was damnable; so much at least she felt now. And here came her old lover, crying for her with so fierce an accent in which no love dwelt.

"Tell her to come, Rachel! It's late—who knows if poor old Anthony is sane yet? He may ride in on us any moment!"

"You'll treat her well?" said Rachel. For she too was in a mad dream.

"For you," said John; "she lived with you!"

"Speak to her quietly," said Rachel; "the poor thing is mazed."

She and Martha stood apart.

"You'll come?" said John.

"If—if you want me," sobbed Mary. "But you don't—love me!"

Her heart seemed breaking.

"I'll love the boy," said John fiercely; "won't that do you? And I'll be kind—was I ever a brute?"

He stroked her hair.

"Poor girl! What a damnable and silly world!"

He called to Rachel.

"She'll come. Now, girl, say to your mistress—that you'll see no more—what you should say."

He took Mary by the shoulders and forced her to the ground.

"On your knees, you little traitress! Here's the one woman in the world that was sweet beyond words to you, that helped you. Tell her of the thing at Pentowan."

And Mary grovelled on the ground and clasped Rachel's feet in an agony of shame.

"Tell her what you did!"

And in bitter, broken words the little fool told of her folly, while John stood above her remorselessly.

"Every deed of yours is my shame," he said, "and I'll endure. Did she give you money?"

She told of bribes, and of the dog, and of the name on the tree.

"Oh, you carved it, as I guessed," said John; "that was clever of Madam at the Farm. There's bright intellect. Those letters burnt my heart, Rachel; they were the biggest cause of my madness. Shame eats me; it carves my heart. Is that all, Mary, my wife? If that's all, get up and let's away. It's late, and there are strange riders about."

He lifted her into the cart, and Martha put Johnny by her side.

"Forgive me, Miss Rachel," sobbed Mary; "I'm going away, and I don't know where. And this was my home!"

"I'll give you one," said John, "but nothing so sweet; and there'll be no such creature as your mistress about. Do you forgive her, Rachel? You might. The girl has no brains and that devil has. She used me too."

And Rachel kissed Mary. But her lips were cold and Mary's heart was ice within her.

"Good-bye," said John; "good-bye, Rachel."

He caught her by both hands.

“ Bless you for yourself, for being what you are! It’s dreadful that there’s only one like you, and that the whole sick world must put up with what it has. I’ll remember you; there’s your name here, here! It’s deep, Rachel, oh, so deep. If there’s a God, may He keep you! May He give you what you want and give you joy! Oh, I feel so dreadful—this is tearing me, I bleed, dear, I’m not what I was; I’d have stayed to be killed but for you. Tell Anthony that. Tell him everything—say you saw me go away into hell for him and you. Perhaps he’ll be a man then, and forget his God for a little while. My tears are blood and no shame, Rachel. Let me kiss your hand—my lost heart is in it. Oh, this is death, it’s death.”

And Rachel’s tears were blood too, and her heart stood still to see his agony, for her own was quiet within her. He got into the cart and took the reins and smiled.

“ I came laughing, I came laughing,” he said, and with that he drove away and never turned. And old Martha sat crying on the steps of the house, and Rachel stood by her quivering.

“ Men are dreadful, dreadful, dreadful,” moaned the old woman. “ He said, ‘ It’s death.’ ”

But the night was not yet over, for no sooner had the sound of wheels died away towards the high Church Town than Anthony came on foot into Rachel’s garden and stood before her. He still carried his gun, but all madness had died out of him, or sunk deep within. The white moon, hanging high over the dark wood, laid his shadow at Rachel’s feet. And so he laid his love.

XX

“ I WAS in the wood,” said Anthony; “ I saw him come and go.”

His voice was very quiet. He was like a man who has endured frightful fatigue, and, needing sleep, has gone beyond it. Rachel’s very soul was pity; her arms ached to take him to her heart, and every passion within her turned to the one great passion of protection. He needed

human help, and sought for God's. She put her hands upon his arm.

"Anthony!"

Her voice was balm, her touch was healing. He passed his hand across his brow and smiled.

"I came to myself on the hill," he said, "and I loosed the horse there. But your wood drew me, Rachel. So poor John has gone, and taken Mary! We're alone again now; I heard something that he said."

She led him to the door, and made him enter. And she brought him food into the old sitting-room of oak.

"You have never tasted food in my house," said Rachel, "but you shall to-night."

She stood and waited on him, and his eyes followed her.

"The narrow path is dreadful," said Anthony. But his feet were set thereon.

"I was mad to-day, to-night," he said. "I thank God this hour that I lost my brother as I rode, or else his blood would have been on my hands."

He looked at Rachel with burning eyes.

"There was a red moon in the sky, Rachel, and the fields were wet with dew of blood. I came out of that on the hill as I saw the white moon and dew that sparkled, and I fell upon my knees and kissed the natural earth."

He drank some water that she poured out for him, and he rose.

"I must go," he said, "this is your house."

He murmured, and she heard him:

"Oh, it hurts me to be in her house, it hurts me!"

And she said:

"Need you go?"

For her heart cried again:

"This house is yours!"

He answered:

"Let me into the air, Rachel; I want to breathe the wind off the sea."

They stood again in the moonlight. For all her quiet she meant to speak with him; she had much to say, oh, very much, though it was midnight and the moon stood in the high south, warm in a fleece of clouds.

"You said we were alone again, Anthony."

"His folly made me mad, Rachel."

"But we are not alone."

He looked towards the west, towards Pentowan, and shook his head.

"Let's not think, girl. Why do you stab me? It's been so dreadful a day that this is peace and heaven to me."

"Are you going home?"

She put so fierce an accent on the bitter word that he flinched.

"That's not like you," he said simply. "You know I love you, and—and—and it can't be!"

Rachel took him by the arm.

"Did she tell you how it came that John went mad with me—did she tell you that?"

"What she said he told her wasn't the truth," he answered. "But she's my wife."

She stirred his mind, though, and his eyes dilated; she set his heart strings trembling; her touch upon his arm was something to draw him.

"She bribed Mary, Anthony. That's your wife! She beat poor Sigurd because you gave him to me. That's your wife!"

She spoke in a low voice, but the passion in it hurt him even more than the true words.

"There's more than that, Anthony. Let me say it; if I burn, I'll tell you. There's something so unutterable in her that it makes my heart sick."

He knew that; none knew it better.

"Tell me if you must," he said; and he prayed, "Help me, O God, for this woman of whom she speaks is my wedded wife. By Thine altar did I plight my troth to her for ever. Give me strength to endure and keep Thy law."

And Rachel stood apart from him with her head down. She stood in the shadow, but she saw his face in the midnight moon. She prayed to other gods, to those of the woodland and the sea, and the great grey uplands where the lapwings cry; to the gods that speak unashamed in

human hearts and are so beautiful; to the gods of dear love, and of sweet offspring, and the kindly gifts of the due seasons, sweet without passion, and most natural. He cried to the Law and she to the Spirit that remakes the Law or perishes.

“He’s mine, he’s mine!”

Her voice was low, but as clear as a bell, save where righteous and natural shame stirred its music. She spoke exactly, giving words their right, and as she spoke all that he knew came in as living witnesses. He saw a broken man spurred on to crime by this creature of his polluted house, and nodded dreadfully. This was truth, oh, it was so true that he saw it in action—beheld her move, heard her voice. And as Rachel spoke he burst out suddenly:

“This—this is my wife!”

She knew now that he had fire within him, and she watched his face with every word of agony.

“And I forgave her!” he said piteously; “I forgave her, Rachel, for all her cruelty, and for all she had done. She asked that, and said I mustn’t leave her! And I couldn’t. I said, ‘Are you not my wife?’ I said that, Rachel, and now I know what she is utterly; and this is madness, Rachel. It’s worse than it was. Why did you tell me, girl?”

He ran to her and caught her hands.

“Why did you tell me? What’s it now for me? Oh, Rachel, Rachel!”

He groaned aloud, and Rachel cried out with pain to see him thus; and still her heart was stubborn to save him from the path on which he journeyed.

“Now—now, you’ll not go home,” she stammered; “you’ll not go home! Where is your home, Anthony? Am I so mad, so wicked, so unnatural as your eyes make me think? Anthony, Anthony, you’ll not go home!”

She loosed him and ran back into the shadow.

“The light hurts, it burns! Oh, that it were black dark, that I could speak to him. Oh, God, it’s not for myself, it’s for him, for him!”

He followed her, speaking vain things.

“Be strong—pray—believe—there’s a God—there’s

heaven—if there's hell here. I shake, I tremble, but there's a God!"

She fell upon her knees and tried to speak, but could not, and he bent over her and saw her open her lips.

"My God, I could kill that woman," he said; "I could kill her. Am I going mad again, mad? Does the moon hang red in the sky once more? I'll go home; but there's that gun!"

He ran to where it lay against the steps, and catching it up brought the muzzle down furiously on the stones and smashed the bent barrel from the stock. Then he laughed.

"Oh, fool that I am! I have hands, hands! There's her throat! No, no, I'll be sane. Poor Rachel, poor Rachel!"

He ran back to her and knelt beside her on the grass, and put his arm about her.

"Poor girl, why do you love a madman like me? There's fine men on earth, quiet men, and strong, who haven't been fools. There are such traps for men, dear, and they say the traps are all for women. We must be sane, child. There's no way out. I shall see you and love you, and you'll believe again, and God is merciful! Don't I know it; don't I know it?"

But now Rachel laughed dreadfully, and did not cease laughing when he begged her.

"It's awful, awful! Don't laugh, my heart breaks!"

The tears ran down his face, but not down hers, even when her laughter ceased. Her heart was insistent.

"Here's your home!"

She caught him to her heart.

"There's other places than Pentowan, than Morna!"

"It's death if I don't go back."

"And if you do, if you do!"

She spoke as one in final agony, but not yet was it the agony which is calm, though that might be coming.

"Anthony, Anthony, I'm not mad. God never meant this, could not mean it. There's no God could. She's not fit to live. Could any God make her? My love for you grew up with me; it's part of my heart—it's so true, so

deep. I think of you all day, all night. I dream and you come and sometimes are sweet, and sometimes in a pale agony, and sometimes you are dead. That's best of all, Anthony; for when you are sweet my heart aches and my body aches, and the next day is a pain that hurts without tears. You love me, and I'll believe, if you leave her. Oh, do you ever say you love her? Does your God let you tell such lies? The day's a pain, and the night's unspeakable, and I have moments when I'm with you; and then you go, and I'm sick, bodily sick, Anthony. I've lost my faith, and the poor old priest sends for me, and I won't go. They say's he dying now. I'm so lonely, now Martha's getting old. There are times death beckons, Anthony—oh, that I'd died with you on the sea! Do you know my mother killed herself, poor thing, with that cross I showed you? There are times I look at it and see blood on it again, I see blood. Don't go home, Anthony; don't go back! I'm past all shame now; there's that in my heart which makes me speak, or I should die here, here on your knees. I'd be glad, glad if we were dead together. Anthony, Anthony!"

And the man on whom she hung was so moved that his voice seemed cold.

"You draw the heart out of me, girl! I—I can't see God for your hair, Rachel!"

He stroked her bowed head.

"So much a man can endure," he said, "so much! God in heaven, is man so strong?"

He fell into a silence deep as frost, and sat apart with his own soul.

"Can I not sit like God, and condemn my own soul to the fires?" he asked. And out of his extreme bodily torment and his pity for her he loved his soul was quiet within him.

"Rachel, give me this summer, and do not think of death."

He rose up and gave her his hand, and she rose too and stood by him. And presently he kissed her forehead, and went away quietly. And she sat in the darkness of her own room for an hour, and then, taking the crucifix from

her bosom, locked it in an old cabinet. For she had polished the blade until it was exceeding bright, and the point was sharp as the pains of love, and for a certain season there should be no need of it.

And though the days of the summer were long, yet would they pass.

