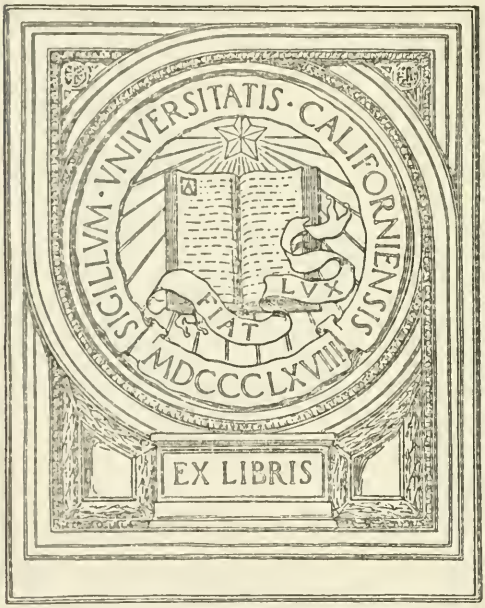

THE

MASTER OF THE MINE

VOL. II.

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THE

MASTER OF THE MINE

BY

ROBERT BUCHANAN

AUTHOR OF 'GOD AND THE MAN' 'THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD' ETC.

'The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant Sea above his head'

KEATS' *Endymion*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE

MASTER OF THE MINE.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INQUEST.

For 'Murder?' The very word paralysed me; and I looked at the man in utter consternation.

'What do you mean?' I cried, recoiling. 'Who are you?'

'I'll tell you all about that presently,' replied the fellow, coolly. 'In the first place, are you going to make a shindy, or are you coming along quietly?'

As he spoke, two policemen in uniform entered the room. He nodded to them; and,

with the utmost *sang-froid*, felt in his pocket and drew out a pair of handcuffs.

'Oh, Hugh!' cried Annie, wildly. 'What is it? What have you done?'

Without answering her, I looked wildly at the men; then, acting on a mad impulse and quite without reflection, I rushed to the door. In a moment the men threw themselves upon me, and there was a brief but fierce struggle; but my strength was of no avail, and in a couple of minutes I was overpowered and handcuffed.

The man in plain clothes, who had first addressed me, looked at me with a grim smile.

'You're a bold chap,' he said; 'but it's no use. You'd have done much better to have come along quietly. Now lookee here. I've got to tell you that, whatever you say, from this moment forward, will be used in evidence against you.'

'For God's sake, explain!' I answered. 'What does it all mean? *Who* is murdered?'

The man smiled again.

'Lord bless us, how innocent we are! You'll be telling us next that your name aint Hugh Trelawney, late overseer of the St. Gurlott mine.'

'Trelawney is my name, but——'

'Of course it is; and Trelawney's the name of the man we want—the name on this here warrant. My duty is to apprehend you for the murder of Mr. Ephraim S. Johnson, the new overseer, who took your place.'

'Johnson!—murdered!' I cried. 'It is impossible!'

'Oh, no, it aint,' returned the imperturbable official. 'Deceased was found at the foot of the cliffs, with his brains knocked out, and bearing on his body signs of violence; worse than that, he'd been stabbed with a knife; and

once more, you're the party we want for having done the job.'

Utterly amazed and horrified, I staggered and fell into a chair. As for Annie, she seemed completely petrified. I can see her white face *now*—frozen, tearless, and aghast!

There was a pause of several minutes. Certain of his prisoner, the officer looked on quietly, and allowed me breathing time. Gradually, my brain cleared, and I became comparatively calm.

'I will go with you,' I said, 'but I am perfectly innocent. Until this moment, I never even heard of this horrible affair.'

'Of course not,' returned the officer, cheerfully. 'That's what they all say, young man; and for the matter o' that, every man's innocent till the law proves him guilty.'

'But I was not even *there*. I left St. Gurlott's two days ago.'

'Exactly,' was the dry retort; 'you hooked it the very night of the murder. The body was found early on the morning of the 23rd, and the warrant was issued yesterday.'

As he spoke, I seemed to feel the net closing round me. At first the very accusation had seemed preposterous; *now*, I began to understand that my position was one of extreme peril. If Johnson had really been murdered, and on that night, as now seemed clear, I could not escape suspicion by a mere alibi. I remembered, with a thrill of horror, my last meeting with the murdered man, just before my departure; and my heart sank within me.

I knew my own innocence—but who was guilty? As I asked myself the question, I looked again at Annie, who was still watching me intently; and in a moment, as if by an inspiration, I thought of her father! Had John

Pendragon, in a moment of madness, taken the life of the man whom he suspected of betraying his daughter? The thought was almost too horrible for belief—yet, alas! it was not unreasonable.

'Now, then, are you ready?' said the officer, placing his hand upon my shoulder.

I rose quietly. As I did so, Annie sprang towards me with outstretched hands.

'Hugh! dear Hugh! tell me you did not do it! I cannot—cannot believe that you are guilty.'

As I looked at her, all my spirit darkened and hardened against her.

'When the time comes,' I said, solemnly, 'may you be as well able to answer for your deeds as I shall answer for mine. The trouble began with *you*. If murder has been done, it is your doing also—remember that!'

They were cruel words, and afterwards I

bitterly regretted them; but I was thinking of her father, and remembering how bitter must be her blame, if, by any possibility, he had been driven into crime and violence as a consequence of her conduct. Whether she understood me or not, I cannot tell; but, hiding her face in her hands, she sank on a couch, hysterically sobbing.

What followed seemed more like an extraordinary dream than cruel waking reality! I was led from the house, placed in a cab, and driven away. That very afternoon I left London by train, and late that night was handed over, handcuffed and helpless, to the authorities of Falmouth Jail.

It is a truism, I know, that the best consolation to be found by the unjustly accused is the consciousness of their own innocence—a consciousness which is said to sweeten suffering, and lighten the weight of

prison chains. My own experience is that innocence has no such effect on a man indicted for the foulest of human crimes. My first night in jail was, like many that followed it, a night of simple horror. Had I really been guilty, I could not have suffered a tithe of what I actually endured.

To begin with, the whole affair was so horrible, so unexpected ; it was like the solid earth opening under my feet to destroy me and swallow me up. By a strange fatality, Johnson had been killed on the very night of my departure, and at a time when I was known to bear the greatest hostility towards him. Remembering all I had read of men unjustly convicted and even executed on circumstantial evidence, I thought with a shudder of how my very departure might be construed into evidence against me.

In the extremity of my position, one thought haunted me with tormenting cruelty.

What would Madeline think, when she heard that I was accused of a crime so terrible, so cowardly? I could bear everything else but the fear that *her* heart might be turned against me.

My suspense did not last long. The very next day after my arrival at Falmouth Jail, I was taken from the prison, and placed in a dog-cart, with a policeman at my side and another on the seat beside the driver. An inquest on the body of the murdered man was to take place that day at St. Gurlott's; and, of course, my presence was necessary.

How vividly I remember that drive! Snow had fallen in the night, and the skies were dark and sunless; the whole prospect bitterly cold and desolate. We followed the same road that I had pursued long years before, in company with John Rudd! *Then* I was a lonely boy; *now* I was a melancholy man.

I wore a large ulster-coat, the folds of which covered the handcuffs on my hands; but I fancied that every soul we passed knew the truth—that I was a criminal accused of murder. Talk about the consciousness of innocence! I could have wept for shame.

What was a long day's journey by John Rudd's slow, old-fashioned waggon, with its innumerable stoppages for business, gossip, or refreshment, was a swift drive of five or six hours on this occasion. We started at six in the morning, and before mid-day were in sight of St. Gurlott's.

As we dashed through the village, I saw several of the miners hanging about; but I carefully averted my eyes from theirs. A little further on, we passed the door of the cottage where I had dwelt so happily and so long; and I saw, with a sigh of relief, that there was no sign of anyone about. We trotted on, till we

reached the gate of the avenue leading to Redruth House. Here, to my surprise, the horse was pulled up, while one of the men jumped down and threw open the gate.

We passed up the avenue at a slow trot, and, on arriving in front of Redruth House, found the front door wide open and a large number of people, both gentry and common people, flocking round the doorsteps and on the lawn. There was a murmur as I appeared. I looked round, but saw no face I knew.

'Now then, get down!' said my companion; and I alighted. As I did so, someone pressed forward, and I met the honest eyes of John Rudd. The poor fellow thrust out his hand to seize mine; then, finding that I was handcuffed, drew the hand hastily back and placed it on my shoulder.

'Dawn't be dawnhearted, Master Hugh!' he cried. 'There be not a sawl in St. Gurlott's

believes 'ee killed 'un. So cheer up, lad; they'll soon set 'ee free.'

I thanked him, with tears standing in my eyes, for his kindness touched me. Then I was led into the house, and in a little while was facing the Coroner, in the great old-fashioned dining-hall, where the inquest was being held.

I forget many of the details of that miserable day. Only one thing I vividly remember —the sight of the dead man's body, stretched out for inspection in the kitchen. Why I was taken to see it I do not know; but I felt that I was closely watched as I bent over it. Poor Johnson! I freely forgave him all the trouble he had ever caused me, seeing the blood-stained and disfigured mass which had once been his living self!

As the inquest proceeded, I realised the full extent of my peril. Several of the men came forward (unwillingly enough, I am bound

to say), and testified to my having quarrelled with the murdered man and knocked him down. Then the young master, George Redruth, gave his testimony—to the effect that I had been dismissed from the overseership, and that I bore a violent grudge against the man who had supplanted me. Finally, it was proved that I had left St. Gurlott's some time on the very night of the murder, which was not discovered until the following morning.

Among the witnesses examined was my aunt. She looked utterly overcome with grief, and, on seeing me, would have sprung to and embraced me hysterically had she not been withheld. Her husband, it was shown, was too ill to attend; but as his evidence would have simply corroborated hers, his absence was deemed unimportant. All she had to say concerned merely my movements on the fatal night, and the Coroner elicited from her the fact that

as late as nine in the evening I had been in the neighbourhood of the mine.

Vague and circumstantial as all the evidence was, it was sufficient to decide the jury against me. Dazed and horrified, I heard them bring in their verdict—a verdict of 'Wilful Murder against Hugh Trelawney,' who was straightway committed for trial at the next Assizes.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADELINE PROVES MY FRIEND.

After the inquest was over, I was led into a small room fitted up as a library, still handcuffed and still attended by the two policemen who had brought me over. They gave me refreshment—biscuits, which I did not touch, and a glass of wine, which I drank off eagerly.

Ever since my arrival at the house, I had been looking eagerly for some sign of Madeline Graham; but she had not appeared. While I sat apart, however, George Redruth entered the room, and after glancing at me with (I thought) a certain compassion, addressed me.

'This is a bad business, Trelawney,' he said, looking very pale and agitated.

I glanced at him, but made no reply.

'Let me tell you, however,' he continued, 'that ugly as the evidence looks against you, I hope that you'll succeed in proving your innocence at the trial. I haven't much cause to love you, and poor Johnson had still less; but upon my word, I believe you incapable of such a crime as this.'

'Thank you, sir,' I replied, trembling, for I could have borne his anger or indifference better than his sympathy. 'You at least do me *that* justice!'

He nodded assent, and was about to say something more, when there was the rustle of a dress behind him, and with a quick start, and a sharp pain at the heart, I saw Madeline standing in the room. The sight of her was almost more than I could bear; I shook like a

leaf, and my eyes filled with tears. The next moment she stepped forward with an eager cry of recognition, and both hands outreaching. Then, seeing that I was handcuffed, she uttered another cry—of grief and pain.

'Madeline!' cried her cousin, warningly; but she paid no attention. I had turned my head away, too ashamed to meet her gaze, but I felt, rather than saw, that she was gazing tenderly into my face.

When she spoke, her voice was broken and tearful.

'Mr. Trelawney! may I speak to you? May I tell you how my heart aches and bleeds for you, in your great trouble? May I assure you how deeply I believe—as all who know you must believe—in your innocence of such a crime?'

I turned my head and looked at her; my

head swam, and the tears so blinded me that I could not see her.

'God bless you for saying that!' I murmured; and as I spoke, she lifted my two bound hands, and held them gently in her own.

'I could not believe that anyone would think it possible,' she said. 'I would have come before, but waited, expecting to see you set at liberty. But now I hear you are to be put upon your trial! Ah, do not fear! Have courage! Your innocence will be proved, and you will soon be a free man.'

'Perhaps,' I answered; 'but whether or not, it is something to know that my innocence is believed in by *you*!'

'How could I doubt it? Dear Mr. Trelawney, I know you better even than you know yourself. No proof, however terrible, could shake my faith in one whom I know to be the bravest and best of men; one who is incapable

of any baseness, one to whom, remember, I owe my life.'

She turned to Redruth, who was looking on, I thought, rather uneasily.

'And my cousin is equally certain that you are falsely accused. George, speak to him! tell him!'

I looked at George Redruth; his brow was clouded, and his expression far less cordial than it had previously been.

'I have already told Trelawney what I think on the subject. Nevertheless, the evidence is ugly, as he is aware.'

'But you *know* he is innocent!' cried Madeline.