BOOK V

I

THE day was burning hot, and on the beach the ranked boats lay with the flood tide beneath their dipping keels. The westering sun dropped slowly seaward: on the east cliffs its light glowed so wonderfully that the rocks were a deep and splendid red, and the grey moss seemed a rare fabric dipped in Tyrian dye. Beneath the cliffs, inside the claws of the headland, the water was like oil; on the shadowed side the division between air and water was so faint that the double of rock and its reflection hung darkly beneath and over burning blue. And beyond the claws, where the breeze brushed the water into faint lines, the sea was tropic with all the colours of the heavenly sky from the cloudless zenith to the heat haze of the far horizon. The road by the beach was fine white dust; dust lay upon the roadside flowers and in the few fair gardens of the Cove. In the welcome shadows sat many of its people, for the noon had been heavy indoors upon this day of rest, and only now had a faint air stirred upon the land and sea.

From the shore to the high uplands, where even at this hour sheep thrust their bowed heads beneath broken banks of flinty earth, the march of summer was as visible as the mighty track of a great army. The haying was long ago forgotten, and the browned stacks stood here and there like rude huts built for quick human increase. The wheat was yellow as fine gold; the greyer barley was bold and strong; the oats rustled in their ceaseless chatter, and men said that this year the harvest would be early, and that ploughing might be late.

“Sharpen your sickles, my slayers of the corn,” said

old Steve, "for man is but grass. And point the coulter of the ploughs, for his grave is a furrow in the hollow earth."

They said he grew foolish, for who used sickles now in these great days?

"For Death a sickle may do still," said the old man gloomily; "the harvest comes for all of us. As for me I'm but a dead awm of wheat sown by the hedge-side. I stand alone, all alone, and when death comes I care not. For neither open air on the headland nor too scanty drink can kill me, and I would fain cover my face before I see certain things come to pass which will come to pass more surely than harvest here at Morna."

He sat on a great stone outside Sam Burt's cottage, and Sam sat on a bench with his wife, who was heavy with child.

"What are your prophesyings about, Steve?" asked Sam. "These months past you have been going round like a Death's head and cross-bones, saying things which are by no means joyful. Is the drink so scanty now that Mr. John has gone?"

"Oh, aye, he's gone," said Steve, "and I miss him, not for the drink, but because, when he was like himself, he was a man. And I could tell you strange things about him that's little known. He cried like a child to me on the cliff one day, and that not long before he went."

"Why did he cry?" asked Tryphena curiously.

"On account of what old Mr. Tregilgas used to call the tears of things," said Steve; "and about himself and poor old George and about a woman he loved and was a mad fool for, and about those who had happiness offered them and would not take it. Oh, that day John Perran was great upon fools, and he foresaw something. But not so much as I."

The old man had lost much of his marvellous strength, which neither privation nor excess seemed able to diminish until this last hot year.

"I go down the hill now," said Steve. "Did I say I cared not when death came? That's a lie, Sam Burt; I've always said that life was a splendid thing, and so it

is if we are not too curious, and keep strong and bold and don't put your noses into God's business. But Mr. Anthony Perran now is as cock-sure of God as if he had written the Bible under direction all by himself. I hear they revised the Bible, Sam, and I wonder what they made of it by bringing it up to present times. It would seem we've none of the new copies here. We go by the old one—especially on Sundays and when our young wives are by."

Sam fidgeted a little uneasily, but Tryphena was unmoved. Nature worked with her easily; she thought better of Morna than she did. When Sam got up and walked to the beach she followed him with her eyes not unlovingly, though she was a hard little woman.

"How do Miss Rachel and Mr. Anthony get on now, Steve? Folks do talk, surely."

"The less need of us to talk," said Steve.

"'Tis natural," said Tryphena, "for it's very wrong——"

And Steve smiled.

"If you'd been a man, my dear woman, you'd ha' made a preacher. That's the text of all wordy fools; it's very wrong, for it's natural! When do you expect to be a virtuous mother, Mrs. Burt?"

"The end o' the summer," said Tryphena placidly.

Steve rose and followed Sam to the hot beach and leant against a boat with him.

"This is a hot summer, lad!"

"Aye," said Sam; "it 'll end, and we'll blow our fingers out to sea."

"Marriage has made a philosopher of you, Sam. You're a deal wiser than you were."

"Tryphena's sharp," said Sam; "and sharps me."

"Not too sharp?"

Sam went dusky red.

"That 'll do you, Steve. Don't you preach that human nature is human nature? There's no more in me than in some about here. I told you about the time her and Mr. Anthony was in my boat?"

Steve nodded and stared out to sea.

"You didn't tell your wife?"

And Sam shook his head.

"She's plenty to think upon. But folks do talk. If we didn't hate Mrs. Anthony, talk would be bitter, Steve."

"I wish she was dead, Sam. But others will die first. Have you heard that the poor old priest at Caerhays flies the blue Peter, being bound for the great port of Lord-knows-where in the land o' Beyond?"

"We've all to go," said Sam indifferently.

"Aye, aye," cried Steve, "but your quart o' life's at your elbow, hardly sipped. And for me the bottom's in sight. And there's some that 'll spill, lad; they'll spill! Damn the land o' Beyond! Give me the sweet old earth. But if I could give all an unspent life to Miss Rachel, Sam, I'd give it, oh, I would!"

"I don't ask what's between her and another," said Sam, "but she has the kindest heart in Morna and around. She's making baby clothes for Tryphena, old chap."

But Steve struck the gunnel of the boat against which they stood with his clenched hand.

"By God! it's cruel, it's cruel!" he said. And tears ran down his face. For he had a heart that understood.

"I met her the other day at the gate," he said presently, "and she asked me a strange question, Sam; she said, 'Steve, when does the summer end?' I stared of course, like an owl in daylight, blinking, and a silly thing I answered. 'When it's over, Miss.' And as she smiled (what a smile she has, Sam, even when there's no summer in her heart!) I said that the summer ended somewhere about September. 'But suppose it's fierce and hot till the end of Ocober, Steve?' she said. So I had to allow that I didn't know when summer ended, but that it seemed to me that it was over when the leaves began to turn and to fall, or when a big storm blew up. And with that she nodded and smiled again, and sighed very strangely, as it might be right out of her heart, and she went away by the path among the pines. And it seemed to me there was the end of summer come for her over-early, oh, over-early."

They hung over the boat for an hour saying no more

until the westward cliff flung its kindly shadow over shining Morna, and the setting sun made the eastward rocks the crowning glory of the day.

"I'm going up to Caerhays to ask about Father Brant for her," said Steve. "He's ill and old, and grieves about his lost sheep, and she is so sorry for him that maybe she'll tell him lies to give him a happy send-off. But what true woman cares for heaven when her man's about on earth?"

As he walked through the fields he looked upon the yellow wheat.

"The harvest begins to-morrow," he said; "there's a dark harvester for sweet and unripe wheat."

II

IN the silence and quiet which fell upon her now Rachel found that the morning of each succeeding day went with unimaginable quickness, while the later hours seemed longer and the night drawn out like an unending cadence to melancholy music. When she woke, and now she always woke at dawn, terror of the swift motion of implacable time got hold upon her, because she remembered no more the slow passage of the evening that was gone. Her imagination of the processes of earth took on a peculiar dread of the uprising sun, which gave her hope and then menaced her with swift oncoming night. In dreams she saw the round earth with a child's thoughts, and beheld the days flash by like sparks from a grinder's wheel, while she sat displaced from her company of dear earth-children. And then once more she came among the alien corn, and found it alien no longer, but the gift of the divinely human earth.

Folks said she looked at them with eyes which smiled and saw beyond them, and for a long time she avoided the little children who had always been her chief delight. She stayed more within her own garden and her woodland. And she closed her books, shutting up the room in which she had read about the Sibyl, and such noble knights, and

ladies as did what they would, yet did no harm at all. For there was but one more book of Fate to read, and she would find it on the knees of autumn, like a red leaf inscribed with runes. She walked not wholly without a certain sober cheerfulness, so that many were deceived. She took her quiet pleasure in the pinewoods, where the wind was a wandering minstrel, and there birds came to her, even when Sigurd, who was sound but a little lame, rested his great head upon her knees.

There she considered many things, and not least often the sweet death of her old priest, to whom, as Steve had wisely foretold, she confessed upon his death-bed to make him happy. That her hour's acceptance of his faith, which was as dear to her as one long dead, was a lie, troubled her conscience not at all. For she perceived in the dying man the flame of the spirit rather than the gross fires of the Church by which he had lived, and she now had a pity for her ancient faith which cried out in him as one abandoned. If she substituted other penances than those his failing voice imposed, they were penances of a more natural and solemn order in the way of charity. For she tried to understand how it was that men gave such attributes to God as they abhorred in their brothers, and by what monstrous perversion of the kindly human heart belief in a creed ranked before the virtues of any pagan soul. And she saw that this dreadful growth was as inevitable as any noble quality, or as any crime, or as any high purpose, or any base passion, or as bitter love itself, or even as death.

Out of these meditations, which were truly the wordless communion of her spirit with the indwelling deities who fit man for his fellows, came a great and prophetic content with death. This content, being yet no more than contemplation, went hand in hand with her desire for life, and those gifts of life for which she strove. But now death seemed less far, and she had the knowledge, which noble age or exceeding passion shares alike, that the very act of death itself may be so great a deliverance unto peace as to surpass the most awful expectations of immortal love. She beheld the old priest lying dead with reverent and

appalling interest, for in death he grew more youthful and majestic. He would not lie in marble, but was marble. Death had taken the body and had finished it in the manner of a god-like artist. "Here," said Death, "is what life shall itself work out at last, when the noble type that I foreshadow shall live serenely beneath the very shadow of my wings." If, as some said, the older human beings grew the more they prophesied the creatures of the later day, then the very type itself of grave and sweet death should mark the quiet and triumphant close of life's strange drama upon his earthly star. She loved life like a little child, but her secret heart, which knew more than she, comforted itself with death against her aching bosom.

And men reaped the golden harvest, and the golden days dropped from the tree of summer like some precious spice which embalmers use.

III

THIS peace which came upon her in these more solemn hours so influenced those who loved her that they would have believed in her acceptance of fate, save for certain things which happened in the village during the later days of the hot harvest. And besides these matters it was clear to the simplest who knew Anthony Perran that he at least had found no peace even in the full hours of summer.

"He's mad for work," said old Simon the carter when he came through the Cove on his way to the eastern farm; "he be fair mad for't, and if another man worked as hard he'd drop. If it weren't for his love o' horses, and I'll say this, that he's kind to beasts, he'd work day and night. Aye, he grows thin. There's more wrong than meets the eye. The maids talk at our farm. And there's times Mr. Anthony sleeps at the hill farm, in the old cottage. These two days he's not been home."

And someone said that at last Winifred Perran herself grew pale.

"That pleases me," said Steve, when he heard it; "I

should have thought she'd have reddened and fattened while others wanned and pined. Those of us that know her hate her, and I knew her since she was a girl. Her old dad has talked about her; and that night Mr. John went off with his boy and Mary he told me things, strange things, boys, that it would be a shame to tell seeing that some we love are touched. Mrs. Winifred suffers, does she? When did she do aught for those who suffered? Has she ever helped the widowed or the fatherless? Has she come into the Cove with healing in her hands, or kind words that are the greatest help except silence? I've seen Miss Rachel go into a cottage here, and find a stubborn desolate heart, with the man it loved beneath the sea, and by silence and nought else she's brought on the great gift of tears so that the widow has remembered her children. That's a God's gift; that's a God's true heart; but if the woman at Pentowan suffers 'tis wholly for herself and out of jealousy. That's natural, you say? I don't say it isn't, and it's a difficult world, but she can't bring joy anywhere, and that ends her for me. I'm for joy and love, I am, and she can know nothing but pleasure. That's her nature. I wish she was dead. If she was a real woman, aye, and no more than a dozen in the Cove, there wouldn't have been the trouble that there is or the trouble that is coming. I once knew such a woman better than I should, and she scarred me!"

"You know and you don't say how it was that she had Miss Rachel's dog up there and whipped him," complained the Cove.

"If I told you'd put Mrs. Winnie in the sea," said Steve; "so some day I will when I think the time comes."