'I *hope* so. Whoever took poor Johnson's life was a miserable and ruffianly coward, well deserving the gallows; and I can't fancy that Trelawney, in spite of his violent temper, is anything of the kind.'

There was something in his manner, now, which aroused all the angry blood within me. His old superciliousness had returned, and the compassion in his eyes had changed to hard dislike and suspicion. I could not trust myself to answer him, but, turning to the police officers, who sat by, I cried—

'How long am I to remain here? Take me away! For God's sake take me away!'

'All right,' replied one of them. 'The trap 's at the door.'

I rose to my feet, and then, setting my lips firm to conquer my agitation, I turned again to Madeline.

'Don't mind *me*, Miss Graham. I shall come through this trouble right enough, perhaps; and, whatever happens, I shan't forget your goodness. I cared for no one's good opinion but yours. I'm not the first innocent man, by many, who has had to face

an unjust accusation, and answer it with his life; and what you have said to me will give me courage, perhaps, to bear the sorrow that's to come!'

Before I realised what she was doing she had taken my hands again, had raised them to her lips, and kissed them!

'Don't! don't!' I cried, half sobbing. 'I can't bear it! Here, lads, take me away!'

'Use him kindly,' she cried, weeping, and addressing the officers. 'Remember he is a gentleman, and falsely accused.'

'Don't be afraid, my lady,' said the man who had previously spoken. '*We*'ll look after him.'

'And Mr. Trelawney—dear friend—do not think that, though we part now, I shall be idle. I am rich, remember, and whatever money can do for your defence shall be done by me. It is a poor return, indeed, for the life

you gave me! Keep a good heart! Think that you have friends working for you, praying for you! Think that the happy time will soon come when you will be free again to return to those you love, who love you, and who will love you the better for a trouble bravely borne!'

In the rapture of that moment, I should have caught her in my arms, but I was helpless, and perhaps it was better so. Gently, but firmly, the officers led me from the room, and along the passage to the door, where the dog-cart was waiting. There was a crowd about the doorsteps, and when I appeared there was a sympathetic murmur.

The officers pushed me through the groups, and I mounted to my seat in the trap. Then I heard a wild cry, and saw my aunt, who rushed forward, reaching up her hands to touch mine.

'Hugh! my poor Hugh!' she sobbed.

'Don't cry, aunt,' I said, forcing a smile. 'They don't hang innocent men in England. I shall soon come back home!'

At that there was a faint hurrah, led by John Rudd. Several rough fellows from the mine rushed forward, reaching out their horny hands in honest sympathy.

'Cheer up, Measter Hugh! None o' *us* believes you killed 'un! Cheer up! We'll ha' you back in St. Gurlott's soon.'

'Iss, that we will!' echoed John Rudd.

The officer had now mounted beside me; and his companion, who was seated by the driver, cried in a loud voice:

'Clear the way there! Let go her head!'

The horse, freshened by rest and a feed, bounded off, and I left the group of sympathisers behind—my poor aunt, half fainting, supported by John Rudd. But on the door-

step under the porch stood two figures, on which my eyes were riveted till the last—George Redruth and Madeline Graham.

Madeline waved a white handerchief. I could make no sign in return, but I watched her with streaming eyes till we entered the avenue, and the boughs of the leafless trees blotted her from my view.

Of that sad day's business, only one more vivid memory remains to me. Slight and trivial as the circumstance seemed at the time, I remembered it afterwards with a wondering thrill.

Our way back, like our way coming, lay past the old cottage. Quitting the gates of the great house, and leaving the dark avenue behind us, we rattled swiftly along the country road. The horse, being homeward bound, whirled us along at full speed : indeed, as the poet has it,

We seemed in running to devour the way.

As we approached the dear old cottage, I craned my neck round to look at it; the next moment we dashed past it; but in that moment I caught the glimpse of a ghastly white face looking out of one of the lower windows.

It was the face of my uncle, John Pendragon! As we passed, he seemed to give a wild start of recognition.

Then, looking back, I saw, before we were fifty yards away, a figure, wild and half dressed, running out across the garden to the gate, and looking after us. It was my uncle. He seemed dazed and stupefied. As we disappeared round a turning of the road, I fancied I caught the sound of a sharp cry, and simultaneously I saw him throw his two arms wildly up into the air!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIAL.

It is not my intention to trouble the reader with chapters full of appeals *ad misericordiam*, or to pile up the agony in the manner of the expert manufacturer of sensational fiction; though if I chose to do so, there is plenty of material ready to my hand. I have my doubts, perhaps, whether I am personally interesting enough to sway the sympathy of the tender-hearted, in the character of a man unjustly accused of the most horrible of human crimes. But the mere fact that I survive to write these lines is proof positive of one thing—that I was not hanged! So, on that score at least,

the reader may be perfectly easy in his mind.

The Assizes came on some six weeks after the date of the inquest, and in the interim I found that my darling did not fail to keep her word. A firm of solicitors, instructed by her, undertook my defence; and though I at first, out of motives of pride, declined their good offices, I was finally persuaded to accept them. Through their managing clerk, I more than once received kindly messages from Madeline, but not once did she appear upon the scene personally until the day of the trial came, when, on entering the dock, I saw her sitting by George Redruth's side in the crowded court.

My aunt and uncle were there, too—the latter so worn and changed that I should scarcely have recognised him; so was honest John Rudd, together with other old friends and acquaintances. But before the trial began, all

those who were called as witnesses withdrew, George Redruth among the number. My darling remained in her place, close to my counsel and solicitors, in the well beneath the judge's seat; and more than once, in the course of the proceedings, I saw her whisper words of instruction and suggestion to my defenders.

Thinking it all over again now, in the quiet of these after-years, I am sure still, as I was sure then, that her face helped to save me. Its pathetic beauty and sympathy, I believe, touched the heart of the jury, and wrought wonders in my behalf. Even the judge, who had what is known as a 'hanging' reputation, looked down upon her with eyes of favour.

Early in the course of the proceedings, I heard whispers among the crowd surrounding me. They were looking at Madeline, and someone was asking who she might be. A voice replied (how well I remember it, and how

my pale face went red with proud surprise) that she was 'the prisoner's sweetheart.' Far away as I knew that idea to be from the simple truth, I looked at my darling with new feelings of love and gratitude, and almost forgot for a moment the great and impassable barrier between us.

After the speech for the prosecution, in which I was painted in vivid colours as a young man of violent habits, having an homicidal hatred to the murdered man, the first witnesses deponed to the finding of the body and to the marks of violence upon it. Then George Redruth described my last quarrel with Johnson, and my dismissal from the overseership of the mine. On this occasion, I fear, Redruth rather exaggerated than under-estimated the extent of my hostility; and when asked if he personally thought that the deceased had any reason to fear my violence, hesitated and

answered that 'he was afraid he had.' I saw Madeline start and look appealingly at the witness, while a low murmur ran through the court. On the whole, Redruth's evidence, though given with a certain reluctance, was very hostile. I could not help feeling that it was none the less so because Madeline was seated there with my defenders, and working so zealously on my behalf.

My aunt next described my doings on the night of my departure from St. Gurlott's, and again admitted, as at the inquest, that I had been at a late hour in the neighbourhood of the mine. Then my uncle entered the box. Ghastly and woe-begone, clad in his Sabbath clothes of black, he stood like a man dazed; not once turning his eyes in my direction. His evidence only corroborated that of my aunt; but unimportant as it was, he gave it with extreme reluctance.

After the prosecuting counsel was done with him, he was questioned by my own counsel, as follows :—

'On the night of the murder, you were at home with the prisoner?'

'Iss, sir.'

'Did you see him go out?'

'I disremember. I took naw note o't; and ma memory's failing me.'

'Ah; you have been ill for some time?'

'Nawt just myself like, sir.'

'Had you any reason to imagine that the prisoner bore any animosity to deceased? Did he ever in your hearing utter any threats against him?'

'Never, sir: nawt one ward.'

'So far as you know, he had no cause to dislike deceased, beyond the fact that he had taken his place as overseer?'

I saw my uncle trembling violently; but his answer came clear and firm:

'Nawt as I knaws on, sir; and I knaw this, he ne'er meant to harm 'un.'

'On the night in question, did the prisoner show any agitation?'

'Naw, sir; tho' he were a bit put out at gawing awa' fro' home.'

'Did he show on his person any signs of violence, as of a struggle?'

'Naw, sir; nawt he.'

'That will do. You may stand down.'

Still carefully averting his eyes from mine, my uncle left the box.

All that could be said was said in my defence. My witnesses to character included John Rudd and other local worthies; but all this testimony would have been of little avail without that which followed. To my intense surprise, Madeline herself entered the box as

a witness on my side; and though what she had to say was practically irrelevant, though it concerned chiefly my saving of her life from shipwreck, it worked wonders for me. Never shall I forget the thrill of joy that went through me as she said, in answer to a question:

'No one who knows the prisoner believes him capable of this or any crime. He is the bravest and truest man I have ever met.'

It was at this point that the prosecuting counsel rose, and said, very suavely:

'Excuse me, Miss Graham—but you have a great interest in the prisoner?'

'A very great interest,' replied Madeline, looking him calmly in the face.

'A *tender* interest, perhaps? Am I wrong in believing that there has been an engagement between you?'

I could have knocked the fellow down.

Madeline went crimson, but recovering herself in a moment, steadily replied:

'That is not true. My engagement with Mr. Trelawney is one of gratitude, to the man who saved my life at the risk of his own.'

The counsel lost something by this passage of arms, and I gained much. Madeline's reply was greeted with the approval of the entire court. For myself, I felt all my being flooded with a great joy, which carried me along in a fearless mood till the end of the proceedings. After my darling's tender proclamation of her belief in my innocence, I cared not what other man or woman in the world might believe me guilty; or, indeed, what became of my life. I was justified in her sight, that was enough.

After a trial which lasted only the greater part of one day, the judge summed up—sternly enough, I thought—and the jury retired to consider their verdict. Now, for the first time

during the proceedings, I realised my position. My life hung in the balance, and a few minutes would decide whether I was to live or die.

The jury returned into the box, and the judge also reappeared in his place. The foreman stood up, and replied, in answer to the clerk of the court's question whether I was guilty or not guilty:

'We are agreed that there is not sufficient evidence to convict the prisoner.'

'That is no verdict at all,' cried the judge, sharply. 'You must decide one way or another—guilty or not guilty.'

For a moment the foreman seemed dubious, and, stooping to his companions, spoke to them in a whisper. Then he said:

'Not guilty, my lord.'

I was acquitted, but the manner of the acquittal was cruel enough, leaving it clear that the moral presumption was against me,

though the evidence was inadequate. I did not quite realise this at the time, but I had bitter cause to remember it afterwards.

A little later, I was standing, a free man, in the parlour of a small inn, whither I had been led by John Rudd, and where I found my aunt and uncle waiting for me. I cannot say that it was altogether a joyful meeting. The shadow of death seemed still upon us all. John Rudd alone was jubilant, and insisted on drinking healths all round. My uncle, usually an abstemious man, drank eagerly, but the drink, instead of cheering him, seemed to make him gloomier than ever.

It had been arranged that my aunt and uncle were to return in the waggon that evening with John Rudd, who had postponed the hour of his departure in order to await the result of the trial, and they urged me eagerly to accompany them. I was in no hurry, how-

ever, to hasten back to St. Gurlott's. My plans, as far as I was as yet able to shape them, were to leave England, perhaps working out my passage to the Colonies on some outward-bound vessel.

While we were sitting together, a waiting-girl beckoned me out; and following her into another room, I found Madeline waiting to speak to me. Directly our eyes met, she held out both her hands, and I took them eagerly in mine. Then, for the first time, my emotion mastered me; and, fairly sobbing, I almost sank upon my knees before her.

'I was right, you see,' she said, tenderly. 'I knew they would never condemn you.'

'I owe my life to you,' I answered, in a voice choked with tears.

She smiled sweetly, and shook her head.

'Even if it were so, it is only doing as I have been done by; but no one ever doubted

your innocence from the first. And now, tell me, what are you going to do? Of course, you are returning to St. Gurlott's?'

'I cannot tell. God help me, I can hardly realise it all yet! It will never be the same place to me again.'

'Suppose,' she said, looking at me thoughtfully, 'suppose I could persuade my cousin to reinstate you as overseer of the mine.'

'He would never do that,' I replied; 'and even were he willing, it would be impossible. It is like you, it is like your heavenly goodness to think of it; but it is out of the question. I think there is but one course for me to adopt, and that is—to leave England.'

'You must not!' she cried, quickly. 'For all our sakes! for mine!'

'For your sake?' I returned.

'Yes, surely.'

'You—you would wish me to stay?'

She looked embarrassed, but almost instantly replied:

'Yes. I should not like to think that you had been driven away. St. Gurlott's is your home—why should you quit it?'

I could not answer her. I could not speak to her again of my poverty, my want of foothold in the world. I could not remind her that all I cared for in England was her friendship and sweet companionship, which I knew, alas! could not long be mine. But as I looked into her face, and thought of the hopeless distance between us, there ran through my brain the words of the beautiful old song:—

Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied,
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside!

After a little space she spoke again:

'Whether you return there or not, at least you will let me help you.'

'Help me? Have you not done so—ah, far more than I deserve?'

'But I am rich, while you are poor.'

'Not so poor as *that*,' I answered eagerly, 'not so poor that I would take money even from your hand. Ah—do not ask me! To deny you anything gives me pain, but let me keep my independence—all that my ill-fortune has left me in the world.'

'Promise me at least one thing.'

'Yes.'

'Not to depart from England without letting me know—without seeing me again.'

'I'll promise that freely. Then you—you will permit me to see you once more?'

She smiled her answer. After a few more words, she held out her hand and said, 'Good-bye.' I walked with her to the inn-door.

'My cousin is waiting for me in the market-

place,' she said. 'He is going to drive me back to Redruth House.'

As she spoke, George Redruth himself appeared, turning the corner of the street in a high dog-cart, driven by himself, and drawn by a pair of fine bays. He came up at a walk, and directly his eyes fell upon us, his face grew black as thunder.

He pulled up, while the groom sprang down and went to the horses' heads.

'I couldn't think where you'd got to!' he cried. 'I have been waiting for the last hour.'

'I came to speak to Mr. Trelawney,' replied Madeline, quietly, 'and to congratulate him on his acquittal.'

'So it seems. Well, we've a long drive before us, and it's time we were off.'

He did not even look at me until just as I had assisted Madeline to her place by his side,

when our eyes met, and I saw in his face an expression of merciless jealousy and hate. I knew then that he was mad at my escape—that, in his cold dislike and distrust of me, he would gladly have witnessed my condemnation to a miserable death.

'Good-bye, Mr. Trelawney,' cried Madeline, grasping my hand again. 'Good-bye; and do not forget your promise.

A sharp cut of the whip started off the horses, and I had to draw back hastily to avoid the carriage-wheels. As they drove away, I saw her turn to her companion and address him—I fancied, reproachfully. I stood dazed, watching them until they disappeared.

An hour or so later, my uncle and my aunt went away in the waggon, under the escort of John Rudd. I promised to follow them home in a day or two, and in the meantime to look

about for some kind of employment. So I remained in Falmouth for several days.

What was I to do? The future was dark before me, and I was altogether at a loss how to act. My only practical knowledge, as a man of business, was connected with copper-mining; beyond that, I knew nothing. However, I was fairly educated, and quite ready to turn my hand to anything. I searched the newspapers. Finding a clerkship vacant in a mine somewhere in South Wales, I wrote in for it—only to find that my misfortune had preceded me, and that the owners refused to employ a man who had just been accused of murder. The same fate dogged me in every quarter. To my horror, I at last realised the fact that, although I was free, I had been acquitted under such circumstances as left undestroyed the black presumption of my guilt.

I saw no hope now, save in speedy depar-

ture from England. I would cross the seas under an assumed name, and begin a new life in a new world. A new life? Alas! every fine fibre of my nature was bound to the old life and the old land. In quitting England, I must quit Madeline, I must part for ever with the only being who had made my wretched lot endurable, and whom I still dared to love with all the passion of my soul.

I was mooning one day on the seashore, close to the quay, when a hand was placed on my shoulder, and, looking up, I saw the kindly face of my old friend the carrier.

'Back again, John?' I said, taking his great hand in mine.

'Iss, Measter Hugh; I comed in late last night.'

'How are all at home?'

'Middling, middling. The awld man be queer still, and folks say the trouble about Miss

Annie ha' turned his head. But that's what I want to speak on. I ha' seen her—she be here, in Falmouth, Measter Hugh.'

'*She*? Do you mean my cousin Annie?'

'Sartinly. I saw her last night wi' my awn two eyes, and I misdoubt she's in trouble.'

Then the good fellow, with tears standing in his eyes, told me that late on the previous evening he had caught sight of my cousin in the poorest part of the town, close to the stables where he put up his horse. She was wretchedly attired and looked worn and ill, as if she had just risen from a bed of sickness. His first impulse was to speak to her; but finding that he was unseen and unrecognised, he chose rather to follow her; which he did, and tracked her to a poor lodging in a neighbourhood of very doubtful reputation.

Remembering my last meeting with Annie, and how I had found her surrounded by all the

indications of comfort and even luxury, I was stupefied. What had happened, and why had she come to Falmouth? On these points John Rudd could give me no information. All he could say was that he had seen her, and was quite certain of her identity.

My mind was, of course, made up at once. I would see my poor cousin, and, if possible, persuade her to return home in my company. So I told John Rudd to lead the way, and we walked rapidly up the town till we found the neighbourhood of which he had spoken. It was miserable indeed—a place of dark and fishy dens clustering close to the wharves; the streets narrow and liberally ornamented with drying clothes, suspended on lines stretched from house to house; the inhabitants unclean and ragged waterside characters of predatory habits.

It was one of a small row of houses in a lane facing the beach. John Rudd pointed it

out, and I had hoped to approach unobserved ; but as I neared the door, which stood wide open, I saw a white face gazing at me from the lower window, and I recognised my cousin.

The moment she saw me she started back and disappeared ; but, with her name upon my lips, I ran into the house, and entered the room where she was standing, pale and terrified, as if eager to escape.

'Annie!' I cried.

She uttered a low cry, and, pressing her hand upon her heart, tottered as if about to fall ; but, striding forward, I caught her in my arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER.

Yes; it was Annie, though for a time I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes. She was so white and thin, so poorly clad, and living in such a den. Truly her sun had set and, as I predicted, she was wending her way home. She cried out at sight of me, and, instead of giving me a welcome, she hid her face and moaned. I felt no animosity towards her now: whatever she had done, she had been bitterly punished. I took her in my arms and tried to comfort her.

'Annie,' I said, 'my poor Annie, tell me

what has happened to you, that I find you like this?'

But she could not answer me for crying. Then she fell back, half-fainting, in a chair.

We soon discovered the cause of her weakness—it was hunger. The poor thing had spent her last shilling, and had not eaten a crust since the morning; and, had we not found her, she would have spent that night starving in the streets. It was the work of a few moments for John Rudd to run out and return with some bread and wine. We dipped the bread in the wine, and forced her to eat; and after a few mouthfuls, she revived a bit. The colour came into her wan cheeks, and her eyes grew a bit brighter. I now had leisure to observe her more closely, and I was horrified to see that the clothing she wore was of the poorest; indeed, she was almost in rags, every available article having been pawned, as I

soon learned, to keep her from absolute starvation.

When she came wholly to herself again, she looked at me fearfully—dreading lest I should question her again; and I thought it better to let my questions rest.

'Annie,' I said, 'do you feel strong enough to go now?'

'To go, Hugh?' she repeated.

'Yes; I must take you with me to my rooms. I can't leave you here!'

She was too ill to offer much resistance; so, after I had paid the few shillings that she was owing, we left that miserable den together—Annie, still faint and very weak, leaning heavily upon me. After he had brought in the bread and wine, John Rudd had quietly kept in the background, thinking that his presence might serve to further upset Annie. He now as unobtrusively took his departure, after having

whispered in my ear that he would call for us in the morning. I took his hint, and determined to act upon it.

The night was very cold, and as we left the houses and passed down the street, facing the chilly wind, I felt Annie tremble violently, so I hurried her along, and we soon reached the house where I had taken my rooms. Had I not crept into such good odour through my acquaintance with honest John Rudd, I should have been almost afraid to take poor Annie into the house ; as it was, I expected a cold greeting; but to my amazement we were received with open arms. I afterwards discovered that John Rudd had been before us, and had prepared the way for our coming. So when the door was opened the landlady, who was a good kind soul, came forward and almost took poor Annie in her arms, and led her, half-fainting, up to the little sitting-room.

I gave her my bedroom that night, and, rolling myself in a rug, lay down on the sofa in my little sitting-room and tried to sleep; but it was impossible, and after a while I got up and began to walk about the room. Annie's room adjoined mine; so I could hear that she, too, was awake and crying bitterly. Once I thought of going in to her; then I refrained. It was better to let her ease her heart so; in the morning she would be more herself, and I could talk to her.

In the morning, however, matters were considerably worse: poor Annie was delirious. Her pale face was flushed, her eyes vacant, and she cried pitifully on someone to come to her.

At ten o'clock, John Rudd's waggon stopped at the door; a few moments later honest John himself was before me. I took him to the bedside and showed him my poor cousin, and

his eyes filled with tears as he looked at her. Then we both went back to the other room.

'Measter Hugh,' said John, 'what do'ee mean to daw, sir?'

'I shall wait here till Annie gets better,' I said; 'then I shall persuade her to come home. You will be back again on Thursday, won't you?'

'Yes; and mayhap she'll be well enough by then to come. We'll make her a bed i' the awld waggon, and take her careful, Measter Hugh!'

Never in my life had I thought so much of the honest-hearted carrier as now, when I saw him shedding tears for my poor cousin. I took his hand and grasped it warmly.

'God bless you!' I said.

He turned his head away, and drew the back of his hand across his eyes; then he turned again to me.

'Measter Hugh,' he said, 'I dawnt mind tellin' you, 'cause you aint like some as 'ud laugh at me. I'm a big rough fallow, and a bit stupid p'raps, but I've gawt a heart like the rest on us; and that dear lass found her way to it, and made me love her, as I can never love anybody in my life again. She don't knaw this any more than you did afore this minute. She never thought anything o' me, and I didn't blame her for it; for twarn't no fault o' hern; but I want on lovin' her all the same. I thought, Measter Hugh, she might ha' married you; and if she had, and had ha' been happy—why, I should ha' been contented. But when she went ayaw it a'most brawke my heart.'

'It was a blow to all of us. God grant better times are in store.'

'Measter Hugh, I aint told you this to-day for the sake o' talking. I want you to unner-

stand that if I can help her naw, when she wants help, 'tis all I ask for.'

So saying, he opened his purse, took out a few sovereigns, and offered them to me; but I shook my head.

'I don't want it,' I said. 'I have still got some of my own left—when that is gone, it will be time enough for me to come to you. Poor Annie shall be well looked after, be sure of that; and I hope that by Thursday I shall have her well enough to take her home.'

Looking rather crestfallen, he put the money back into his pocket, and turned to go.

'Very well, Measter Hugh,' said he; 'I'll come again on Thursday.'

He had given me a warm hand-shake, and had got half way down the stairs, when I called him back.

'If you are calling at the cottage,' I said,

'don't tell them anything of this. Don't let them know that Annie is here, or that you have seen her. It will be better to keep the secret yet.'

If he could not induce me to take money, John Rudd determined to render assistance in some other way. About half an hour after he had left, a doctor arrived to see Annie; then came several bottles of wine, and some fruit; and I had strong reason to suspect that the landlady had not been quite so averse to accepting his money as I had been. At any rate, she was untiring in her attention to Annie, who rapidly recovered

When John Rudd came on the Thursday, he found her sitting up in bed, able to recognise him and talk to him, but still too weak to walk into the adjoining room. Nothing was said about going away that day; but I judged that she would be able to make the attempt on the

following Monday, the day of the carrier's return.

On the Sunday morning, therefore, when she had left her bedroom, and sat in the arm-chair by the sitting-room fire, I took her poor thin hand in mine, and said:

'Annie, my dear, do you feel strong enough to take a journey?'

For a moment she turned her frightened eyes on mine.

'A journey, Hugh?' she asked, faintly.

I saw her cheeks grow very white, but I knew that what I had to say must be said; so I went bravely on.

'John Rudd will be here to morrow,' I said, 'and I want to take you home.'

It was pitiful to see her face. 'Oh, Hugh! I can't go!' she cried. 'I can't face father, it would kill me! You go, and leave me—try

to forget you have seen me, and they will never know.'

I saw it was a hard task I had before me, but I tackled it as bravely as I could.

'Annie,' I said, 'the time has come when you must tell me the whole truth. When we met in London, you said you were a married woman. Was that true, or false?'

She shivered, and turned away her face.

'Don't ask me, Hugh, don't!'

But I persisted, and at last she replied:

'When I told you, I *thought* it was true. He said I was his wife. We went before a sort of lawyer together in Plymouth, and though I prayed sore to be wed in church, he said it was the same thing. Afterwards, when we quarrelled, he told me that the man was in his pay, and that it was no marriage at all. That was why I left him, and went out into the streets to starve.'

'Now, answer me,' I cried, 'who is the man who deceived you? If he is living, he shall make amends!'

'Too late, too late!' she cried.

'What!' I exclaimed, startled by her tone, and thinking of the murdered man. 'Is he dead?'

'No, Hugh; he is living!'

'His name? Tell me his name!'

'Hugh, dear, I cannot—at least not yet. But I trusted him, and he deceived me. He made me swear to keep his secret for a time, saying that if folk knew of our marriage it would be his ruin. At last, when I could bear suspense no longer, he told me the truth. With the aid of him that's dead, he had deceived me!—our marriage was all a pretence! Oh, God help me! What shall I do? What shall I do?'