He knew so much that his influence was strong in spite of his rags and drunkenness. He hated Mrs. Perran, and understood that his bitter hatred and ceaseless talk against her must avail. It availed much that very week, for by chance it happened that she came down into the village, flaunting clothes that befitted no farmer's wife, as folks said, though for that matter she did no work and desired none. And underneath her fine dress she carried a bitter

and angry heart and a sore one. For Anthony stayed over-much at the hill farm, and she wondered if indeed he slept there. And she met Rachel in the village close by Sam Burt's house, for Rachel had gone there to take Tryphena something for the unborn. And Steve saw the two close together and came up with a spark of fire in his eyes. The village ran out to see if anything happened, for Steve was tolerably drunk, and they knew his mind. And they were rewarded; for they saw that Rachel passed her as if she were something that cast no shadow, while Steve stood up before Mrs. Perran and took on an attitude which betokened that oratory would break loose in him.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Perran," he said sharply; "how good it is to see you here among us! What good deed's yours this day?"

And Winnie knew him for her enemy, and hated him. She made as if she would pass him; but he dodged in front of her.

"Good people all, both great and small, come out upon your doorsteps and see our sweet friend!" he cried. "Here's Mrs. Perran of Pentowan Farm come down among us! Who so sweet as she? Good my dears, who is it that brings you help and is so kind to everyone, including dogs? Damn my own petty little soul, when I look upon her I'm ashamed! How great and fine even a woman can be! She brings little puddings to the poor and such like; the widows find a husband in her (she's a power of love) and the children a father. She makes clothes for us and thinks of us hourly, and when a month's storms blow us starvation she's our Lady Bountiful! Isn't it natural all men should love her? All men, all men, but one!"

"You—you beast!" said Winnie, choking.

"Tie me up and whip me," cried Steve; "tie me up and stab me with a hay-fork!"

And some of the women laughed, and some hissed lightly. For of a surety no one loved her.

"I could shout with laughter, ma'am," said Steve; "I'm an old sop, an old wise fool, but I know you in

and out. There's an old man up the road a bit that talks about white rabbits of the bracken. I could talk, I could! Where's our Mr. John? The night he went he burst out about a certain lady and told me pretty things."

He went right up to her and whispered, and Winnie was as white as foam. She stammered and could not speak.

"You smote me on the mouth your wedding-morning," said Steve, "but I know more than I told you then. Smite me now!"

He offered her an insulting mouth, and Winnie, wrought up to active rage, struck at him and failing to touch him burst into tears. And then of a sudden he saw Rachel, who came to him swiftly and took him by the arm.

"Steve, come away," she said, and the old man went with her as meekly as if he were a child.

"I couldn't help it," he whimpered. "God bless you, Miss Rachel, I couldn't help it. Isn't it true she struck me? Aye, Miss, and she's struck you too. They say she talks of you to the maids at Pentowan. If your dog Sigurd would only tear her throat I'd say 'Glory be to God!'"

But Rachel told him sternly to be silent, and she went back towards her own house, while Winnie crept out of the village like a thing which has been beaten. And old Steve stood in the road and wept.

"We poor ants, we poor ants must wait," he said. "What are we, even the biggest? I smell death hereabouts, and sad disasters. We work things out, and so do those who walk among us. I tell you I smell death."

As he cried he ran after Rachel and overtook her at the far side of Jose's forge where the path climbed the hill.

"Miss Rachel, Miss Rachel!"

She turned and waited for him, and when he came up with her he rubbed his bleared face with his ragged sleeve and lifted his face to her from below with a lamentable and piteous heart within him.

"My dear young lady, my dear Miss Rachel, what I

said of her in mockery is true of you. I'm nothing, I'm a wreck, oh, I'm dead, but it's true we love you, and I, that know so much, am grieved for you, if I dare say so. But you are a great woman, Miss Rachel, and you know how what we call God works in the world and in us. If there's wisdom at times in the mouth of babes and sucklings, there's wisdom in an old fool, and a strange keen sight. I've read that there are those who seeing some can foretell their death, because they see a white shroud about them. I've no such dreadful gift, but I've common wisdom, and if this endures I see that we shall lose you and that you will die young. And I'd wish to die before you."

He wept bitterly as he spoke.

"Forgive me, Missy, for my heart's full."

And he saw tears upon her wan cheeks.

"Poor old Steve," she murmured. And saying that she gave him her hand. But as he took it there was a change in him, a change so great that she was startled and looked at him, the drunkard and the outcast, with something which was like awe. For among human beings, cast adrift in this world, there are those who by endowment have the gift of priesthood; and now once more, in the midst of degradation and out of his infinite and despairing pity for her, the priest awoke within him. As it awoke his bowed figure straightened, and all light folly went out of him, and his eyes were bright, and his face had something in it which was venerable. And he raised his hand and blessed her.

"That which is God-like in this world, bless you," he cried, "and all that is true and natural joy be yours. May your days endure and love brighten your eyes, for where you go love springs like any flower."

And she bowed her head before him, and then turned toward the woodland path. As she went he cried out to her:

"I'll do something for you, Miss Rachel, something that poor Father Brant wouldn't have done!"

But he had done much already, and fate had done much, for her peace dropped from her like a frozen leaf, and she cried aloud for the end of the summer.

And in the burning heat old Steve toiled up the eastern road.

"It's time that someone spoke to Mr. Anthony," he said, "for there's death in that dear woman's face."

IV

IN a little hollow or roundish dimple of the yellow grey upland, where wild and scanty grass edged cornland or the rough weeds of abandoned tillage, lay the cottage of the hill farm. By it no trees grew; there was a clear reach of open earth right to the sea, and, upon the north, further yet to the hummocks of brown hills. The land had been won with pain and labour from the desolate moor, and had then been given up because of the failure of the only well. No one but Anthony Perran could have made it yield even a poor rent, but he was of those who endure, even more stubbornly than the earth itself, the conflict which wrenches harvest from the soil. Often and often it had seemed to him that the five fields upon which he laboured were bitter personal opponents; only in a fine season could he make them friends or anything but tribute-bearing slaves of toil. But this year the season wrought with him, the crop was clean and good and tall. He worked upon it with his men in sombre silence, not unthankful, yet without any heart to take payment for labour which brought nothing to ease his heart.

The deserted cottage, in which he now sometimes slept, was the one thing untrimmed within his boundaries. Of its three rooms two were uninhabitable; nettles grew in rankest profusion about its walls and in what had been its garden. Among the nettles showed the broad leaves of dock; wild vetches blossomed rarely, only the thistles were mown down lest the wind should sow them broadcast in the later year. The one room which he used had nothing in it but a truckle bed, a table of scrubbed deal, and an old wooden chair. But this room was as clean as old Simon the carter could make it. Ever since his strange dismissal the man had feared Anthony more than

he feared God; for, being one of those who lived equally with kindly beasts, he saw no more quick reason to be afraid of God than of the far-off majesty of the remote law.

"There be an owl nesties in the old kitchen chimbley, sir," said Simon; "shall I smoke un out?"

"Let it be," said Anthony.

As Simon went away he murmured thoughtfully:

"I do hate owls, I do, they're sad birds o' night. 'Tis a sign as the master hates his misses if he'd sooner sleep with an owl; that's certain."

Half the wheat was low when Steve Penrose came upon the hill. It showed like the gold of sunset as it lay in waves where the reaper had thrown it. But it was noon, and the men were taking their mid-day meal under the shadow of the northward wall, while the horses champed their food with their head-stalls off. Anthony himself was in the house, for he ate but little, and found dry bread and cheese and water no more tasteless than any food that came his way.

"'Tis a damn dry place for Steve to come to," said the men when they saw him climbing the hill; "what's he want now? Well, water's precious here, lads; let's offer him a pint."

But the old man waved their clumsy jests aside and went straight in to Anthony, whom he found sitting with his face upon his hand. He was looking at the dead white wall, but if the old man judged true he saw other things than those he looked at with his eyes. Now he stared at Steve for a long moment until he knew who it was, and then he moved impatiently.

"What is it?"

"I've come with a message for you, sir," said Steve very soberly, as he pushed aside two ragged locks and stood upright before him.

"From whom, man?"

"That's more than I can rightly say, sir. According to my notion it's from God, and as likely as not you'll say it's from the devil. But I beg leave to speak, for, if you remember, I once said there would be a day I'd come

and speak to you if you tore my tongue out afterwards."

"If you remember so much, it's good," said Anthony, "what folly are you after now?"

But there was still something about the old preacher which was so unlike himself that Anthony wondered.

"I've come to speak to you about Miss Rachel, sir."

"Keep your tongue off her name, man."

"It's a name that blesses every tongue that speaks it," said Steve; "and you know I love her, sir. And I've no hatred for you, only a kind of sorrow. And I'd like you to know, sir, as you must know, that according to some poor Miss Rachel's blessed name lies in the dust. And there are others, not so wicked as foolish, who think the same, for they've no heart to be strong and to rejoice in natural love. I'll speak to you of Miss Rachel, sir, if you kill me!"

His voice was more like the voice of a young man, and his very soul was moved. And Anthony Perran sat quietly.

"If I will not hear you?"

"You will hear me, sir."

He looked straight into Anthony's eyes, and saw how wasted the man was, and how his face was drawn so that he seemed over his age by many bitter years.

"Speak," said Anthony. "I never gave you anything; I'll give you fifteen minutes now."

This was in the nature of penance, for he foresaw suffering. And he saw something in Steve which looked as much the direct gift of God as shining waters in a desert of dry sand.

"Now you give me leave, sir," said Steve, "I come upon the difficulties of it. But I want you to know that I saw Miss Rachel an hour ago, and when I left her I said, 'It's time that someone speaks to Mr. Anthony, for there's death in that dear woman's face.' Yes, sir, there's death's shadow on her, and a consuming fire in her, and it's a fire of love and pity which burns. And I've a notion in me that, by unhappy chance, you lighted that fire before you were married, sir."

And Anthony veiled his face with his hands, and sat trembling.

"Oh, sir," cried Steve, "here's the difficulty of it, that I've been a preacher and am now of the less account for that, seeing that my name's for laughter and I live like a creature of the fern and take as much liquor as I can get, and make myself less than a beast. And now I'll not speak of the wild nature in me, which has made me what I am, for I'd scorn to defend myself to you. And I can see, sir, somehow, that the very fact of my being what I am and yet able to speak to you so, may show you that God's in me yet, though my God is not yours, and yours is very dreadful to me. For I'll speak fairly, and say that every man in this sad world seems to have a God of his own, unless it be the poor folks who have none and worship in crowds. And so I come, God knows how, to Miss Rachel and to you, sir, and to your wife, sir, which last is the matter that may make you lay hands on me. However, I care not, as the sky's my judge and the God that we look for in our hearts and out of it."

But though he paused Anthony never spoke.

"It's common knowledge, dreadful knowledge, sir, that you love our Miss Rachel and that she loves you. And such love as hers is out of all comparison the rarest gift upon earth. 'Tisn't her beauty, sir, which is so strange and rare, and now wastes like ice in the sun. 'Tis her kindness and her thought for others, and her tenderness and the swift heart to help and her most wonderful power of love which passes words, aye and passes all understanding. And nature being what it is, and she being what she is, she has set her heart on you, and it's owned all round the country that you are a fine man, good and strong and fair dealing, and with that kind of face and eye which makes many women sigh when you are spoken of. And you would say, 'I'm married,' that's what you would say, and what you do say, sir. I won't speak against matrimony, Mr. Anthony, for it's a holy estate. But it's not holy, as you know, sir, just because of a ceremony, but because it's according to nature—when God and nature go together 'tis a sweet and plain path, oh,

the very sweetest. But God's found with difficulty, and nature's here before us. Who is at the back of nature but God, sir? and there His word is plain and clear. This He gave to us; it's the great book, the unwritten book, that sometimes even I have read in when I've slept under the stars and heard the sound of the sea beneath me."

He wiped his brow and went on, for the man to whom he spoke made no motion. And words were sweet to the old man, for he loved that which lay beyond them when they were clear and true.

"Oh, sir, you've never lived! And I—oh, I have, sir. You believe in books, in the Book. Books come out of the human heart, even if God puts them there. But what need have you of books, when here are hearts for you to read? Their very blood is the word of God. They're nearer to Him than any books, believe me. You can't live by thinking, but by living, and religion's not life, sir; it's only a help, it's only one staff, and nature is our very limbs, our feet. And here you live by the letter of the word, and Miss Rachel's dying, and there's another that's living on her blood, whose heart is wickedness. For some hearts are evil, as some books are evil. And there are things I know about one who is, as you believe, bound to you, that you don't know. And I've come here to tell you the truth, and I'll speak it while I've a tongue in me, for I love Miss Rachel, too, sir, and what is right in her sweet eyes is righteousness in me!"

And with that he dropped his voice, and leaning with his hand upon the table he spoke things which stabbed Anthony to the heart.

"I've no right to hear you," he cried; "no right!"

"I'll speak," said Steve, "I'll speak and I'll say the truth; truth that I've seen and heard; truth that I've seen with my eyes in moonlight; truth that her poor old father told me; truth that your brother owned to me in the mad hour he had before he went that night, sir. I'll speak it unless you choke me."

Old as he was and broken, yet he was strong now and dominant.

"There's no such woman living, I should say," said

Steve; "she'd drag the fairest soul down to hell. You can't live with such a woman and see God. There are such women, I know—one I met in my old life. That I saw her spotted soul and left her before I was plague-stricken gives me rights that few have, and I've known poor harlots and loved them, sir. Harlotry's no such sin—Christ was kind to a harlot, but what about Sapphira? And a common liar is a poor tool that's soon blunted beyond the power of wounding. But what of this woman who sat in secret and worked out a plan to make your poor mad brother, whose wild passion she knew, drag Miss Rachel in the dust of shame in the dark of her own wood?"

He whispered that into the ear of the man who sat clutching the table.

"She is my wife!" cried Anthony; and he caught Steve by the wrist and nearly broke it.

"If you're strong to hurt me, be strong to hear the truth," said Steve. "I'm an old man, and you're the strongest man in Morna. It's true, it's true."

And Anthony groaned in torment, and was white as ashes.

"She—oh, I said I'd forgive her everything. Is this all true? Oh, God, it's true; there's that in me cries it. What did Rachel say? And even this old man knows!"

He sat with a fallen jaw, and his eyes were wild.

"And she's my wife! Oh, man, you talk folly!"

He caught Steve by the coat and shook him.

"She's my wife!"

And Steve cried out:

"What's a wife but something human? That's what a wife is. Oh, but I'm sick to see so fine a man, and one that Rachel Marr loves, think so much of his own soul as not to trust his heart if it leads him to damnation."

He took Anthony by the shoulder.

"And that's what no human love did yet! If there's a hell, be sure it's full of those who thought themselves surest of heaven. Will Miss Rachel be in hell, sir? If I thought that I'd be willing enough to lose my own thin chance of Paradise."

But Anthony heard nothing that he said, and saw no blinding sunlight, though he looked upon the warm and radiant earth. For him the word was law; the sacrifice of his heart the sacrifice appointed. Unto the Lord he made his altar; unto the Lord he sacrificed his soul. His word was not given to the woman, but to God, and nothing could recall it. The thought of any revocation was monstrous sin, and yet not so monstrous because it was impossible. He had cried out to Rachel on a sea not so perturbed as his own spirit, that even if he fell yet would he go back. And here his human pride stepped in and blocked his path to any remission of his agony. To know what his wife was, how foul, how bitter, how secret in revenge, how public in her name, and then to return and to say what any guilty man must, would be so intolerable that his body sickened at the thought. He turned upon Steve at last and spoke fiercely and with a religious passion that was dreadful.

“Are you the devil himself, Steve Penrose, you that once preached God’s word and now infect the world with atheism? Out of my sight, man! Whatever the chances of salvation the woman I love has, shall I blast them utterly and blast myself, aye, and damn you deeper than you are, by being what you would have me be? Oh, God forbid! I’m what I am, and where I am, and my sins are as scarlet now.”

“God help you!” said Steve; “God help you for a mad fool and for a man that lives on the crumbs that have fallen from great men’s tables where they fed the poor in ages past. There’s as fine a table spread for you now as there is for every age, and yet you crawl upon the ground. If God makes the times, with them He moves. The man who crucifies the best within him is a howling Jew on Calvary. What a sick heart said a thousand ages ago of man’s wicked heart was a lie born of sickness. Man’s heart is desperately good, and there’s his Bible. In the Bible you cry about there are lies, Mr. Anthony, for any truth becomes a lie when it deals with man and his strange conditions. But I’ve done, I’ve done! I’ve said my best, and done my best, sir, and that dear woman, who was

born a woman when most shes are only females, must pay the penalty. Good-bye, sir, and a great red-gold harvest to you, and when you thresh and winnow your own slain soul, may you find grain in it, and not only poppy leaves and tares and darnel. I've done, sir, and a bloody evening to you this black day!"

With that bitter curse upon a bowed head the old man, weeping and aflame, took the white road in the dust. He spent that afternoon with old George Perran, and both were drunk before the sun went down. But Anthony, being drunk with shame and passion, worked like three men, and drove his labourers and his horses till they groaned, and it was long past sunset.

V

But when the sun was a sunken star, and colder stars hung in the pure vault of heaven, and a hot land breeze moved upon the waters like the faint breath of a foredone beast who drinks at the margin of the sea, Anthony came out of his wrecked house and sat for an hour in so full a quiet of the body that he seemed carved out of stone. He saw rats run swift in the dusk; they squeaked beneath his very feet; the owl sat upon the chimney top and hooted, and then with spread vans slid like a shadow through the lucid night. The colour of the slain wheat made a golden pallor even under the stars, and the hill-top rose out of the vague and tenebrous darkness which covered Morna and the sea like a huge barrow given over to the dead. Far away down among the trees, the pines and elms of Morna, twinkled lights; where the wind touched the moving tides, or where the tides chafed in an overfall, there was a broken gleam. But Morna House was obscured by its trees, and over it there shone a faint far lamp which marked Pentowan Farm in the open fold of its descending valley.

"God help me, there's my home!" he said. And as he prayed, for this was a prayer, he knew that it was God's purpose to give him no help, but to try him in the fires.

He was very certain of God, and God's ways; for he was assured that the ways of man were not the Almighty's, and that God gave His creatures their passions and their delights to be sacrificed to His own incomprehensible glory, unless their happiness was approved by man, whose approval by his bitter logic went for nothing. And now he wrestled with himself upon a high place, and prayed against his nature and accepted all things, even shame, while within him there was that which cried out like one that would yet triumph. And this was how he, too, prayed wordlessly for death. It was close on midnight before his day's toil and passion gave him, if not a victory, a bitter truce, and he lay upon his bed and slept. And it may be that he dreamed, though there are those who will say he did not dream, for the nature of man broadens like the very stream of time, and with new needs new faculties awaken and are begotten in the fertile hearts of men. For he heard a fine faint voice cry aloud, "Anthony, Anthony!" and his flesh moved upon his bones, and the hair of his head stood up. This was the voice of Rachel, and he accepted it as her messenger without any denial or any amazement, though he was cold with fear of himself and of heaven. And going out into the night he found that the constellations had wheeled in their mighty march but a mapped hour's space, and yet the aspect of the heavenly host was strange to him, for he saw them not upon any plane, or any curve of the sky's dome, but as lamps nearer or farther yet, in a deep fathomless abyss. He stood upon the hill over the darkness of the abyss of earth, stood as one lost among the stars, and he found their high company cold and the earth warm as the bosom of his beloved. And like a man who walks in his sleep, or one whose will is bound in the fetters of one desire, he descended the hill, and only when he found himself upon grass within three fields of Rachel's house did he once more awaken. Then he went down upon his knees, and sweat that was ice broke out upon his forehead, and he found no words for heaven, but only those inarticulate motions of the mind which consume the very words which show them forth. And without any

words his spirit cried out to the Giver of all Good Things:

“O Thou, Thou who hast set us upon this bloody star, this fire-encircled globe, this trembling planet of appalling thunder, to war against the flesh, give me courage to break down my heart and burn it on Thy altar. There’s no pride in me, nothing but appeal, for she’s so strong, so strong! She cried out to me, I heard her. Her nature is so pure, so sweet, and speaks as if Thou Thyself spoke in it. That old man was terrible this day. Oh, Thou knowest her mercy, her loving-kindness, her most immortal pity for the poor, and those who suffer. There’s a God-given anguish in her: she pours ointment on the very feet of death itself. But for me she has no pity: my passion’s here: she cries of green pastures to me in the fire that Thou hast kindled to try me. Immortal God, Great Omnipotent, Just and Most Merciful Creator, blind me to her ravaged beauty, which is more lovely than youth in flower: burn out my eyes with burning tears: palsy my limbs that strive towards her! There’s such an ache in me: there’s such a wind that blows me to her: I’m a drifting seed upon her indrawn sighs: there’s no help but in the God I’ve given my youth to! Let me not sink in fire and be consumed! Thy Law—Thy Law—but there’s the flesh, the flesh! I beat it down, and there’s the body, and my soul’s drawn with it: my will consumes! I will not fall, I will not! Lift Thou me, for the solidity of the earth dissolves beneath me: I’m engulfed in earth and her cruel love. Make me love yet hate her: take a little of the burning hatred of my heart and pour it into my love. Set me free from her voice. If it be that my death alone can preserve her and bring her heart and body back to Thee from one poor creature, stamp me into the trenched ground, into the hollow earth, into the clay which is my body’s! Save me, save her! Oh, oh, this awful earth! there’s but a faint star of faith over it: make the star burn for me, O God!”

And yet he rose and staggered onward through the night, and it was as if the earth were split beneath him and spurted flame. To his own salvation and the will of

God he hung as a stricken mind that is barely sane hangs to sanity and is afraid. But his body was drawn onward; and in this hour he knew that if by any fatal chance she used her power there would be no power in him.

He crossed the belt of pines and plunged within their scented solitude, for one immortal minute of respite he breathed like a lover at a tryst most exquisitely happy in dear expectation. So sweet and awful a moment of the body's triumph appalled him: he gasped for breath and wondered.

"Is there such happiness for happy men that lasts?"

He saw an equal glimpse of truth, that happiness, however won, must come from God. He thrust the truth away and came beneath the windows of the silent house, and as he stood there he heard Sigurd speak low as one who knew his old master's step. He came to the dog, who fawned upon him joyfully.

"You are hers, you see her daily," said Anthony; "she's your sweet mistress; I've seen your head upon her knees. Oh, but you're a dog, great of affection, but so little to me that you're a ghost, not a reality. What is real but agony? Heaven's so dim. And I said, 'Give me the summer,' and here I am in harvest breaking faith with myself and with her. Oh, but years ago when we were happy, she cried out, 'I'd do anything you wanted, Anthony.' I'll tell her that. She must not cry to me!"

He stood beneath her window that faced the south.

"Did you call to me, beloved?"

Here the lover spoke softly; here the man denied himself no music of his own voice.

"Did you call to me? I heard your voice upon the wide upland; it came to me."

Above his head the white house stood that held his heart: earth breathed upon him with odorous winds, and the great woods murmured.

"One star of my sky. Oh, oh, what red dawn's for me? If she speaks what shall I do? Tear the wall down; break the door and take her; or will her voice be what it was of old, and make me gentle?"

He talked like one in a dream, as one drunk with strange dews of plants in a deep land of flowers.

"I will speak, I will cry out," he said, "while I stand and wait I'll give myself this gift. I'll fool myself, fool my heart, drink deep. There'll be an awakening, for I'm strong. I shall say what is God's will, but underneath my words I'll call her dear, and utterly beloved, and my soul's red heart, and I'll think of her bosom and her arms!"

And then he knew that Rachel herself stood at her window, open for the cool air of night, and looked down upon him. He lifted wordless lips and stammered, but even in the drawn passion of him he held his arms down, rigid with clenched hands. He heard her speak, and the air was vibrant and warm, and the scent of flowers filled the very ether.

"Is it the end of summer?"

The warm air and the scent of corn-lands and all the innumerable voices of the middle year mocked him as he spoke.

"Did you call me, Rachel?"

"How should I call you?"