My head whirled; I had a sore struggle to

collect my furious thoughts. At last I mastered myself, and cried :

'You must come home with me. You must tell the truth to those that love you. If not——'

She clung to me, looking up into my angry face.

'Hugh, you won't ask me? Promise me that!'

I did not answer her, I could not trust myself to answer. I was thinking of all the evil that had already happened, of the dead man, of the hand which, in a moment of madness, had laid him low. I was thinking, too, of Madeline.

At last I turned to my cousin.

'You must leave it all to me,' I said. 'Now go and lie down ; I will call you early in the morning.'

It was a wretched night for both of us. I

walked about the sitting-room hour after hour, and listened to Annie's stifled sobs and moans from the adjoining chamber. In the morning I called her according to promise. She looked deathly pale, but tolerably composed, and when John Rudd knocked we were both ready to go. When we got to the waggon, we found that there was a nice bed made up for Annie, and near to it was a basket full of things for her to eat.

I shall never forget that journey; to me it seemed interminable, but to poor Annie it ended over-quickly, I fear. At starting, she took her place inside the waggon, upon the bed which John Rudd had made up for her, and there she stayed until the end. As we drew nearer and nearer to St. Gurlott's, her agitation increased terribly; and when at last John pulled up within a hundred yards of the cottage-gate, she began to cry pitifully, and

beg to be taken away. I soothed her as well as I could, and, having left her in the van, I walked on to the cottage to prepare the way for her reception. I entered the gate, went softly up to the cottage, and looked in at the kitchen-window. It was quite dark outside; but inside the kitchen lights were burning, and a fire was blazing on the hearth. Before the fire, seated in his arm-chair, was my uncle. His face looked whiter than ever, his hair was like snow; on his knees he held the big family Bible, which he was reading, tracing the lines with the forefinger of his right hand. I looked around the kitchen for another figure—that of my aunt. She was not there. I hastened back to the waggon, lifted out Annie, more dead than alive, poor child; and half led, half carried her to the kitchen-door.

'Go in, Annie,' I whispered, 'your father

is there!' Then I opened the door, and, leaving her on the threshold, returned to my post of observation at the window to see what took place.

For a moment, Annie swerved and half-turned, as if about to fly, then she laid her hand upon the door and sobbed 'Father!'

I saw my uncle start nervously and drop the book upon his knee; then he rose, and, with a piercing cry of joy, held forth his arms.

What followed I don't know. I rushed to the kitchen-door, and when I reached it I saw poor Annie lying half-fainting upon her father's breast.

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER AND CHILD.

It was a sight to bring tears to the eyes of a strong man. The poor old father—white-haired, haggard, trembling like a leaf, and feverishly clasping the child who had been the darling of his days. He looked into her face—he smoothed back her hair with his wrinkled hand—he murmured her name—while, sobbing and moaning, she clung to him and entreated his forgiveness.

I stood looking on, almost terrified. As I did so, my aunt brushed past me, and, entering the kitchen, uttered a cry of surprise.

'Annie!'

The tone of her voice was harsh and cold, and her face was stern indeed.

Releasing herself from her father's embrace, my cousin turned to her mother with outstretched arms.

'Yes, mother! I have come back!'

But my aunt, with the same stern expression, repulsed her, and the poor girl fell back with a pitiful moan.

'Mother, mother, dear! won't you speak to me?'

'Bide a bit! Wha brought 'ee? Did you coom back alone?'

Annie turned her eyes pitifully towards me.

'We came home together,' I said, stepping forward.

'Let me look at 'ee!' cried my aunt, suddenly approaching her daughter, who hid her

face and sobbed. 'What, can't 'ee look your mother in the face? Naw? Then away wi' 'ee, for you'm na daughter o' mine!'

My uncle, who had sunk trembling into a chair, looked up amazed, as she continued:

'Look at your father! Look at the shame and trouble you'm brought upon him! A year ago he were a happy man, and I were a happy woman; but *now*—look at us both *now*! Better to be dead and buried than to coom back yar, wi' thy shame upon 'ee, bringing sorrow and disgrace on folk that once held their heads up wi' the best!'

I was lost in amazement at my aunt's severity; for never for a moment had I anticipated such a reception. Hitherto, indeed, my uncle had seemed to take the affair most to heart, and it was *his* attitude towards Annie that I had most dreaded. But the parts of the two seemed reversed—my aunt was the stern

man; my uncle, the gentle and forgiving woman.

'Come, come, aunt,' I said. 'You must not talk to Annie so. There has been trouble, no doubt; but it is all over now, and everything can be explained.'

But my aunt was inflexible.

'Whar has she been all this while, tell me that? She left o' her awn free will, and she comes back o' her awn free will; but till I knaw what she ha' done, I'll ne'er sit down or break bread wi' her again.'

'I told you how it would be!' cried Annie, addressing her words to me, but still hiding her face. 'Let me go! I wish I had never come!'

And she made a hurried movement towards the door, as if to fly. Seeing this, my aunt relented a little; though her manner was still harsh enough.

At this moment my uncle rose.

'Annie,' he said, 'dawn't heed mother. She dawn't mean it, my lass—she dawn't mean it! Whate'er you'm done, this is your home, and you are our child—our little lass.' Then, turning to his wife, he added, 'Speak to her, wife! speak kindly to her! Maybe she'll tell 'ee all her trouble.'

His broken tones, so pleading and pitiful, melted the mother's heart. With a wild cry she sank into a chair, the tears streaming down her face.

'Oh! Annie, Annie! may the Lord forgive 'ee for what you ha' done!'

Suddenly mastering herself, my cousin uncovered her face and looked at her mother. Then, drying her tears, and speaking with tremulous determination, she said:

'I know I have been wicked. I know I should never have gone away. But if you have

suffered, so have I. I never meant to bring shame and trouble upon you or father; I loved you both too well for that. But if you can't forgive me, if your heart is still bitter against me (and God knows I don't blame you, for I deserve it all), I had better go away. I don't want to be a trouble or a burden. I have made my bed, I know, and I must lie upon it; and if I had not met my cousin Hugh I should never have come home.'

'Tell me the truth, Annie Pendragon,' said my aunt. 'Wha took thee from home? Was it him as is lying, dead and murdered, in his grave?'

Annie opened her eyes in wonder. My uncle started, and then, curious to say, averted his face, but stood listening.

'What do you mean, mother?'

'What daw I mean?' echoed my aunt, sharply. 'What should I mean, Annie Pen-

dragon? Folk say you did leave St. Gurlott's wi' a man. Were that man him that is dead?'

'I have already asked her that question,' I said; 'and she denies it.'

I saw my uncle start again. He was still eagerly listening.

'No, mother,' said Annie, firmly.

'Naw? Ye were seen together i' Falmouth; all the folk think the overseer took 'ee away fro' home.'

'Then it is not true.'

My uncle turned; his face, which had been troubled before, was now ghastly beyond measure.

'Annie, Annie, my lass!' he cried. 'Dawn't deny it! Speak the truth, and we'll forgie 'ee! It were Measter Johnson wha brought thee to your trouble—say it were, Annie, say it were!'

His voice was pleading and full of entreaty.

I alone of all there guessed why. But Annie shook her head sadly, as she replied :

'No, father. Him you speak of was nothing to me, and never harmed me by word or deed.'

'John Rudd saw ye together i' Falmouth,' cried my aunt; 'and after that, the overseer were away for days. Why will 'ee lie to her that bore 'ee, Annie Pendragon?'

'I am not lying, mother. I am telling you the Gospel truth. Father, she *won't* believe me! But *you* will, won't you? God knows I would not deceive you, after what has past!'

But my uncle had turned away, like a man mortally wounded, and, leaning against the lintel of the window, was looking wildly out.

'Dawn't speak to me!' he said; 'dawn't, my lass! I can't bear it!'

I thought it time to interfere; so gently taking Annie by the hand, I led her to my

aunt, and made them shake hands and kiss each other. Thus some sort of reconcilement was established, and presently the two women, mother and daughter, went upstairs together. My hope was that, after that, recriminations would cease, and some sort of peace be established in the unhappy house.

Directly we were alone, my uncle turned and faced me. I saw that he was still greatly agitated, and fancied that I guessed the cause.

'Hugh, my lad,' he said, 'I knaw I can trust 'ee. Ever sin you was a little lad, you'm been a'most a son to me.'

With the tears standing in my eyes, I wrung his hand. I pitied him, with my whole heart and soul; for indeed I loved him like a son.

'Hearken then, Hugh, my lad. Did you hear what poor Annie said about hersen and the overseer?'

I nodded; and he continued:

'Be it truth, think 'ee?'

'I think so—nay, I am certain.'

'There were nawt between them?'

'Nought. Annie would never have looked at such a fellow. Lord forgive me for speaking so of one that's dead!'

He drew his hand across his brow, where the perspiration stood in beaded drops.

'I think you'm right, lad; I dawn't think my Annie would lie. But it has allays been on my mind, d'ye see, that Johnson 'ticed her fro' her home. God forgie me if I ha' been mista'en! More than once, lad, dreaming like, I ha' fancied—I ha' fancied—that overseer hissen confessed wi' his awn mouth that he were to blame; and only last night abed, dreaming like again, I thought I had my fingers at his throat . . . and tried to take

'un's life! I might ha' done it, I might ha' done it, if what I thought were true!'

As he spoke, he raised his voice to a cry, and a strange mad light, such as I had never seen there before, began to gather in his eyes.

Terrified at his words, I moved to the kitchen door, and closed it quickly.

'Hush! For God's sake, don't speak so loud! Someone may hear you!'

He was quiet in a moment. Subdued and gentle, he let me lead him to a chair. Then our eyes met, and though we exchanged no word, he saw that I guessed his secret, and, groaning painfully, he buried his face in his two hands, and called on God to forgive him for his sins.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SHADOW IN THE HOUSE.

Thus it was that poor Annie returned to her home, and was received once again as a member of the little circle at St. Gurlott's. But things were sadly changed for her, poor child; and sometimes, as I watched her patient endurance, my heart rose in revolt, and I blamed myself for having been the means of bringing her home again.

True, my uncle was glad to see her, and treated her with uniform kindness; indeed, he was never happy unless she was before him, and Annie, noting this, was untiring in her

devotion to him. But with my aunt it was another matter. She, who was usually the kindest of women, now became a domestic tyrant, and practised towards her daughter a species of cruelty which in another person she would have been the first to denounce. She never let poor Annie rest, but reproached her unceasingly about the troubles she had brought about, the change she had wrought in her poor father, and the happiness of the little home; and she never failed to remind her that it was not until she had been deserted by her unknown lover that she had decided to return and administer consolation to those whose hearts she had broken.

All this Annie bore without a murmur. 'It was only her due,' she said; 'her mother was right; she had destroyed all their happiness, and she should be made to suffer.' Nevertheless, it was hard for her to bear, and

I very often saw her with traces of tears upon her cheek.

But when people have poverty before them they cannot afford to exaggerate sentimental troubles, and I soon came to the conclusion that the best way to help Annie was to help myself—to obtain a situation, in fact; and thus, by contributing a weekly allowance, to give things a better complexion at home. As all hope of obtaining employment in St. Gurlott's was out of the question, I turned my attention to other quarters. After many heart-rending disappointments and endless correspondence, I obtained a situation as overseer of a copper-mine in Devon.

The situation was a suitable one in every way, and promised to be lucrative. I was to leave home and begin operations in a fortnight.

I was in the midst of my preparations, half happy in the thought of being able to inhabit

a part of the globe where my misfortunes could not find me out, when I one day heard a piece of news which killed at one blow all my hopes of the future, and made my life mere Dead Sea fruit.

A report spread over the village that George Redruth was about to be married forthwith to Madeline Graham.

How or through whom the report originated no one could tell; but its truth was admitted on every hand.

The news stunned me at first, then it drove me mad; wild, ungovernable jealousy took possession of me. I could do nothing, think of nothing now, save one thing—that the woman I loved beyond everything in this world was about to become the wife of another man, and that man my bitter enemy at heart.

It was impossible to conceal my secret any longer—they had but to look into my face and

read it. When Annie heard the news, she cried bitterly; and I, blind as usual, believed she cried out of sympathy for me.

'It is a shame, Hugh!' she said, 'after having made you love her, that she should wile away another man.'

'Don't say a word against Miss Graham,' I returned, 'for she is an angel.'

'Iss, hold your peace!' cried my aunt. ''Tis nawt to us, and why should you interfere? And, after all, 'tis better as it is. She could never have wed wi' Hugh; and no good comes o' young folk dangling after one another when they can never coom together.'

There was sound sense in my aunt's words, though at the time, with the fiercest jealousy and hatred raging in my heart against the man who had supplanted me, I could not listen to them. A few days' reflection, however, brought me to a better state of mind—showed

me that I was a fool, and that the news which had wrought such an astounding effect upon me was only what I might have expected, if a wild unwarrantable passion had not made me blind. For, after all, what was I to Madeline?

During my boyhood, I had dared to love her; but when we met again, I saw distinctly that the episode which had been all in all to me had passed completely from her mind. I had had the good fortune to save her life, and she, angel that she was, had been grateful; but now the debt had been repaid—in exchange for her life, she had helped to save mine. Having paid her debt, she had removed herself irrevocably from me.

As I thought of all this, I felt my heart grow hard, and I cursed God, who, in His beneficence, had sent me this one ray of blessing. But why had it come at all? Why had I been shown the light at all, if I was doomed to be

cast into darkness again for the remainder of my life? With Madeline Graham by my side, I knew what my days might be; without her, I knew it would be better for me to be lying at the bottom of the sea.

I had mused thus walking up from the village one night, and now, standing at the cottage gate, I looked across the marshes towards the spot where so many months ago I had brought Madeline to shore.

As I gazed, my eyes grew dim, and the impulse came upon me to revisit once again the spot where my darling had set her foot; so I struck off across the waste towards the lonely shore.

It was a fine bright moonlight night, clear and still, though the shifting clouds in the sky predicted storm. I found the sea as calm as a mill-pond, fringed with white where the edge lapped the stones upon the shore. The moon

was shining radiantly upon it; also upon the boat-house, which I looked at tenderly, remembering how I had carried Madeline there. Then I fell to thinking of her. I felt again as if her head were lying on my shoulder—her cold bare arms clinging about my neck; and I felt as though I would give half my life for such an experience again.

With a heavily drawn sigh I was about to move away, when a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and turning, I found myself face to face with Madeline herself!

Yes; there she stood, looking more like a spirit than a thing of flesh and blood—her face was so white, her eyes so sad. She was wrapped from head to foot in costly furs, while a black hood was thrown lightly over her head and tied under her chin.

At the sight of her, all the blood rushed to my temples, and I felt my body trembling like

a leaf; but I commanded myself sufficiently to speak.

'Madeline!' I said: 'Miss Graham, you here at this hour?'

'Yes,' she answered calmly, smiling a little; 'it is a strange place to find me, is it not? But then you know, Mr. Trelawney, I am a strange creature. . . I may as well confess the truth. I followed you here to-night.'

'You followed me?'

'Yes. After our dinner this evening, I came out with Anita, intending to pay you a visit at the cottage. When we came within sight of the gate, I saw you standing there. I paused a moment before stepping forward to speak to you, and you moved away, striking across the marshes towards the sea. I sent Anita back, and followed you here.'

I was not altogether glad that she had done so. It was torture to be near her, to look at

her, and to know that she had come straight from the caressing arms of another man. However, I commanded myself sufficiently to say:

'It is not right for you to be here, Miss Graham. Will you let me take you home?'

'You shall do so presently,' she answered, not looking at me, but keeping her eyes fixed upon the sea. 'Now I want to talk to you. Is it true you are going away?'

'Yes; it is quite true.'

'Where are you going?'

'To the borders of Devon. I have obtained a good situation, and hope to make a position there which I could never have risen to here.'

'And you will be glad to go,' she continued —'to leave your home?'

'Yes,' I replied; 'I shall be glad to go. As to my home—why, I have no home now, all is so sorely changed. My uncle is so broken, I should hardly know him; my poor cousin,

with her load of sorrow, sits in the house and shrinks from the sight of any human soul. It will be all changed for me elsewhere. Perhaps I shall find happiness. God grant it! At any rate, there will never be happiness for me here again!'

'You talk very bitterly,' continued Madeline. 'Then you have no wish to stay?'

'Why should I wish to stay? A few days ago it would have been another matter. It is all changed now—all changed!'

'What do you mean, Mr. Trelawney?'

'I mean,' I answered, utterly losing my self-control, 'that, through all these months of darkness and trouble, I have been sustained by one thought, one hope. Miss Graham, we are alone together to-night; there is no one but you to hear me. I may never see you again in this world, therefore I will say it. I love you. I have loved you all my life!'

She put up her hand and said, hurriedly 'Mr. Trelawney, please say no more!'

But it was too late, I took her hand and kissed it.

'I loved you,' I continued, 'in those far-off days when we were boy and girl together. Then years afterwards the sea gave you back to my arms, and, God help me! the old passion was rekindled in my soul with ten times its original fire. Once I had looked again into your face, my darling, I had but one hope, one thought. I know I was a madman. I knew there was a gulf between us broader than the sea from which I snatched you, and yet, fool that I was, I lived in my paradise, and refused to see the pitfalls which were looming ahead. It was enough to know that I loved you, and that sometimes I was gladdened by a sight of your face.'

I paused, and dropped her hand; she was crying.

'Miss Graham,' I cried, 'don't cry, for Heaven's sake! You have a right to hate me for what I have said.'

She quickly brushed away her tears, and turned to me, smiling sadly.

'Don't say so, please. I honour and respect you more than I can say—more than I can confess, even to myself. I shall pray always for your welfare and happiness, and I shall never forget you as long as I live!'

'God bless you!' I murmured, kissing her hand again.

She drew it away hurriedly.

'Ah! don't do that,' she murmured, 'I ought rather to kneel to you—you, who are so much braver and better than I.'

She walked away a little, and I stood for a moment pondering with my eyes upon the sea.

Suddenly I said, 'Miss Graham, when are you to be married?' She started, hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

'I don't quite know. I am going up to London shortly. We are to be married there.'

Every word she uttered seemed to stab me to the heart. Up to this I had clung to a wild hope that the reports I had heard might have had no foundation—now that hope was gone.

'Why,' I asked desperately, 'are you going to marry your cousin?'

She started again, and trembled slightly. 'Why do people generally marry one another?' she answered. 'Still, there is a very grave reason why this should be. My cousin is comparatively poor, while I am rich; he has grave difficulties before him which I can relieve if I am his wife.'

'Did he put all this before you?'

'No; he does not even know that I am

aware of it. Ah! Mr. Trelawney, we have all our troubles, and my poor aunt is breaking her heart over hers. Things have been going wrong ever since my uncle died.'

'And you are to be sacrificed to set them right again?'

'Where does the sacrifice come in?'

'Did she ask you if you loved her son?'

'No! She asked me if there was anyone else whom I wished to marry, and I answered her truthfully: I said there was not.'

We walked back over the marshes, Madeline leaning lightly on my arm; but we never spoke a word. Having reached the road, we walked on towards Redruth House, and paused at the gate.

'Good-bye, Miss Graham!' I said, holding forth my hand.

'Good-bye!' she said.

'Yes,' I returned, 'I think it ought to be

good-bye. In a week, or ten days at most, I shall be leaving St. Gurlott's, and we may not meet again!'

Before I knew what she was doing, she had seized my hand and raised it to her lips.

'Good-bye, dear friend,' she murmured, 'and may God bless you!' then, with a sob, she turned and was gone.

I stood petrified, watching in a dazed kind of wonder the figure as it moved up the moonlit avenue and disappeared amongst the trees: then, with a sigh, I turned away. Bitterly as I had suffered through my love for Madeline, I did not for one moment wish that that episode in my life had never been.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I PREPARE TO LEAVE ST. GURLOTT'S.

All this time there had been a double shadow on my life; for not only was it darkened by my unfortunate and despairing passion, but by anxiety for my uncle. I alone, of all who knew and loved him, guessed the true cause of the sorrow which made him,

> As a tree inclineth weak and bare
> Under its unseen load of wintry air,

bend lower and lower with a mysterious burden; so that, although not an old man, he had become prematurely infirm. He still went about his daily work in the mine, but feebly, mechanically, and very silently; but in the

long evenings he sat brooding by the fireside, starting at the sound of a foot without or a knock at the door, but otherwise showing little or no interest in the affairs of life.

Poor Annie noticed the change, and, secretly reproaching herself as the cause, was ever watchful to attend his slightest wish, to answer his most careless look. Her mother's sternness pained her, after all, infinitely less than the sad endurance of one who had ever been the tenderest of fathers. And the change reflected herself in *her*; so that no one would have recognised, in the pale suffering woman, the happy, gentle girl who had once been the light of a humble home.

All this troubled me greatly, and made me naturally anxious to leave the scene of so much pain. Had I been able in any way to heal the wounds that misfortune had made, had I even been able to speak with a free heart of the

trouble which, in one shape or another, was weighing upon us all, it might have been different; but I was utterly helpless. Combined with my great grief, came oftentimes a great dread—lest others should discover what was still an unspoken secret between my uncle and myself. So, in my despair of being of any service, I could not help counting the hours till the day came when I was to leave St. Gurlott's and repair to my new place in the adjoining county.

I was anxious, too, to get away from the district, where the engagement between Madeline Graham and George Redruth was a matter of common gossip; where I was tormented, a dozen times a day, by rumours of what was going on up at the great house. After our farewell described in the last chapter, when my last hope left me and there was nothing for it save to resign myself to the

inevitable, I saw nothing more of Madeline; but a day or two later I heard that she had gone, accompanied by Redruth and his mother, to London, and I knew, in some distant way, that the journey meant further preparations for the marriage. All this made me chafe and fret like a man in chains; eager to breathe other air, and to put solid earth between himself and his sources of torment.

I had lost Madeline for ever, that was clear; indeed, I had never had any hope or chance of gaining her; but the dead, cold certainty of my loss was unendurable. If I was to live on, I must exercise all the powers of my manhood, and endeavour to forget what had been, at the best, only a foolish dream. So long as I remained in the neighbourhood, haunted by so many sweet memories and troublous associations, forgetfulness was of course impossible.

The evening before the day fixed for my

departure, the gloom in the little cottage was greater than ever. All our hearts were full. Although I was only going away a little distance, and although I had promised to revisit my old home whenever an opportunity offered, it seemed like parting with the old life for ever. Ever since I was a boy I had dwelt there, with those good people, who had stood to me in the place of father and mother; my little world had been St. Gurlott's, my only home that humble cottage; and I should have been made of hard stuff indeed, if I had failed to feel the parting.

We sat together round the fire. I tried to assume a cheerful tone, and talked hopefully of the future; but it was no use. Eager as I was to get away, I was no voluntary exile. Where I had lived so long I would have chosen to have lived and died.

My aunt, who was busily knitting some

stockings to form part of my wardrobe, listened to my bold talk, and dolefully shook her head.

'"Tis well to ha' a light heart,' she said, 'and 'tis easy when one is young. But they tell me Gwendovey be a lawnesome place.'

'Not a bit of it,' I answered, laughing. 'Not half so lonesome as St. Gurlott's.'

'And it be so far—'tis bad as going across the sae.'

At this I laughed again.

'Why, 'tis only seventy miles away as the crow flies! A man might gallop it on a good horse in a few short hours. Then, as to the mine itself! It's different to being underground, and, what's worse, under salt water. It's open to the sky, and cheerful as sunshine—isn't it, uncle?'

My uncle, who occupied his usual place by the ingle, looked round vacantly, and nodded.

'Iss, lad, that be true!'

'Sunshine, did 'ee say?' said my aunt. 'There'll be naw sunshine for me or father, when our lad be gone. I dawn't knaw what father will do with hissen, when you'm gone. You ha' been his right hand ever sin you was but a child; and now he be breaking like, he'll miss thee more and more. But I dawn't blame 'ee, lad! You'm right to seek your fortin'; and this be a poor place, Lord knows, for a bold lad like you!'

'Hugh will come back, mother,' cried Annie who stood behind her father's chair. 'He is only going for a while.'

'Of course,' I exclaimed. 'Or, better still, I shall make my fortune, as you say, and you will come over and live with me.'

'Too late for that,' returned my aunt. 'We be awld folk naw, and our time be nigh

come. When he comes back, 'twill likely be to our buryin'.'

'Nonsense, aunt!'

'I could ha' died content, Hugh, if I had seen 'ee a happy man, wi' childer at your knee,' she said, glancing at Annie, and remembering the old plans—which had fallen long before, like a house of cards.

'I shall never marry,' I replied, darkening, in spite of myself.

There was a long silence. My aunt's words had struck a painful chord, and we were all more or less uneasy. To break the spell of gloomy thought, I rose and gazed from the window. It was a fine night, with a full moon.

'We shall have fine weather,' I said. 'The wind has gone up into the north.'

As I spoke, the kitchen door opened, and John Rudd entered, hat in hand. He greeted

us all round, and, at my aunt's request, took a seat by the fire. After smiling silently for some minutes, he felt in his pockets, and produced some of his usual presents, brought that day from Falmouth.

'Gawin' away to-morrow, Measter Hugh?' he asked presently.

'Yes, John. I start after breakfast.'

'Dear, dear! A-harseback, Measter Hugh?'

'No; I am going to tramp it right across the moor. I shall take it easy, you know; divide the journey into two days, and sleep one night on the way.'

'It be a middlin' long walk, Measter. Folk tell me there be snaw out on the moor. I wish 'ee were going my way; I'd gie thee a lift, and welcome.'

'Thank you, John,' I said.

'Lawd, it do seem but yesterday sin you

first rode, a little lad, in my awld cart. Do you remember, Measter Hugh, how I made a pome about Missus and Annie here, and how you put 'un dawn in writing as fine as print?'

'Of course I do,' I replied. 'You don't write so much poetry now, John?'

John Rudd's face fell. He scratched his head somewhat lugubriously.