But her heart leapt within her. Here was the man, by his voice so shaken that its very tone proved her power at last. And even as she knew it, pity for him raised its head within her, and it cried out softly that she was cruel, and she knew the truth of it, and yet was bound in such inexorable need that the knowledge helped him nothing. Pity sat apart in her and wept, as it might at tumbrils and the march of war.

"Rachel, I lay up yonder, and I heard your voice. It cried, 'Anthony, Anthony!'"

She was hard, for triumph that was cruel, that is cruel, ordered the passions of her soul.

"I lay asleep. Perhaps I dreamed!"

"Then your spirit called me. I believe now that this might be. An hour ago I'd have denied it."

The reaction of his audible passion upon her made her so strangely cold that she wondered.

"Am I ice?" she asked; "am I ice? What has hold of me?"

She found speech incredibly difficult: the fountains within her were dried up. At this moment it seemed as if she could have surrendered him to his own fate. But she knew better, and yet was cold.

"When does the summer end?" she asked of him. "Is it when the leaves fall, or when a storm comes? I'll keep faith with you!"

And he cried out in a loud voice:

"What name has this garden, O Christ in Gethsemane?"

He found words and poured out speech before her.

"You said you'd do anything I wanted, Rachel! That was what you said years ago. Do you remember that night when you were in the cool water, and your heart was cool, and I was what I am, though I knew it not? Oh, I love you, there's no measure of it. But I'm set fast. Don't call to me. I hear you, and shall hear you. And there's two agonies for me. Give me one! Give me what you will! No, no, I did not mean that. I said, 'Give me the summer,' but your soul called to me. Rachel, I was drawn here; my dear love, I was drawn here. But I swear before God I'm strong now, and calm, and I bid you to remember what you said. The harvest's half down. Can I live to see it ended?"

But her heart was ice, was motionless, she could not speak. And she knew that the old man had been with him, and had used dreadful truth upon his soul.

"Death itself were better."

But she could say nothing, nothing. She stood and looked down upon him, while dumb pity wept within her, and the march of death went on. And she heard herself cry out aloud:

"When does the summer end? Has it ended that you have come to me?"

And she saw him going blindly among her flowers, and she knew that whether summer ended now, or burnt in an eternal glory, he was hers when she called to him. And knowing something beyond this, by reason of the

separate pity which dwelt apart within her, she took out the carved crucifix from the old cabinet, and put it against her heart, and spoke with it as she might have spoken to a living thing.

But Anthony went not back to the hill, but to Pentowan. And going in he woke his wife and said things to her that she found no answer for. She sat shaking till dawn, and then renewed her courage, though she wept.

“She’ll not get him. He’ll come back to me.”

She prayed that hour to some god she believed in; for now, according to the measure of her nature, she loved him and was afraid.

VI

THE harvest of the corn fell to the reaper, and the hours that perished and were reckoned up fell to the reaper of days, and yet the summer endured like gold that the rust of winter cannot corrupt. And there were some whose harvest was nigh gathered, and some that went under the flail and the winnowing fan till men might judge what God sowed. Rachel was of those whose fertility in the eyes of heaven was known; and even men and women knew her, and for all her griefs they loved her still, because she loved them and even now was not cold. And to herself, as she remembered it, that strange midnight hour which found her as cruel as the grave was a very strange and dreadful thing, even though she thought upon death, and went quietly with the thought within her.

“I was cruel to him, cruel to Anthony!” she cried in bitter astonishment. But she could not let him go, for her love was stronger than his death; many waters could not quench it. Her jealousy was cruel as the grave, and digged a grave for him. She prayed ancient human prayers to the white knife of her cross, and handled death like a child.

And now in Morna, which perceived all things through the dark glasses that Steve held up to them, the folks saw one strange change in Rachel. Once she had scorned the

old and those without children, for it seemed to her abundant strength that age was lack of endurance, and owed nothing to the passage of time, while those who were wives, yet not mothers, belonged by no right but a bitter courtesy to the fertile children of the earth. But now she gave herself daily more and more to the old, and such houses as held no rocking cradle and mothered no children found her within their thresholds with grave consolations and many gifts. It was Steve who first saw this, and his very soul was sorrowful, and for many days he said nothing of it, for it seemed even more cruel than that her natural mother's heart should set her empty hands to the help of the unborn.

"This is death's warning," said Steve; "this is to be 'fey,' as some have called it. She looks upon the old, not because they are old, but because they are soon to die. And she is sorrowful out of her own sorrow for those who have no children. Now I see death has set his seal upon her, and she makes ready without knowing it. For nature works this way with many, and not once only have I seen it."

But she desired life, even if it were only for one hour, and her thoughts upon death were, as she knew, alien and intrusive so far as her own soul was concerned. And there were times when she desired to go back upon the path of time with such a desire that it made her do things which otherwise she would not have thought upon. But of a truth she was at once so fixed and so open to certain impulses that she moved as the very winds listed and was blown upon the winds. And a strange thing happened to her, or what she thought strange, since she was of a mind to see portents in inconsiderable chances of the hour. For only a few days after Anthony had come into her garden at midnight she went out into her wood and stayed there till twelve was struck by the clock of the church on the hill and the gibbous moon was high in the south. And she remembered the night of long ago, the night in which she had bathed, and Anthony had come riding by the beach with her own dog Sigurd.

But then the moon was full and the harvest stood un-

touched. Now upon Pentowan and the hill farm the golden corn was stacked, and the moon was no pure circle, but something incomplete. Yet the night was such a night as the other, balmy and odorous with the scent of pines and heavy roses. The tide was close upon the flood; her acute ear caught the sound of the lessening purr of the Lion in the tide-way, and the sleepy lap of windless waters on the rocks. She laid her cheek against the cool clean scales of her pines and sighed once or twice, and then at last rose, and going quickly to the house she loosed Sigurd and went down to the beach. Now it was after midnight and the world was asleep. Was there anyone awake? Who should ride upon the moonlit road this night? Was anyone dying at this hour, as her mother had been near to death so long ago? She put the thought away from her, and with that thought other thoughts as well, and tried to be what she had been, as she sat upon the table of rock from which she used to bathe when she was not a woman. And suddenly she looked up and between the claws of the rock which enclosed the waters of the Cove she saw far at sea a vessel on the flood. Such a ship she had seen upon that night. On what voyage had it been: for it was the same mystically, and bore mysteries within it? As the moonlight fell upon its sail it was white and faint and wonderful. And even as she watched it the vessel went up into the wind, and its sails were in shadow and a shiver ran through her veins. She clutched hold of Sigurd, who lay upon the rock beside her, and found comfort in his friendship. About her a very heavy shadow lay, and the water near at hand was dark. She touched it with her fingers and found it warm, and in another moment was swimming while Sigurd lay with one great paw upon her garments.

In the firm and cool embrace of the passionless water she recalled her passionless hours, and in her dark heart she regretted the passions of the flesh. These swept over the white purity of the soul, and if they did not make it, marred it. Though she strove against all thoughts of the present, the exceeding bitterness of it could not be ex-

pelled. She was as one driven out of Paradise without cause, and the strange folly of vain self-denial rose before her like a monstrous reef of rock. If Anthony had only trusted himself! At the thought of lost happiness she sighed, and the gibbous moon was a vast blur of light in the heavens. The pale stars ran down the sky like those which fall, like tears which fall.

And she heard Sigurd speak upon his rock as one who says, "Listen!" But she heard nothing.

And Sigurd barked low once more. It was as if he said, "I hear a friend."

And Rachel's heart almost failed her in deep water, for she knew that Anthony came riding upon the high road. For one moment time itself died within her, and that mystic sense which sometimes flowers in the human heart and says that time is not, grew to a wonder in her. She found another portent in his coming; it meant much. She could make it mean much. How slowly Anthony rode! She remembered that while he was alone at Pentowan he rode homeward fast. He came within sight of her, riding with his head sunk upon his breast. But she knew that from where he was he could see her house. He drew up and looked towards it, and her heart was all love and pity, for he threw up his hands with a gesture of despair. He sat his white horse bareheaded; it was as if he prayed. Then he rode on and found Sigurd in the path; and the great dog, remembering much that had happened at Pentowan, though his chief memories were of a certain woman, whimpered joyfully to him and lay down in the dust. And in the moonlight man and horse and dog were like peculiar apparitions, for the quiet world was so dead asleep. Where dust rose it fell. The dark water was like oil; the moon had no wake in the sea, but was repeated in burnished silver set in the dark of blue.

She heard him speak.

"Sigurd, Sigurd, why are you not at home?"

He stared at the heavy shadows, and fearing against fear and hoping against hope, cried out:

"Rachel!"

Her voice came back out of the dark waters:

"Yes, Anthony."

His heart leapt within him fiercely, and intolerable joy and passion shook him. Twice he lifted his hand and then he spoke.

"Rachel, Rachel!"

He alighted from his horse and came to the verge of the water, and stammered strangely:

"Years, years ago—do you remember?"

He saw her head set in water to her throat; she was like a lily in a pool.

"You bade me go home. Then Sigurd was mine," he said.

He spoke like one in a dream, and knew it.

"This is like a dream."

"I was cruel to you the other night, Anthony. I'll not be cruel again."

But she knew that she had triumphed, and held his soul within her hands.

"If there's happiness, I'll give it to him."

His passion took his thoughts and turned them at its will.

"You said, 'I'd do anything you wanted, Anthony,'" was what he thought. He said:

"I love you."

The sound of his own words came to him and made him tremble, though they were so faint and low.

She smiled, though he saw not that she smiled.

"Is there such a thing as time, Anthony? If you love me I'll believe in immortality."

His soul asked him: "Can God condemn a human soul to hell for ever because it loves?" And his body said that love lasted for ever, and that if love existed there could be no hell. For in this hour of midnight he was a man, and lived among natural things and saw God face to face. And he forgot the morrow and the resurgence of those things which made him less and more than a man. Here the night surrounded him and cut him off from those aspects of the world which live on dead faith. They were both children of the moon and forgot the bitter sun, and spoke dear words to each other. He knelt upon the

beach and saw her like a dim naiad, and his heart was fire within him.

And suddenly they heard Steve far up on the road singing. When he was drunk he often sang hymns, and now he sang, "Oh, God, our help in ages past" as he came back to Morna from drinking with old George Perran.

"Go, go!" said Rachel. And Anthony rode away upon his white horse with a strange fierce joy in his heart. For now he knew that his God would not be his help, and he desired nothing but her love. And this would endure until passion fulfilled itself, since this is the nature of men of bitter faith.

But for the first time a sense of pity for his wife grew up within him. For her natural gifts were the infernal endowment of the pit, and Rachel was as splendid as the angels of God.

VII

HE passed Steve staggering on the road and singing.

"Good-night, Mr. Anthony," said Steve, "good-night; my legs are very drunk, sir, but bar a tendency to see two Mr. Perrans, which is a remarkable increase of lamentable folly, I'm sober enough."

But Anthony said nothing and rode on, cursing himself and afraid, and yet in a wonder of the rapt flesh which is the spirit. And Steve went down to the beach and sat upon a rock not far from Rachel, though out of her sight, and as she clothed herself again on leaving the water she heard him rave. For there were more thoughts within him than his drinking with George had let free, and meeting Anthony in the road set him preaching.

"Oh, aye, good people," he chanted from his rock, "oh, aye, good people, here's folly for you from the wise and wisdom from a fool. I met a ghost on a white horse up the road, and 'tis a ghost that's afraid of love. Good dear people, do not be afraid of love, for when it is met God is met, in whatever shape. But the ghost on the horse flees

from love, I know. I taught her wisdom myself, and I've helped to slay her. Wisdom's too much for women; and even men rarely get through to the sunny side of wisdom. Look at me howling hymns and preaching to sleepers while my legs are limp and I see twice the houses in Morna that there are. Oh, woe's me, woe's me, Miss Rachel's dying; she's dead already, for she's thinking of the childless ones. And to-morrow maybe Tryphena Burt will give her sinful Sam a child. What's that? Here's another ghost! 'Tis Sigurd and not a ghost. If he were a ghost I'd not see two of him, and here are two Sigurds at my knee."