'My gift be failing me, I fear,' he murmured; 'but thar, pomes be for young folk, not for old chaps like John Rudd. Howsomever, it do come out o' me now and then, like sparks fra' a forge; but there be much on't I can't repeat, and much I disremember. 'Twere a relief to my feelin's, like, Measter Hugh, when I had *you* handy to put 'un dawn!'

He added, spreading his great hands on his knees, and sinking his voice to a whisper:

'Did I ever tell 'ee the pooty pome I made about yoursen, when they took 'ee for killing the overseer?'

I saw my uncle start and change colour, while the pipe that he had lit and was smoking almost dropped from his mouth.

'Never mind that now, John,' I cried, quickly. 'Talk of something else—something more pleasant.'

'All right, Measter Hugh,' returned the poet. 'Shall I tell 'ee the news?'

I nodded; and he continued:

'Young Measter be coming home fro' Lunnun to-morrow wi' her he is to wed.'

'How do you know that?' I cried, flushing to the temples, and conscious that all eyes were turned suddenly upon my face.

'I brought a big bawx to leave up at the house, Measter Hugh, and 'twere addressed to the young missus; and when I were up in the

kitchen, and taking a glass o' ale wi' cook, they told me postman had brought a letter this arternoon, and that young master were coming home. See!'

He little knew the torture he was causing me; but every word he uttered went through me like a knife. Again I made a device to change the subject, and succeeded; but while the good fellow prattled on, my mind was full of the news that he had brought.

My original determination had been to leave home at ten or eleven in the forenoon, and, striking across the moorland, to do a leisurely forty miles before resting for the night; but I was now resolved to depart much earlier—indeed, at daybreak. I dreaded the torture of seeing my darling again; and I knew it to be extremely probable that she might arrive from Falmouth very early in the day.

After a parting glass of spirits, in which he pledged me heartily, and wished me all the good luck in the world, John rose to go away. I walked with him to the door, and across the garden to the gate.

Here we shook hands heartily.

'Keep an eye on the old man when I am gone,' I said. 'Gwendovey is not far away, but far enough if anything goes wrong. My uncle may want a friend. If anything happens, don't fail to send to me at once.'

'I'll do that, Measter Hugh,' replied John Rudd. 'I be downright grieved to see the old mun saw broken down.'

After another hearty handshake, he walked away in the moonlight. I was turning to go in, when I felt a touch upon my arm. It was Annie, who had crept out after me, and now spoke in a low voice, almost a whisper.

'Hugh, dear Hugh, this is the last night

we shall be together for many a long day. I wanted to speak to you before you go. I wanted to be quite sure that we are friends, in spite of all that has past.'

Her voice was broken with tears. Full of tenderness and pity for her, I put my arm around her, and kissed her on the forehead.

'More than friends, Annie,' I said. 'Brother and sister—as much as if we were so by blood.'

'Oh, you are good, good!' she cried, resting her head on my shoulder. 'Don't think I am ungrateful! Don't think I fail to see how kind you have been; how all your thought has been for others—never for yourself. But, Hugh, dear, you won't be angry if I speak of it?—it's on my mind, and I should like to say it to you before you go.'

'What is it, Annie?'

'It's about Miss Graham! Ah, don't be angry! I wouldn't pain you for the world.'

'Do not speak of her,' I said, trembling.

'But you love her, Hugh, you love her—ah, do you think I have not seen?'

'Yes, Annie, I love her. What then? I learned long ago that my love was hopeless and foolish. She is far away from me as that star! I ought to have known it from the beginning.'

She raised her eyes to my face, and looked at me earnestly and long. Then she said:

'Sometimes, Hugh, I have thought that you are wrong, for you are worthy of any lady in the land. Sometimes I have thought that, if you had only spoken, she would have listened to you. Why do you give her up? Perhaps there is time yet?'

'In a few days, Annie, she will be married to Mr. Redruth.'

'Never, never,' cried my cousin, with strange vehemence.

'Why, it is all arranged. They are engaged. Even if it were otherwise, where would be my chance? Great ladies do not marry beggars, little woman!'

'It is of that I wished to speak,' persisted Annie. 'I do not think those two will ever be man and wife.'

'Why do you say that? Have you any reason?'

'Yes, Hugh. Do not ask me to say more now; but promise—promise me that you will not quite despair. For you care for her very much, do you not? and I—I know what you must feel, with such a love as yours.'

As she spoke, the old suspicion came upon me. I bent down and gazed into her face, lit by the brilliant moonlight. Never had she looked so pretty.

'Annie,' I said, 'before I go, have you nothing more to say to me?'

'No, dear Hugh.'

'I mean—about yourself.'

How she trembled! I could feel the sudden leaping of her heart, as I proceeded:

'I have had my own thoughts all along, but I have kept them to myself. You know what I said to you long ago about George Redruth? Was I right or wrong?'

'Do not ask me now,' she sobbed. 'Some day, soon too, you shall know everything—but not now! not to-night!'

I saw her agony, and forbore to question her further. But we did not go in at once. Lingering at the gate, we talked of old times, of her father, of many things near to our hearts, but no more of the one thing that was nearest to mine. All my anger against her, all my indignation at the trouble she had

wrought, died away in tender brotherly sympathy and affection. She was my little cousin again, my confidante and friend. The peace of the still night fell upon us, touching our spirits with a beautiful consecration. Never shall I forget that gentle time of parting

'Whatever happens,' I said, as we turned to go in, 'remember that I am your loving brother.'

'Dear, dear Hugh!' she answered. 'I have not loved you half enough. Ah, if I had trusted you at the first! But maybe it is not too late, even now. God help me, I will try to make amends!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CHAMPION OF GWENDOVEY.

Soon after daybreak the next morning I took the road. All I carried was my staff and a small knapsack on my back; my other worldly possessions had gone on, days before, by carrier. My aunt and Annie watched me from the door; my uncle walked with me through the village, and a short distance up the highway. He was in his working clothes, ready for his day's work in the mine.

Scarcely a word was spoken between us till I reached the point whence I meant to strike off across the open moor. Here I paused, and held out my hand; he gripped it

in both of his, and looked into my face. He was never one of the crying sort, but I saw now that his eyes were dim.

'Hugh, my lad, I knaw you'm nawt going far away, but summat tells me as it may be a lang while afore we meet again. I ha' ever loved 'ee like my awn son. If aught happens to me, you'll be a son to the awld woman still?'

'Ay, that I will!'

'And Annie, poor lass—you'll be a brother to poor Annie?'

'Be sure of that,' I answered. 'But keep up a good heart. We shall all be together soon.'

He gazed at me sorrowfully, with eyes in which there was no earthly hope.

'Maybe, lad, maybe; but lookee, I be an awld man naw, and a'most done wi' life. There be summat here i' my heart, gnawing like, and I feel like that chap i' the Bible as were ate up by worms. But I mun wait

and bear, wait and bear; only promise me again, lad, to look arter the awld woman and our little lass.'

I promised with all my heart. He still gripped my hand, and seemed about to say more, but with a moan, he blessed me and turned away. Greatly moved and troubled, I left him, and walked away across the open moor.

The day was bright and still; one of those calm days early in the year, when the chill of winter is still about the dark bones of the earth, but when there are quickening motions in the air, and mesmeric admonitions of a vernal resurrection. The dew sparkled upon the heath, and strung its silver threads upon the bare branches of gorse and broom. A lark was rising from the ground and signing heavenward, as if it were spring indeed.

Following a thin sheep-track, I was soon out upon the wild moor. Turning at last, I

saw St. Gurlott's reddening in the sun's rays, while away beyond glimmered the sparkling expanse of the sea. My heart swelled within me, with love for the dear old place. I might have been a pilgrim to the Antipodes, instead of a man merely journeying to the next county. But in this world of ours, distance is measured by sympathy, not by mileage; and never having been much of a wanderer, I was inexperienced enough to undergo the pangs of exile —though the place of my banishment was to be only the adjoining parish.

With a sigh of farewell to St. Gurlott's, I turned and faced the track again. Around me on every side the moor stretched like a sea, flat for the most part, but here and there rising to rocky knolls, or descending into green hollows, where the sward was damp and spongy under foot. From time to time I passed a lonely moorsman, cutting turf or

gathering furze for fuel, with whom I would exchange greetings and stand talking a few minutes before wandering on. But for the most part the place was solitary, haunted only by stray sheep and wild cattle. Hawks and ravens were numerous, for it was their happy hunting-ground. Trouble had made me a little superstitious, and I eyed these birds, especially the black croaking fellows and their kindred vagabonds the hooded crows, with little favour.

As I went on the prospect grew wilder. Tall blocks and tors of granite were scattered everywhere, like the fragments of some submerged world; and, indeed, I knew well that the ground whereon I walked had once been the bottom of the sea, and that the mighty stones had been washed by mightier waves, and deposited there long ere the coming of man. Mile after mile, far as eye could behold,

stretched the stony blocks—some tall and huge monoliths, pencilled over by green moss and grey lichens; some flat and recumbent, like mighty tombstones—as indeed they were. Verily it was Tadmor of the wilderness; broken up confusedly, as if an earthquake had just passed.

But though the scene was wild and bleak below, the sky was calm above it, calm and flecked with delicate filmy clouds that stretched gently over the brilliant blue of the far-off ether. Had my heart been less sad, I should have exulted in the beauty and wonder of the scene. Even as it was, I drank in the keen moorland air with a quickening sense of life. Gradually, the dark shadows flitted from my brain, and the strength of my manhood returning upon me, I passed on rapidly across the open waste.

More than once, in my passage, I struck the

road again, and found myself among moorland villages and pasturages, with intervals of leafless wood. At mid-day I halted at a farm-house, situated many miles from human habitation and surrounded by pastures watered by a wild moorland stream. As I approached the door, a troop of wild shepherds'-dogs surrounded me, so savage that I had to beat them off with my staff; but the simple folk welcomed me with true pastoral hospitality, and regaled me royally with scones and milk. The coming of a stranger was an event in their lonely lives, and they had a hundred questions to ask concerning myself, my destination, and the unknown region whither I was bound.

The sun was setting when I sighted Torborne, the inland village where I had arranged to sleep, which was close on fifty miles from my old home by the sea. It was a mining settlement, and as I approached I found

myself abreast of a rough tram-road communicating with the mines. A busy sound of clattering and clanking, clashing and rushing, broke upon my ear; great wheels suddenly appeared, revolving in the air above my head, together with a lofty chimney, skeleton platforms, and iron chains clanking over iron pulleys. Flocks of women and children soon appeared, busy on the surface. Close by them ran a brawling stream, copper-coloured by the refuse of the mine.

They greeted me merrily, as I paused to look at them. I noticed that they spoke a dialect somewhat different from that of the district where I had lived so long.

I slept at Torborne, and at daybreak next morning proceeded on my way. Soon after mid-day I reached my destination, another mining settlement on the very borders of two counties, Cornwall and Devon. I found it to

be, as rumour had informed me, a 'lonesome' place, situated on the banks of a small river, and surrounded on every side by the wild blocks and tors of the moor. The mines on which I had been engaged belonged to Lord ——, who had a residential castle close by, and whose representative, a solicitor, resided in the village. I reported myself in due course, and was forthwith installed in my position.

Before the day was out, I quite understood the motives which led to the engagement of a man with a 'rift' in his character. The miners were a wild, godless lot, and the last overseer, an elderly man, had more than once gone in danger of his life. As a person still suspected of violent proclivities, I had been chosen to take his place. The truth was, the place bore the worst of names, and few men would have accepted the situation, at any price.

The agent, during our first interview, hinted that the miners needed an iron hand to rule them; and I was rather glad than otherwise of the information, for I wanted work, the more desperate the better. That very afternoon I inspected the place, and found myself inspected in turn by as villainous a set of faces as I had ever encountered. There was much muttering and murmuring, for the fellows wanted to be under the direction of one of their own number, one Michael Looe, a red-haired giant, who had this one advantage over his comrades—that he could read and write.

The very next day, the first after my installation, I found out the sort of opposition with which I had to reckon. As I stood by the open mine, giving some directions, that same Looe ran up against me, with a pickaxe on his shoulder, and almost capsized me. A hoarse laugh greeted this performance.

'Can't 'ee look where you'm gaun, Measter?' cried the fellow, grinning savagely, to the huge delight of the throng—men, women, and children.

I looked him steadily in the face, as one looks in the eye of a furious bull. What I saw there did not daunt me. The fellow was a bully, and I had dealt with bullies before. If I was to retain any authority in the place, I must bring him to his senses.

'What's your name?' I said, quietly.

'My name?' he repeated, leering round at the others. 'Mike Looe, if you maun knaw. As good a name as yourn, I'll wager.'

Another laugh greeted this touch of primitive humour.

'My name is Hugh Trelawney; and, as I am master here, I'll trouble you to remember it. If you don't, my man, I'll find a way to impress it on your memory.'

'You will, will 'ee?' said the giant. 'And so you be measter? Mates,' he added, looking round, 'd'ye hear 'un? Take off your hats to 'un! This fine gentry pup be measter i' the mine. Take off your hats to 'un, I say!'