He touched Sigurd upon the head.

"Aye, he's real enough and wanders around. She lamed him. Old boy, come and lie down and warm me. I'll sleep here. I wish I was dead. Poor old Steve, what a sad life yours is! And there's Miss Rachel! I could weep, I could. There's a halo round the moon, she'll weep; the sky will weep. Summer's done for all of us."

He lay down and went to sleep, and Rachel went back to the house with Sigurd following.

"That's afraid of love," she said, "and is the summer over?"

There were clouds in the south-west sky, and a little breath of wind came out of the sea, and when she woke in the morning she heard the sound of the rain. And it rained for three days, and then a storm from the west and north-west turned the green leaves brown and cast ripening fruit upon the earth of many broken orchards.

VIII

WHEN the storm blew over and the land was quiet again, with all the glory of the summer gone out of it, Greer was called to the village, and when he left it Tryphena Burt had a child at the breast. Rachel came down to the Burts' cottage and left the mother things which she had made with her own hands.

"Will you see the boy?" asked Greer. And to his sur-

prise Rachel said that she would not. The whistling doctor whistled and stared. And whether it was that he had wisdom of his own, or had talked with Steve, he understood and cut his whistling short.

"I'll walk up to your house with you," he said. And when he came to the garden he stopped and turned to her.

"You are ill, Rachel," he said suddenly.

But she denied it, palely.

"I am perfectly well."

"Then why did you refuse to see Mrs. Burt's child?" he asked, and Rachel's pale face flushed. But she did not answer, and Greer shook his head and talked almost to himself.

"A doctor has to be hard," he said, "but he has his griefs even when he does his cold best for the dying, Rachel. For he sees that human beings are fools and choose the difficult, when the easy is at hand. I'm in trouble about you, girl, for I knew your mother. And I had trouble a while ago, for you know I loved John Perran with all his faults. He's gone, and won't come back. For that matter, the boy I knew went when Jose struck him. What has struck you, Rachel?"

"Am I so changed?" she asked.

Greer threw his hand up and nodded.

"If I were your father I would take you away."

"That's where I am going," said Rachel to herself; "that's where I am going."

"You want a change."

"The summer's ended, Dr. Greer," she said, "and that will be a change. Will you come in?"

Greer stood irresolutely and did not answer. But suddenly he put out his hand and shook hands with her and turned away.

"I'll never help her through any trouble," he said. "Damn civilisation and morality, and more especially damn Anthony Perran! There's trouble coming, coming fast. The man's like a madman, and she's as white as death."

But Rachel said that now the summer was ended, and a great restlessness fell upon her, and a feeling which was

that of entire impotence in the hands of something which was herself and not herself. She walked in her garden, and its odours pleased her not, and the quiet of her beloved wood was not satisfying, and the sound of the sea was terrible, and the hills of the uplands too solitary. And when Martha spoke to her she answered at random, and when the old woman followed her in the house she turned upon her in a strange passion till Martha wept. And then Rachel comforted her and went away dry-eyed.

"I can't let her speak to me," she said; "since that night in the wood we've never spoken. Now I'll not call to Anthony, for the summer's ended."

And yet he came not of himself, and when he rode through the village he rode fast and desperately, and men from Pentowan said he never smiled. The women at the farm said that he and his wife rarely spoke, and that Winifred Perran had a look of fear in her eyes, and that she was curiously quiet with them and with everyone about her.

But when the rain was all over and the dry leaves began to fall Rachel met Anthony riding hard, and called to him. And he did not stop, but said to her, "God help us, dear!" as he rode on. Yet she could not help him, or herself, or any human thing; and she went back home, and lay on the bed all day, and next day did not rise.

"What's this in my heart?" she cried; "oh, this bitter hardness! This is love that was gentle, and it's fierce as death. Oh, my heart! My eyes are dry and my hands hot and my bosom's fire, and my soul is a flame!"

Martha came up to her, and sat by her without words.

"So I used to sit with her mother."

And seeing Martha's eyes, Rachel took her hand.

"You dear, you faithful dear! You've lost your own grief in me, and I give you nothing. Martha, am I beautiful still?"

"You're pale and thin, dear, but there's no such beauty as yours. It breaks my heart!"

"Beauty has been no use to me, Martha."

"It shall be," said Martha. "There's none like yours on earth, and there's power in it, darling!"

"There's none. My very bosom aches, Martha.

"I know it, Rachel."

The woman on the bed reached out and caught Martha's hands, and drawing her close laid her head on her knees.

"Did you ever feel death was a helper, Martha? Why, it's rest, you know. I'm lonely, Martha. Hold me close, closer."

The old woman rocked her in her arms.

"My baby, my baby!"

And Rachel shivered.

"The doctor said that Tryphena's child was a beautiful boy, Martha. I wouldn't see him. I—I hated poor Tryphena."

And Martha said nothing, for she understood.

"I wouldn't see him, Martha, I wouldn't. I wish I had—now."

She whispered:

"I can see the baby now, Martha, with his little hands and his dear little mouth. He's all like a sweet crushed rose. Martha!"

"Yes, darling."

"Martha!"

But Martha did not understand, and Rachel pushed her away and lay back upon the pillow and hid her face in her hands.

And then Martha's heart opened and she went down to Tryphena Burt's and spoke to the mother herself. And Sam's sister came back with her carrying the baby, who was very big and very quiet, and lay still with open eyes and clenched hands.

"I'll take him up myself," said Martha, and she went upstairs with him to Rachel. And Rachel sat up in bed and her loosed hair fell down over her shoulders and bosom, and she cried aloud and tears came to her eyes. She held out her hands and took him and laid him against her heart. Then she turned her head to Martha.

"Go away, Martha, go away!"

And Martha sat outside weeping, while Rachel spoke to the baby, and crowed over him and pressed him against

her white bosom, while the tears ran down her face as she kissed him.

“Oh, baby, baby!” she said; and those were all the words she had, but sharp pains ran through her body and there was a dry fire in her bosom, though there was sweetness in her hands and the warmth of the child’s clear flesh was a dreadful comfort. And presently her tears ceased and the tumult of her body was calmed until the baby pressed with his little hands against her bosom and made her cry out to Martha. Then she said with wild eyes:

“Take him away now, Martha, to a happy woman in a cottage. I’ll never nurse my own, never, never.”

She locked the door after Martha was gone and paced the room until at last she grew utterly weary. Then she lay down again, and slept and dreamed as she had often done of her own children of the pinewood, and the vision renewed itself in the wood as it had been, and she was intensely, exquisitely happy. But then her heart became like a mother’s when her children are born to die; for these, the gifts of God ungiven, these promises of God unfulfilled, grew wan thin ghosts and most unhappy. And when she called to them they heard her not, and when she would gather them to her mother’s breast they were thin air or the dead leaves of a dead and ghostly tree. And as she looked upon them they peaked and pined and were as shadows, and they faded away into the night and left her utterly alone. She woke herself by passionate sobbing and found that the shadows of the evening were about her house. She clad herself and went downstairs and sat with Martha for an hour without speaking. And when Martha went to bed she walked in her garden, which was already wan with the touch of autumn.

“When will he come?”

She stood by the verge of the garden where it looked upon the little valley where the stream and the wind in the sedges murmured, and on the opposing slope of the hill that hid Pentowan.

“He said, ‘Give me the summer,’ and the summer is consumed, and the harvest is gathered, and the wind has

strewed half the leaves upon the stubble and the mown grass," she cried, "and my heart is consumed too, O God!"

She left her garden, and entering the meadows took the path to the little bridge across the stream. And when she came to the water she heard Sigurd howl strangely as if he knew she had gone from him and was alone. The night was dark about her, and her soul was dark, and she knew not what she did, only knowing that she was drawn onward by something that rebuked her very will and made her its instrument, as love and hate make men their instruments. Yet at this moment it seemed to her that she did not love Anthony, but almost hated him. For it was as if his spirit had her by the hair, and indeed the hair upon her head moved and the flesh crept upon her bones.

And after midnight she came to the farm and stood outside the grey stone wall, touched with moss and lichen, which held the grey house where her beloved lived. Far across the valley she heard Sigurd howl. Then she called to Anthony, using such incantations as women make in their minds when their hearts are lonely, and their arms lack sweet comfort and their very souls are barren and cry out. As she stood there she heard the desolate cry of curlews and strange birds of the night on the upland, and the cold murmur of the selfish sea, and the faint wailing of the rhythm of the wind. And no one but the birds and the sea and the wind answered her, though still she spoke to him, feeling now no bitterness against him because her nearness to him told her how it came that his great heart was shut in stone and bound in the very cloths of death. She used such sweet words to him as she would have used to a child, and told him that God's men lived for life and not for death; and that death was a thing not to think upon, as the natural heart of man declared and as all sweet women knew, since they were chiefly concerned in the giving of life.

And though she knew it not, she drew him from his tired sleep and set him praying, and praying in vain, and set him in revolt, not wholly in vain, and made him look out of the window towards her house and the dark wood

which hid it. And he too heard Sigurd howl mournfully, and his thoughts turned fiercely upon tied men that their souls treat like dogs. And he said:

“Does she cry to me?”

For one moment of the mournful night the night was not mournful. For he forgot that he would come back to this prison house even if he yielded to the great desire within him. And he said again what he had said in her garden, when he stood beneath her window:

“I’ll call her dear, and utterly beloved, and my soul’s red heart!”

And as he heard the wail of the wind he knew that the summer was ended, and Rachel went back to her house as if she had held him to her bosom, for something comforted her. But Anthony walked his solitary room for an hour, and his wife sat up in her lonely bed listening to him. Once when she heard his door crack she crept out of bed and put a cloak about her and took her shoes, and opening her own door looked upon the landing. She heard far Sigurd howl quite plainly, and shivered, for there were times when she dreamed of the dog as he was when he hurled her upon the ground, and destroyed half her hold upon the man whose agony she heard at midnight. And if she never cried out in these dreams it was because Sigurd had her by the throat. But when she woke she often wept bitterly, because she was not happy.

IX

THE next morning Anthony saddled his horse early and rode up through Morna Church Town and many miles further. As he left no orders and no word of where he was gone, his men stared at each other in wonder and went off to work with as much amazement as if the stars had fallen or as if the world turned no more upon its axis. But for him, as he rode, Pentowan was nothing but a house where a woman dwelt, and the farm was lost out of sight, and work was foolishness, and the fruits of the earth

and of labour were the foolish desire of men that were as ghosts. For he could help himself no more, and went for help, knowing as he did so that any aid was vain, because he believed no longer deep within him that man had any free will or power to move beyond that implanted in his body at his birth. Nevertheless he called to God, and prayed, and rode onward quietly, meaning to confess his trouble to an old minister who had been a friend of his father's.

The day was fair, and the sky, though clouded, was very blue, and the far-off sea as he looked down upon it was blue and purple; and the uplands were wonderful in colour because of the moving shadows and sunlight. As he rode his mind eased itself a little, and came into closer harmony with the earth and with the air and the sun; for now, since free will was a myth, his soul struggled less within him, and for the moment he accepted the ministration of the air and sun more sweetly. For this is often the nature of despair, and he knew that whatever he did this day would be done by something not himself. And it seemed to him that God was someone very far withdrawn, and he wondered a little dully at the fierce strange prayers which had once been kindled in his heart.

So he rode thinking of Rachel, and many things she said came back to him, and he saw her a thousand times like a lily in a pool. And words that old Steve had roared at him came back, and phrases out of his own prayers, and wild blasphemies of John's uttered when his brother laughed at man and God. And one thing that he remembered Steve to have cried out when he was preaching to the village came to him again and again. "I used to talk of one sinner and ninety-nine just persons," said Steve, "but that was when I thought the world was mostly order. Now that I see order's the rarest flower, I think of ninety-nine sinners, poor dears, and one just person, damn him!" Was there one good man, even one? And if God's just person could crush love, was his love great, or his love of God wrought out by his own hands? Or was he not the only sinner?

And still Anthony rode in the sun and the shadow, and

the early autumn was like a peaceful summer, and the woods within the valleys were crowned with russet and gold. But he saw the pinewood on the slope of the hill and cool waters at midnight, and Rachel asleep in the wood.