And suiting the action to the word, he bowed mockingly before me. My blood was now up, and I faced him resolutely. 'Go back to your work,' I said. 'No more words. Do as I bid you.'

His manner changed from mockery to savage determination.

'Who'll make me?' he said, brandishing his pickaxe.

Before he knew what I was about, I wrenched the weapon from his hand, and flung it on the ground. He clenched his fist and made a rush at me. I waited for him, and landed him a blow which made him stagger

back, dazed. The men flocked round us, murmuring and threatening.

But Michael Looe had confidence in his own prowess. He weighed fifteen stone, and had the fists of Anak: so that I, though a tall strong man, looked no match for such a giant. He uttered a fierce oath, and bade the men stand back.

'Fair play, lads!' he cried, grinning again. 'Lea' the new chap to me. Don't 'ee see he means fightin'?'

With that the men made a ring, while their champion stripped off his waistcoat and began quietly turning up his sleeves, showing an arm with muscles like iron bands. For a moment I shrank back, not that I feared the ruffian, but because I felt ashamed to take part in such a brawl.

The men saw my hesitation, and uttered a derisive cry.

'Look at 'un! He be afeer'd! Hit 'un in the 'ee!'

At this juncture, an old man, one of their number, but superior in manner to the rest, whispered in my ear:

'You'd best bolt, Measter. He'll smash 'ee like an egg, as he did chap afore 'ee!'

My answer was decisive. Off went my coat, down went my hat on the ground, and, clenching my fists, I faced the giant. This rather turned the tide of feeling in my favour; at any rate, it elicited a feeble cheer. The men prepared themselves for enjoyment: a real stand-up 'fight' was imminent.

Were I acquainted with the beautiful vocabulary of the ring, I might compose a prose poem on this episode; but alas! I am as one uninstructed, and, after all, it is too absurd. Annoying as the affair was at the time, I laugh at it now.

Mike Looe came at me like Goliath, but at the first encounter I discovered that he had no science. I myself had a little, and though far his inferior in weight, possessed muscles and sinews of steel, due to my healthy life and constant exercise, from boyhood upward, in the open air. The result is easily predicted. In matters of fistiana, science, combined with pluck, is everything. Before many minutes had passed, Michael Looe had received as sound a thrashing as man could desire. He lay on the ground, his head supported on the knee of one of his comrades, and looking stupidly up into my face.

I turned to the men, with as much good humour as I could assume under the ornaments of a black eye and a bleeding forehead, whereon my opponent's fist had descended with the force of a steam ram.

'Well, my lads,' I cried, 'you see I've paid

my footing. If any of you think I haven't paid enough, let him stand up, and I'll give him a little more.'

This speech, quite in the humorous manner of my late opponent, completed my victory. It was greeted with an uproarious laugh and a cheer. To my astonishment, the men crowded round me, and began shaking hands. Then Mike Looe, rising slowly, approached me, and held out his enormous fist.

'Shake hands, Measter,' he said. 'If you can lick *me*, you can lick any two o' 'un. Eh, Lord, but you knaws how to feet, dont' 'un, mates? Gi'e me yur hand. You may sack me to-neet and willing, but I'll go bail you'm the right sort to be Measter here!'

So we shook hands, and from that moment my physical supremacy was undisputed. Instead of dismissing my late opponent, as he anticipated, I kept him in his place, and he

afterwards became my right-hand man. I had made a very good beginning. After that day, I had very little trouble in retaining my due authority as overseer of the Gwendovey Mine.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW SURPRISE.

My life at Gwendovey was quiet and uneventful enough. I found a decent lodging in the house of one Mark Drew—the elderly man who had advised me, in a friendly way, to run for it, just when I was about to tackle the champion of the mine. It was a white-washed cottage on the skirts of the moor, and sufficiently removed from the noise and bustle of the mine itself. I had a bedroom and a small parlour, so that when I had got around me my small stock of worldly goods, including a few books, I was tolerably comfortable, and as contented—well, as contented as one crossed in love can be.

A fortnight passed away. Short as was the time, it seemed an age to me, hungering as I was for some news from home. I had received one letter, written by Annie, in which she told me that no change had taken place since my departure, but made no mention whatever of Madeline Graham or George Redruth. To this I had replied in as cheerful a strain as possible, but shamefacedly keeping silence on the subject nearest to my heart. I was full, therefore, of secret anxiety.

As for the chance of any stray rumour reaching me concerning changes at St. Gurlott's, it was fully as remote as if I had been a dweller on the other side of the earth. The village where I dwelt resembled an island surrounded by an unnavigable sea; and the people in it knew as much or more of Kamtschatka as they knew of St. Gurlott's. From generation to generation, they dwelt apart; Troglodytes of

the mine, they knew of nothing beyond it. Very few among them had ever beheld the sea, though its nearest point of coast was under forty miles distant.

The place contained a church and a schoolhouse; the former a sort of chapel of ease of the Rev. William Stephenson, known as 'Billy' Stephenson, the famous 'hunting parson;' the latter superintended by a schoolmistress about one degree removed above the ignorance of the children she taught, or was supposed to teach. 'Billy' Stephenson or his deputy preached a sermon every Sunday, generally a short one, and conventional in its news of both this world and another; but the reverend gentleman was most welcomed when he rode over on week-day business, marrying, burying, or visiting the sick, and when his conversation was secular, not to say horsey, in character. Ever top-booted, spurred, and ready for a gallop after

the fox or the wild red-deer, and ever ready to exchange a coarse joke or repartee with the meanest of his parishioners, he was highly popular; though it is needless to say that he did little or nothing, shining light though he was, to scatter the mental darkness of his savage flock.

One Sunday, the second after my arrival, as I was preparing to go and hear this worthy preach (having just seen him pass by at a trot, riding in the direction of the old church), I was astonished to see a light country cart draw up at the door, containing John Rudd and my cousin Annie. Startled, and fearing some bad news, I stepped out to greet them, and learned that they had driven over from Barmouth, a town some twenty miles distant, where they had arrived in the carrier's waggon on the previous night.

I assisted Annie down, and saw that she

it.

was very pale and trembled. Then while John Rudd drove away to the beer-house, where he was to put up the horse, I led my cousin into the cottage.

Directly we were alone, she burst into tears.

'Something has happened,' I cried. 'Speak, Annie! don't keep me in suspense! Is anything wrong at home?'

My fear was that some evil had befallen my poor uncle, but I was immediately reassured.

'All's well at home, Hugh dear; it's not *that* which brought me over. I came to tell you that the marriage day is fixed. They are to be wedded in St. Gurlott's next Wednesday morning.'

I knew of whom she spoke, though she mentioned no names, and I was both surprised and angry that she should travel to me with

so sorry a message. She saw the darkness gathering on my face, and cried eagerly:

'Hugh, dear, don't be angry! I felt I must come and tell you—for oh! it is breaking my heart, as well as yours.'

I looked at her in amazement.

'Breaking your heart?' I echoed. 'What is it to you?'

'It is everything to me. Master George, though he is going to wed Miss Graham, is my husband in the sight of God!'

'Then I was right!' I cried. 'I was right from the first. The villain! He led you from your home!'

She bent her head in weeping acquiescence. All my spirit arose once more against her, for though I had suspected the truth, her confession came upon me like a thunderbolt. I looked at her in horror as, stretching out her hands pitifully to me, she proceeded:

'Hugh, dear, I promised that I would one day tell you everything, and it is for that I came. I waited on till the last, I thought to hold my peace, I hoped and prayed that he would never go so far; but when I heard the day was fixed, my mind was made up—to hold my peace no more. But first I went to him, and prayed to him on my knees. Then, finding that it was all in vain, I determined to come *here*.'

'You are speaking of George Redruth?' I asked, sternly.

'Yes—of the young master.'

'You left home in his company? You were together in London?'

'God help me—yes!'

'Why have you screened him so long?'

'Because I made him a promise. Because I believed until the very last that he might make amends. Because—because—I did not

wish to see him harmed! Oh, Hugh, forgive me! don't look at me like that! You promised to be a brother to me always. Keep your promise now.'

How could I resist her sad appeal? I was a churl to repulse her, even for a moment. But, casting off the mask of severity, I kissed her, and placed her in a chair. As she looked up at me with her pleading tearful eyes, I silently cursed the scoundrel who had been the cause of her trouble, but for her, poor girl, I had only sympathy and love. Then a thought crossed my mind, and I asked eagerly:

'Have you spoken of this to anyone else? Does my uncle know?'

She shook her head.

'No one knows but yourself,' she replied. 'How could I speak of it to anyone but you?'

'So much the better,' I returned. 'Evil enough has come of all this already, and I

would not for the world that it should reach the old man's ears. He believes George Redruth blameless. God knows what he might do, if he knew him to be as guilty as you say.'

Full of the new thoughts her confession had awakened, I walked up and down the room; after a little while I bent over her again, and took her hand.

'Annie, I must know everything; not part of the truth, but the whole; then, perhaps, I can help you. But first, about this marriage? You say it is now a certain thing?'

'Yes, Hugh. That is why I came.'

'You did well,' I answered. 'Now, tell me the whole story.'

She obeyed me, and I listened in deep agitation. Simply, clearly, she described to me all that had taken place, from the day she had first left her home.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANNIE'S STORY.

It was a long and painful story, delivered not consecutively, but brokenly, in a series of vivid episodes; and so agitated was I by what I heard, that it was some time before I was able to piece it all together. At last, however, the whole truth was made clear to me; and I shall now do my best, in form, to make it clear to the reader.

For a long time Annie had resisted George Redruth's solicitation that she should leave her home. Her whole nature revolted against the pain which such a step might cause; besides, he had persistently averred that it was his

intention to make her his wife, and Annie, brought up as she had been, with a simple faith in human nature, saw no reason, since all was straight and honourable, for so much secrecy in the matter.

'It would break my father's heart,' she said to him, again and again. 'It will bring dishonour upon my home and upon myself. Why should we act so?'

But George Redruth was specious in his pleading. He pointed out to her that since they were to be married, there would be no dishonour. That if her good name was tarnished for a time through enforced secrecy of the whole proceedings, it would shine all the brighter afterwards, and as for himself—why, he would love her a hundredfold for this slight sacrifice; in fact, he took full advantage of his gentlemanly manners and superior education to lure her on to destruction. 'I am sure

he really and truly loved me then,' said poor Annie, as she recounted those scenes to me. 'Ah, Hugh, there was love in his voice and in his eyes, real true love that no one could doubt; and was it any wonder then that I never doubted it: when he took me in his arms and kissed me I felt that I could go to sleep and never wish to waken again.'

Nevertheless, poor Annie brought all the strength of her nature to her aid, and resisted him almost to the last.

Even after she had finally been brought to consent to his proposition, she repented before many hours had passed away, and went to him again with a determination to break with him once and for all. It was the night preceding that on which she left her home. They had arranged not to meet again, but Annie, reckless of consequences, had sent a note to him, asking him to meet her. She got no answer

to the note, but at ten o'clock, the time she had named, she went to their usual place of meeting, and here she was soon joined by George Redruth. He looked impatient, and even angry. Instead of taking her in his arms, and kissing her as usual, he began to chide her for her thoughtlessness in sending up the note.

'If my mother had seen it,' he said, 'and questioned me about it, it would have been awkward. What do you want, Annie? I thought everything was settled last night.'

'And so it was,' returned Annie, beginning to tremble at her own boldness. 'But I wanted to see you to-night to say that I have changed my mind.'

'Changed your mind; what the deuce do you mean?'

'Just this, sir,' continued Annie, who grew bolder as she went on. 'I am sure that what we are going to do is not right, and can never

bring happiness to any soul ; let us just wait as we are, and be as we are till you can marry me openly, and take me to your home.'

'You are a little fool,' returned Redruth, impatiently ; 'but you will find I am not to be befooled. If you wish to break with me, say so, and we will not see each other after to-night!'

It would have been well for poor Annie if she could have taken him at his word ; but, alas! it was too late. He had made her love him so passionately, that sooner than lose him altogether, she felt she would make any sacrifice on earth.

Therefore she clung helplessly to him, sobbing bitterly.

'No, do not go from me—I cannot bear to lose you!'

He saw he had gained his point, and grew soft again. He laid her head on his shoulder, stroked her tear-stained cheek, and kissed her.

'Oh, Annie, Annie,' he said, 'you are a silly little thing. When you talk as you did just now, you make me think that you don't care for me at all, and that your only reason in wishing to marry me is the temptation to fill the position I offer you as my wife. My dear, if I did not love you so devotedly I should doubt your love. They say to love is to have implicit faith: you have no faith in me!'

'Oh, yes, I have!'

'Then why not show it? Come, tell me that! Why hesitate and cry as if I am about to bring you to some dire distress. Yet, after all, what have I asked you to do? Only what hundreds of girls have done before you—to be married secretly instead of openly, to conceal the fact of our marriage for a few weeks only, and then to come back with me, my honoured wife, to share my home.'

Yes; the story was specious enough; little wonder indeed that Annie was befooled, seeing that she loved him so. Once more she promised implicit obedience to all his wishes, and left him.