When he came within a mile of where the man whose advice he wanted had his habitation, he got down from his horse and walked. But presently he halted upon a gorse-clad common outside the village, and loosing his horse he lay down upon the grass. He stayed there for an hour. When he rose he walked into the vilage and came to the cottage that he sought, and outside of it the old man whom he knew sat in a great chair. But he was dim of sight and did not know Anthony, and Anthony looked upon him and turned away sighing. He led his horse a little further to the village green and stood thinking, though what he thought he could not have said. He came out of his reverie to find half a dozen children staring at him curiously, and he laughed a little strangely, as such children would think. Then he mounted his horse again and rode back the way he had come, going quietly enough, with a quiet mind until he saw Morna House, and then he fell into a tremble and a sweat, and his heart dreaded Pentowan, and the sweat upon his brow was like ice. But inside his mind there was a voice which said, "To-night," and he shook to hear it, and it seemed to him that going to Pentowan now instead of to Rachel's was something upon the side of his account with God. And then he said to himself:

"If I go to her again it will be to speak to her for the last time. I shall go back to my wife; yes, yes, I shall go back."

And if he heard a voice say "Fool" he listened not to it, and he saw Rachel's arms about his knees. And he lifted her up and bade her good-bye, and then again he saw her by the wood, and beheld the crucifix fall from her bosom. And then they were in the boat, and she showed him the steel blade in the white cross which seemed so strange a thing to be there. Yet it was not so strange as dreadful, for the blade of it had cut them asun-

der. If any voice said "Fool" to him it was said to him for his folly before he married.

"I married Winnie! And there's Rachel, Rachel!"

He came back to the farm at sundown and stabled his horse himself, and taking some dry bread from the kitchen went down to the sea. For the air of the house choked him, and the sight of Winnie was more bitter than ever. He knew there was an uncleanness which clings closer than the flesh. And it was God's will that no river should cleanse him from it but the river of death.

But when it grew dark he swam in the sea, and the cool embrace of the water made him saner, and he went back to the farm like a man walking in a dream. He said he would not go to Morna, but before midnight he rose from his sleepless thoughts and went downstairs quietly. Yet he went not so quietly but that he woke Winnie in the next room; and when she saw that his door was open and his bed empty she threw on her clothes with trembling hands and followed him into the night, with anger in her heart, and jealousy and all the passions of the soul which hurt.

And this night Sigurd did not howl, although Rachel walked in her valley. For he was with her when she met Anthony by the bridge, and yet when they turned again towards Morna he did not follow, but lay upon the bridge with all his hackles bristling and a low fierce growl deep in his throat, for the wind blew from the west, and his ears were keen, and even before he saw one that he knew he heard her running down the hill.

X

THE autumn night was as heavenly as any of the sweet days of summer before the storm which reddened all the woodland save the pines. No breath of wind was swift enough to stir a branch, and yet there was a sensible sweet motion of the air from the sea which just overbore the land-breeze of a warm midnight. The sky was faintly clouded on the horizon, but from above one shining planet

to the zenith the heavens were deep and clear. Nature slept, but slept so lightly, with such kindly happy breathing, that the earth itself seemed a living creature resting by the immeasurable plains of ocean.

But none of the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the shining sisterhood of the heavens poured themselves on those whom the vast obscurity of the hour separated from the sleeping world. Rachel's heart, even as she moved in the darkness of the sloping fields with no other companion than her dog, found no balm in the silence in which she was lapped. And, as she went wondering, the silence opened to her and was silence no more, but an audible intense rhythm of nature itself breathing. And some creatures of the world woke and slept again, and woke and called and slept once more, and a myriad hum of unseen life still endured like the faint far music of the great tides sweeping through the gateway of the seas.

There were hours now that she prayed, not to any saint or to any dear lost Madonna, but to the starry heights which symbolised in the darkness the faint far light of God. The Sibylline oracles within herself gave her strange interpretations and obscure; the kingdom of God in her heart was desolated by passions which should have been so beautiful. But still her strength endured, and out of her destroyed pride a great and stubborn pride grew once more which walked upon the path of death like any martyr moving to the kindled fires. She went as one self-moved by great necessity. She was not herself, and yet she was more. All unhappy women, all who loved in vain, or loved in tender folly, or made disaster out of love, or found love the sister of death, or knew that their heritage was barrenness, went with her as she moved, prayed with her as she prayed, and cried out in anguish for the shame of man, and of themselves.

In the darkness of her mind she saw her lover. It was to him she prayed. And she hated him as she loved him—even as she loved that which was God and hated the folly of His world.

“When will he come?”

It seemed to her that he must come. She stayed at the

little bridge and called to him in her inmost soul, and then she called aloud, and out of the shadows a shadow grew, and she cried out in terror as if he were a dim and wandering ghost.

“Anthony, Anthony!”

He took her in his arms, for he was as one in a dream, and kissed her.

“I called him,” said Rachel, “and he is here!”

Every instinct within them sent them further from the hidden farm above. But though Sigurd licked Anthony’s hand he lingered behind them and was lost in the darkness of the night.

“This—this must be farewell,” said Anthony.

And Rachel was two creatures, herself and the strange heart of all women. And that which was not herself smiled, for the soul within knew that the man talked folly.

“I called him and he is here!”

She triumphed strangely, and her voice grew firm, and there was such a ring of joy within it, joy strained and yet triumphant, that he shook and held to her like one afraid.

“You are my life,” he said. “Oh, this is dreadful. You are my life.”

He spoke not to her, but to his deity, and his deity was now some pagan thing, some most intolerable fetich which could be moved by suffering and could inflict it and be urged to cease by some further sacrifice.

“She’s so beautiful, O God! If there is any way of pain, any long endurance! Think of her loving-kindness, and my torture. I’ll endure such torture if she is given peace. I’ve been an agony these years, an agony raw, bleeding. She’s now lost to heaven, but surely nearer than when I lost her. Her beauty burns me!”

He forgot God and all but Rachel.

“Your beauty burns me, Rachel!”

They were near her garden.

“Your garden’s Paradise, but I’ll not come in.”

He fell trembling again, and took his hands from hers and held them behind him.

"I'll not go in, Rachel. Say I'm not a man, say I'm dead. There's nothing but endurance."

He turned against Pentowan and cursed the spot most awfully and prayed again.

"God, shall my soul rot there? Shall I come clean to heaven. Oh, oh, I must!"

He caught Rachel in his arms and spoke.

"You are most intolerably dear to me, girl. I dream of you, that's my share of you; I adore you. There's been no beauty in my eyes but yours since—since, oh, God, since I married! The heavens are beautiful with your beauty, and the green earth, girl, is fertile with you, and I'm sick of heart for you, because you could be mine, and I've swum a thousand leagues in the great seas with you. God, God! listen to me. Where you tread is beauty; and sorrow, that isn't mine, flees where you come. All people love you, and little children, and the old, and men, and I, I most of all.

She put her arms about him and laid her head upon his shoulder and called him dear names and the tears ran down her face.

"And I must go! Oh, the path of love's not for me. I'll live solitary, I am solitary."

He took her shoulders in his hands and shook her.

"I am solitary."

He fell into a silence and lost himself. And then he woke and they were in her garden, under the shadow of the trees and the darkened house.

"Your house—the house that holds you! It's blessed and a curse."

"Anthony!"

"My beloved!"

She fell upon her knees beside him and he heard her speak, and the voice was the voice that he called Temptation, for she declared that God did not require the uttermost of man.

"Oh, am I so evil? This is my heart speaking, Anthony, it cries like a starving child in me. And my heart is like a mother's heart when her dear ones suffer. Is God less than His creature, less than a child, less than a

mother? I'll not believe that. I can believe in a God that helps His creatures. I ache with your suffering—I think of it, I live it. Think of all that's been done against me, Anthony! I can't speak names, but you know. And I'd have worshipped idols with you and shed my blood before them!"

She took him by the knees.

"My heart's for you, Anthony; it was born for you. I'll not have you suffer—you shall live. With you I'll thank God. I'll not live like this—I cannot, I cannot!"

She sprang to her feet and caught hold of him and sobbed without tears.

"I feel this suffering; not mine, but yours. I ache with it, I'm unclean with it—it stings like a serpent. God's not against our love. I'm not old, I'm young! Have I any beauty left? Anthony, there are other countries. I'm mad, I know, but am I shamed? Not, O God, if I know my dear lover is in hell, while an evil woman feeds upon his heart that loves me!"

She writhed against him and held him close, and he felt the sweet warmth of her body and the trembling of her hands which clutched him.

"There's darkness where you are not—gaping darkness, dearest," she murmured; "there's darkness like a great beast waiting; there's madness and death! There's death in my house, sleeping—death in this wood, waiting, waiting!"

"Give me death, O God," he prayed; "must I go back, must I go back once more?"

He caught her tight and kissed her lips and cheeks and hair, and then he stood away from her, and turned towards the abhorrent place where his home lay.

"Give me death, now, now! Here, give me death! Strike me dead this hour, O God! Oh, I'm lost; she's lost to me! There's no help for her or me!"

He struggled with himself, with his body, with his soul, with the Angel of the Lord, with the emissaries of the pit.

"I'll give her up! I'll call her utterly beloved—I think

upon God, and I think upon her white bosom! Rachel, Rachel!"

But when he called she did not answer, and he turned and saw her staring at the sombre shadows of the pines, and he ran to her and took hold of her; and cried out that she was all the world to him.

And she pointed to the deep paths of the pines and tried to speak, but could not, for she stammered. But her eyes were unutterably strange, and a soft light was in them, and suddenly she broke from him and ran into the deepest shadows, and he followed her, remembering how he had run in the same wood long ago. And as he ran the passion in him grew, as passion grows in darkness and the great natural secrecy of deep woods, and he was a living flame, burning in the night, so that he found her sobbing by her own tree. And she reached out her arms to him with a cry and held him close, and she laid the carven crucifix, warm from her bosom, by the roots of the pine that covered them from the starry heavens.

XI

SHE told him the secrets of the woodland, and the passions of it, and her heart was his to see; and still he held back part of his. She spoke of the dear dead, and of her household, and the sweet old woman who loved her, and being glad to show the natural goodness of her soul, she spoke of her own love for living things, and the warm aspect of the world; and he said nothing of his own soul, and part of his heart was not hers. She told him of her love in moving accents, in most moving words, and every inarticulate sob was a gift beyond all price; and he wept not, nor did he say such things as lovers say, but he was drunk with the scent of the flowers of passion. And still he held part of his soul from her. For it cried out and howled like a creature of the wilds, in an arid plain of hell, trapped in fire.

She spoke to him of her visions, and sighed to think of them. And he heard her hidden voice sing like the music of a quiet brook in shadow. She called him the dearest

names, lamenting for him and for his griefs. And God for her was a great spirit of goodness, speaking in the kindly winds and in the fertile meadows, but mostly in the love of lovers, and the affection of those who love children and are good to the beasts of the field. And where two true lovers are there is God in their midst, and where kindness is there is God also, and where man tortures himself from that place God Himself must flee.

And for him God was a jealous God, who ordained strange things to try human hearts beyond their nature. And part of his heart and all of his fear he kept for heaven. But Rachel did not know this, and was happy; for dear women are blind and the nature of man is beyond them, being strange learning even for the wise.

And once as she spoke she discerned a frightful trembling in his limbs. But again he took her hand and listened to the voice of her heart and the music of her unspeakable love. And the wind breathed more audibly about them, and there was an increasing song of the tide upon the rocks. In every sound there was something calling to him. In Paradise he feared God.

And then he trembled again, and fell into a great shake and withdrew himself from her suddenly, so that she cried out to him. But he did not hear her, or her voice was a woodland whisper against thunder.

And he said:

“O God, have I to go back?”

She heard the beating of the very wings of death, and her heart grew cold with terror and an old thought renewed. And in this garden of the passions, in this bitter garden of most bitter herbs, she heard him wrestle with himself and the dark angels of his soul.

“O God!”

He spoke in audible strange whispers, and every word he spoke she heard. And there was no anger in her, only a vast all-embracing pity, and a removed and quiet sorrow for the life she could not live, which was even now but a vision melting before the dawn. As he cried out and struggled she put on part of immortality, in that she was of no age, neither old nor young, but full of help and

courage and quietness of spirit. Passion folded itself within her like a flower, but love smiled upon death, and she reached out her hand to death. And she saw nothing more in the pine shadows, nor did anything cry out to her. For she beheld the man only, and she perceived that without help there could be no victory for him, but only shame and the acceptance of shame.

"He might say now that I had brought this worst of all things upon him. And it would be true."

For this she should help him.

He cried out:

"I must go back to her!"

Oh, the dreadful thing she was!

Rachel took him in her arms, kneeling by him as he knelt, and he spoke.

"Not I, not my heart, not my body, not my hands, Rachel, for they desire you. Not my brain and my eyes and mouth, for they desire you. Not my mind, nor my spirit, nor my soul, oh, God, for they desire you, dear. I'm driven, driven, driven. It's folly, it's madness. Would I had never seen you, Rachel, would that I had been blind and deaf to you! I'm going back to her!"

He took hold of her hand.

"Here's the deep shame! Am I a man, and who begot me? I go back to shame, I must. Rachel, I'd rather die, and I cannot die!"

She took him close in her arms, and now her tears ran down her face. She comforted him like a Madonna of the sorrowful woods: for this was her child of the pine-wood, and she was already an immortal while he spoke of sin and the years of time and of death.

"Infinitely blessed are you," said Rachel, "and I am not ashamed, nor do I regret. I say that God is merciful, say it even now. Be calm, Anthony, there is still time for us; the dawn is not coming."

He leant against her bosom.

"I'll remember," he said; "and after death we may be forgiven. Rachel, pray when I am gone."

"I'll pray," she said.

"I must go," he cried, "I'm called!"

And she kissed his brow.

"Give me till the dawn, Anthony."

And again he cried out that he must go back, and she smiled over him, saying, "Kiss me." And then he cried out to God and to Christ softly.

"He came to bring peace *and* a sword," said Rachel; and even then in the east stars paled a little. She loosed her hair over his eyes and he kissed it, and the tears ran down his face.

"If it could only be that God would slay me now, Rachel, I could die," he said.

And Rachel knew that God had many instruments and moved in dark woods, and on dark waters towards His ends.

"There is a way," she said, "for he shall not go back."

And when he stirred again she said:

"Wait, dearest, my beloved; it is not dawn, and there is another way."

But in the east the lesser stars were extinguished like candles on a great altar. And what wind there was died away, and the world was very still. She heard her own heart, and a look of infinite bitterness passed over her, and then she was one with the night, accepting all things, and ready. As she held him she felt his heart beat.

"Do I know God now?" she breathed. She kissed him softly and called him her beloved, her child, her dear child, and all that any happy woman can call him she worships. And he was still, with his head upon her knees; and some of the quiet of the dying night passed into him, and some of her great and wonderful peace and even some of her acceptance of the deep energies of the world of God.

"You love me?"

"If I could die so!"

"I'm happy, Anthony!"

"Is that the dawn?"

"It comes, dear, but not yet. Are you happy, my beloved?"

"If I could die so!"

She bent over and kissed him tenderly, and in the faint light of the growing dawn, which put the great stars out one by one, her face was sweet and wonderful and as strong as death.

She reached out her hand and took the crucifix.

THE END

L. C. Page and Company's Announcement List of New fiction

The Flight of Georgiana

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF THE YOUNG PRETENDER. By ROBERT NEILSON STEPHENS, author of "The Bright Face of Danger," "An Enemy to the King," "The Mystery of Murray Davenport," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

Mr. Stephens's novels all bear the hall-mark of success, for his men are always live, his women are always worthy of their cavaliers, and his adventures are of the sort to stir the most sluggish blood without overstepping the bounds of good taste.

The theme of the new novel is one which will give Mr. Stephens splendid scope for all the powers at his command. The career of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" was full of romance, intrigue, and adventure; his life was a series of episodes to delight the soul of a reader of fiction, and Mr. Stephens is to be congratulated for his selection of such a promising subject.

Mrs. Jim and Mrs. Jimmie

By STEPHEN CONRAD, author of "The Second Mrs. Jim."

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

This new book is in a sense a sequel to "The Second Mrs. Jim," since it gives further glimpses of that delightful step-mother and her philosophy. This time, however, she divides the field with "Mrs. Jimmie," who is quite as attractive in her different way. The book has more plot than the former volume, a little less philosophy perhaps, but just as much wholesome fun. In many ways it is a stronger book, and will therefore take an even firmer hold on the public.

The Story of Red Fox

Told by CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, author of "The Watchers of the Trails," "The Kindred of the Wild," "Barbara Ladd," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with fifty illustrations and cover design by Charles Livingston Bull . . . \$2.00

Mr. Roberts's reputation as a scientifically accurate writer, whose literary skill transforms his animal stories into masterpieces, stands unrivalled in his particular field.

This is his first long animal story, and his romance of Red Fox, from babyhood to patriarchal old age, makes reading more fascinating than any work of fiction. In his hands Red Fox becomes a personality so strong that one entirely forgets he is an animal, and his haps and mishaps grip you as do those of a person.

Mr. Bull, as usual, fits his pictures to the text as hand to glove, and the ensemble becomes a book as near perfection as it is possible to attain.

Return

A STORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS IN 1739. By ALICE MACGOWAN and GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE, authors of "The Last Word," etc. With six illustrations by C. D. Williams. Library 12mo, cloth . . . \$1.50

A new romance, undoubtedly the best work yet done by Miss MacGowan and Mrs. Cooke. The heroine of "Return," Diana Chaters, is the belle of the Colonial city of Charles Town, S. C., in the early eighteenth century, and the hero is a young Virginian of the historical family of Marshall. The youth, beauty, and wealth of the fashionable world, which first form the environment of the romance, are pictured in sharp contrast to the rude and exciting life of the frontier settlements in the Georgia Colony, and the authors have missed no opportunities for telling characterizations. But "Return" is, above all, a *love-story*.

We quote the opinion of Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts, who has read the advance sheets: "It seems to me a story of quite unusual strength and interest, full of vitality and crowded with telling characters. I greatly like the authors' firm, bold handling of their subject."

Lady Penelope

By MORLEY ROBERTS, author of "Rachel Marr," "The Promotion of the Admiral," etc. With nine illustrations by Arthur W. Brown.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

Mr. Roberts certainly has versatility, since this book has not a single point of similarity with either "Rachel Marr" or his well-known sea stories. Its setting is the English so-called "upper crust" of the present day. Lady Penelope is quite the most up-to-date young lady imaginable and equally charming. As might be expected from such a heroine, her *automobiling* plays an important part in the development of the plot. Lady Penelope has a large number of suitors, and her method of choosing her husband is original and provocative of delightful situations and mirthful incidents.

The Winged Helmet

By HAROLD STEELE MACKEYE, author of "The Panchronicon," etc. With six illustrations by H. C. Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

When an author has an original theme on which to build his story, ability in construction of unusual situations, skill in novel characterization, and a good literary style, there can be no doubt but that his work is worth reading. "The Winged Helmet" is of this description.

The author gives in this novel a convincing picture of life in the early sixteenth century, and the reader will be delighted with its originality of treatment, freshness of plot, and unexpected climaxes.

A Captain of Men

By E. ANSON MORE.

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A tale of Tyre and those merchant princes whose discovery of the value of tin brought untold riches into the country and afforded adventures without number to those daring seekers for the mines. Merodach, the Assyrian, Tanith, the daughter of the richest merchant of Tyre, Miriam, her Hebrew slave, and the dwarf Hiram, who was the greatest artist of his day, are a quartette of characters hard to surpass in individuality. It has been said that the powerful order of Free Masons first had its origin in the meetings which were held at Hiram's studio in Tyre, where gathered together the greatest spirits of that age and place.

The Paradise of the Wild Apple

By RICHARD LE Gallienne, author of "Old Love Stories Retold," "The Quest of the Golden Girl," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative \$1.50

The theme of Mr. LeGallienne's new romance deals with the instinct of wildness in human nature,—the wander spirit and impatience of tame domesticity, the preference for wild flowers and fruits, and the glee in summer storms and elemental frolics. A wild apple-tree, high up in a rocky meadow, is symbolic of all this, and Mr. LeGallienne works out in a fashion at once imaginative and serious the romance of a young man well placed from the view of worldly goods and estate, who suddenly hungers for the "wild apples" of his youth. The theme has limitless possibilities, and Mr. LeGallienne is artist enough to make adequate use of them.

The Grapple

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This story of a strike in the coal mines of Illinois gives both sides of the question,—the Union and its methods, and the non-Union workers and their loyal adherents, with a final typical clash at the end. The question is an absorbing one, and it is handled fearlessly.

For the present at least "The Grapple" will be issued anonymously.

Brothers of Peril

By THEODORE ROBERTS, author of "Hemming the Adventurer."

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"Brothers of Peril" has an unusual plot, dealing with a now extinct race, the Beothic Indians of the sixteenth century, who were the original inhabitants of Newfoundland when that island was merely a fishing-station for the cod-seeking fleets of the old world.

The story tells of the adventures of a young English cavalier, who, left behind by the fleet, finds another Englishman, with his daughter and servants, who is hiding from the law. A French adventurer and pirate, who is an unwelcome suitor for the daughter, plays an important part. Encounters between the Indians and the small colony of white men on shore, and perilous adventures at sea with a shipload of pirates led by the French buccaneer, make a story of breathless interest.

The Black Barque

By T. JENKINS HAINS, author of "The Wind Jammers," "The Strife of the Sea," etc. With five illustrations by W. Herbert Dunton.

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According to a high naval authority who has seen the advance sheets, this is one of the best sea stories ever offered to the public. "The Black Barque" is a story of slavery and piracy upon the high seas about 1815, and is written with a thorough knowledge of deep-water sailing. This, Captain Hains's first long sea story, realistically pictures a series of stirring scenes at the period of the destruction of the exciting but nefarious traffic in slaves, in the form of a narrative by a young American lieutenant, who, by force of circumstances, finds himself the gunner of "The Black Barque."

Cameron of Lochiel

Translated from the French of PHILIPPE AUBERT DE GASPÉ by PROF. CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative \$1.50

The publishers are gratified to announce a new edition of a book by this famous author, who may be called the Walter Scott of Canada. This interesting and valuable romance is fortunate in having for its translator Professor Roberts, who has caught perfectly the spirit of the original. The French edition first appeared under the title of "Les Anciens Canadiens" in 1862, and was later translated and appeared in an American edition now out of print.

Patriotism, devotion to the French-Canadian nationality, a just pride of race, and a loving memory for his people's romantic and heroic past, are the dominant chords struck by the author throughout the story.

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Another striking book by Mr. Flower, whose work is already so well known, both through his long stories and his contributions to *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, etc. Like his first success, "The Spoilsmen," it deals with politics, but in the broader field of state and national instead of municipal. The book has recently appeared in condensed form as a serial in *Collier's Magazine*, where it attracted widespread attention, and the announcement of its appearance in book form will be welcomed by Mr. Flower's rapidly increasing audience. The successful delineation of characters like John Wade, Ben Carroll, Azro Craig, and Allen Sidway throws new strong lights on the inside workings of American business and political "graft."

Silver Bells

By COL. ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, author of "Hannibal's Daughter," "Louis XIV. in Court and Camp," etc. With cover design and frontispiece by Charles Livingston Bull.

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Under the thin veneer of conventionality and custom lurks in many hearts the primeval instinct to throw civilization to the winds and hark back to the ways of the savages in the wilderness, and it often requires but a mental crisis or an emotional upheaval to break through the coating. Geoffrey Digby was such an one, who left home and kindred to seek happiness among the Indians of Canada, in the vast woods which always hold an undefinable mystery and fascination. He gained renown as a mighty hunter, and the tale of his life there, and the romance which awaited him, will be heartily enjoyed by all who like a good love-story with plenty of action not of the "stock" order. "Silver Bells," the Indian girl, is a perfect "child of nature."

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