It was the last night she was to spend in the cottage, and during that night she never closed her eyes; but she lay awake, watching the moonbeams as they crept in at the window, thinking of all that was past and what might possibly lay before her. If George Redruth had spoken fairly—and why, she asked herself, should she doubt him, and he had really very little to dread. If her father and mother suffered pain at her sudden flight, it would be for such a very little while; and afterwards the great joy which her return would bring them would make amends for all. Still, Annie was not satisfied; her training had been rigid, and now her conscience troubled her sorely; but it

was too late to repent: since that interview of the night before she felt she dare not disobey her lover.

She rose early and came out of her bedroom while my uncle and I were preparing to pay our early visit to the mine. We were both astonished to see her up, but she said, as an excuse for her excessive paleness, that she had a bad headache and could not rest in bed.

My uncle took her face between his hands and kissed it fondly, murmuring:

'This won't do, we maun ha' roses in these cheeks o' yourn. What would I do wi'out my little lass!'

Annie stifled a sob, and turned away with her eyes full of tears. She put on her hat and walked with us half the way to the mine—a thing she had never done before. She held my uncle's hand all the way, I remember, and asked him to kiss her when she decided to go

back and make things ready for the day at home.

We got home rather earlier than usual that evening, and when we reached the cottage we found Annie busy setting out the things for tea. It had been baking-day, and it seemed as if she had been assisting at the work, for her cheeks were flushed now, and all her listless tearful manner of the morning had entirely disappeared. I could not help noticing that her hands trembled, that she seemed excessively nervous, and was strangely eager to anticipate my uncle's every wish. My aunt rebuked her once or twice for what she termed her light-headedness, but Annie only put her arms round her neck and kissed her.

'Don't scold, mother, don't scold,' she said, 'you wouldn't like it if I wasn't here!'

We sat up pretty late that night, and Annie was amongst the last to retire. When my

uncle rose to go to bed, Annie kissed him several times, and my aunt rebuked her again for her foolishness. Then Annie kissed her again and again.

'You don't mean half you say, mother,' she murmured; 'you know you love me!'

When we had all retired, and Annie found herself in her room alone, she sat down and cried very bitterly. Her last adieus had been said, the time for her departure was near at hand, and all her spirit seemed going. Again she hesitated; and had she been left to herself that night, that fatal step would never have been taken.

Suddenly she started, a faint whistle reached her from without. Hurriedly drying her eyes, she opened the window. There was George Redruth standing just outside.

'Are you ready, dearest?' he whispered.

'Yes!' she replied.

'Is there anyone about?'

'No! they are all in bed; I think they must be asleep. It is getting late, isn't it?'

'It is close on midnight. Give me out what things you are going to take; I hope it isn't much, and then come round and join me at the door.'

Annie had collected a few necessaries, and they were made up into a small parcel. She lifted it, and as she did so her tears began to flow afresh. With the parcel in her hands, she returned to the window.

'George!'

'Yes, darling?'

'Are you sure I am doing right? Are you sure you will bring me back very soon, so that I do not cause them much pain?'

'Haven't I sworn it? and yet you doubt me. If you are going to be foolish again, you will drive me from you; and Heaven knows

what the consequences may be. Come, we have no time to lose; be brave, it is your only chance.'

'Very well, I will trust you,' she said, as she handed the little packet to him, and closed the window. It was the work of a moment to clothe herself in her thickest cloak and darkest plainest bonnet; then she hurriedly disarranged the bed, and left the room. She was trembling violently, and crying like a child. She paused at the door of the room where her mother and father were sleeping; and, kneeling there, prayed to God to forgive her for what she was about to do. Even then, she paused and hung back; but George Redruth, growing impatient, entered the kitchen and took her forcibly away.

It was midnight, and pitch dark; there was not a soul abroad. Holding the parcel with one hand, and clutching the girl firmly

with the other, George Redruth hurried her off. Where they went she could not tell, but they soon came upon a dog-cart and a high-stepping bay. Annie learned afterwards that this had been driven out from Falmouth that evening by Johnson, who stood there waiting for her now. George Redruth addressed him :

'Is all ready ? '

'It is, sir.'

'The horse fresh ? '

'Very.'

'That's all right. Remember my instructions, and carry them out to the letter.'

He tossed up the little bundle ; kissed Annie and lifted her in : then, before she could utter a syllable, Johnson sprang in, and they were off, leaving George Redruth behind them. Now, in all his conversations with Annie, George Redruth had said nothing of this plan of sending her away with Johnson, fearing, no doubt,

that if she knew her lover was not to accompany her, all her courage would go. When, therefore, she found herself in this plight, poor Annie's distress increased, and she asked some explanation of her companion.

'It's all right,' he answered, kindly enough. 'He can't come to-night, but he'll join us in London.'

Meantime, the horse, a very fast trotter, was speeding along like lightning, covering mile after mile, and plunging further and further into the darkness.

About six o'clock in the morning they drove into Falmouth, and pulled up the steaming horse before the door of the best inn. The travellers were evidently expected, for there was a porter and a groom sitting up for them; and while the groom took possession of the horse, Johnson himself conducted Annie to her room and left her at the door.

'You have only a few hours for rest,' he said; 'we must catch the eleven o'clock boat for Portsmouth.'

Left to herself, Annie threw off her cloak and hat, and looked round the room. It was a pretty chamber, much grander than anything she had ever been accustomed to before. There were dainty hangings to the bed, and pretty dimity curtains to the windows. Moreover, there was a cheerful fire burning in the grate. Beside the hearth there was a large, comfortable-looking easy-chair, into which she threw herself.

She had not closed her eyes for two nights, and was utterly weary both in mind and body; and as her head fell back upon the soft cushions of the chair, she fell into a sound sleep.

She was awakened by a loud knocking at the door. She started up; it was broad daylight, the fire was out and the room looked cold

and cheerless. She opened the door, and found the chamber-maid standing outside with a jug of hot water in her hand.

'It's ten o'clock, Miss,' said the girl. 'The gentleman says you shall have your breakfast here in a quarter of an hour.'

Dazed and half stupefied, Annie took the jug from the girl's hands, and, closing the bedroom door again, began to arrange herself for the day.'

At the end of the fifteen minutes, the chambermaid returned with the breakfast, temptingly arranged on a tray; a few minutes later Johnson made his appearance. Instead of standing at the door as the chambermaid had done, he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

'All ready?' he began cheerfully. 'That 's all right!' Then his quick eye fell upon the bed and the breakfast, and he gave a peculiar

whistle. 'Come, this won't do,' he said; 'no sleep and no food, you'll wear yourself out, my dear!'

These words, spoken rather kindly, touched Annie's heart, and she began to cry.

'I can't go on, Mr. Johnson,' she said. 'I know my coming away has been a mistake. I should like to go back again!'

After his first surprise was over, Johnson pointed out to her the utter improbability of any such attempt; and, after a good deal more crying, Annie saw the force of his argument and yielded. Yes: the fatal step had been taken—it was too late to think of returning now; the only thing to do now was to make the best of matters and go right on. So Annie again put on her cloak and bonnet and announced herself ready to go.

'You had better put on a veil,' said the practical Johnson. 'We may be seen, and that

would be awkward for me. Haven't got one! Well, upon my word, you are a little simpleton; but we must make the best of it, I suppose. Here, take my arm and hang your head a bit; we'll get on board as quick as possible, and perhaps will escape scot free.'

They passed down the stairs, entered a closed cab which stood at the door, and were rapidly driven away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANNIE'S STORY (*concluded*).

At seven o'clock that same evening the two arrived in London, Johnson tolerably contented with himself for the neatness and despatch with which he had managed the journey, little guessing that he had been detected by the keen eyes of John Rudd. Arrived at Euston, a four-wheeler was summoned, and the two got into it and were driven away. Then Johnson turned to Annie.

'My dear,' he said, 'I may as well make you acquainted with our plans now. The fact is, the master won't be able to join you for a

week, and I am going to stop and take care of you till he comes. I have taken some apartments for that week in a hotel; and, in order to simplify matters, I have given our names as Mr. and Miss Johnson. Therefore, for the time being, you are my sister, Miss Annie Johnson. Do you understand?'

Annie nodded. She quite understood; though she was beginning to feel alarmed as well as puzzled at the strangeness of the whole proceedings. She was still more alarmed at the subsequent manner in which Johnson conducted himself. True, he had taken rooms in the hotel, as he had said—private rooms, which they occupied in common. She was apparently allowed to go and come at will; yet she soon found that she was as much a prisoner as if she had been enclosed by iron bars. Whatever she did, Johnson knew of; and once or twice when she attempted to write to her friends, he

quietly but firmly refused to allow any such thing.

'Look here,' he said, 'don't you think this here game is to my taste at all, 'cause you'd be wrong. I've done a goodish many things in my time, but running away wi' girls, and keepin' 'em caged up like birds, aint one of 'em; however, I gave my word to young Redruth as I'd keep ye square till he came, and I'm agoin' to keep my word; but precious glad I shall be when these six days are over.'

In due time the six days came to an end, and Annie received from Johnson the glad intelligence that on the afternoon of the sixth day her lover would be with her. Trembling with excitement and joy, she obeyed her woman's instinct, and hastened to make herself look her very best. She arrayed herself in the pretty grey dress which she had brought with her from her home, and put some flowers at her

throat; so that when, a few hours later, young Redruth arrived, he clasped her to him again and again, and, looking into her tear-dimmed eyes, said he had never seen her looking so pretty in all her life.

'And you will never go away from me again,' said Annie, and she clung, sobbing to him; 'you will always stay with me?'

'Always, my darling.'

'And we—shall—be married——'

'This very night. Though I have been away, I have not been unmindful of my duty to you, my pet. I have arranged for our marriage; I have taken a house where we will live. We will go straight from here after dinner, and get the ceremony over. It will be a quiet marriage, and, to you, a strange one, I fear. It will not be solemnised in a church, with all the brightness and beauty that should have surrounded my darling. We shall go

before a registrar and be married quietly —this is another sacrifice which my love demands.'

But this was no sacrifice to Annie so long as she was married, and knew her love to be no sin—that was all she asked; so she cried a little on his shoulder; but it was for joy, not sorrow.

Everything seemed changed now the young master had come. A charming little dinner was ordered and served in the handsome sitting-room, which during the past week had been occupied by Johnson and Annie. The little party of three sat down to it—Redruth making the most convivial of hosts; after the dinner was over, Johnson took his leave; and the lovers were alone. There was no time just then for billing and cooing, if anything was to be done it must be done quickly, for the day was well-nigh spent. George told Annie to get on

her bonnet and cloak; she did so, and the two got into a hansom and were driven away.

How strange it all seemed to her—to be speeding thus through the streets of London with her future husband by her side. She was on her way to be married, dressed in an old bonnet and cloak which she had often worn at St. Gurlott's, with no wedding favours, no joyful faces about her. Looking back upon this episode in later years, she saw in it the dreadful foreshadowing of all that was to follow, the misery, the degradation, the shame. But at the time she saw nothing of all this; the sordiness was illuminated to her by the fact that she had beside her the one man, whom, above all others, she loved—and who loved her.

The memory of that episode had faded somewhat away. She remembered only faintly that the hansom set them down before the door of a dingy office in some back slum of London,

that before two men the marriage ceremony was gone through, and that when she re-entered the cab she wore a wedding-ring on the third finger of her left hand, and firmly believed herself to be Mrs. George Redruth.

The house which he had taken for her, and to which he conducted her immediately after the ceremony, was situated in a London suburb. It was an elegant little mansion, furnished and fitted in a style which completely dazzled poor Annie. But in those early days of their union he certainly loved her as much as it was in his power to love: and Annie was happy. Besides, he was always with her: during the day they drove together, and in the evening they went to the theatre or opera—Annie clad in silks and satins like some great lady of the land. But things could not be expected to go on so for ever; and after a while, Redruth began to leave her; for short periods at first, and after-

wards for longer—and his manner, at first so ardent and overflowing, gradually cooled. At first, Annie was heart-broken, and during his absences, cried bitterly in the secrecy of her own room. Then she brought reason to her aid, and acknowledged to herself that it was the lot of every happy bride to pass through the experience which was coming to her. After a man had become a husband, it was impossible for him to remain a lover—at least, she had been told that was the common belief, so she must try to be content. But at times, try as she would, she could not help grieving. Thus it was that George Redruth found her very sad one evening, when he returned to her after an absence of several days. He came in jovial enough, for he had been dining at the club with some friends. He took her in his arms and kissed her; then he looked into her eyes.

'Why, Annie, what's this?' he said. 'You've been crying.'

'Just a little, because I felt so lonely. It is so dreary here when you are away, and you are away so much now.'

'If I am, it is no ault of mine, my pet; important business, which you would not understand, occupies nearly all my time; affairs are getting so complicated that, unless I do something and quickly, I shall be a beggar. But come, it's only for a little while; when things are put straight, as I hope they will be soon, we will go abroad and be constantly together. Now, dry your eyes, darling, and see what I have brought you.'

He produced a little packet, opened it, and showed her a gold bracelet.

'Isn't it pretty?' he asked.

'Yes; it is pretty, but——'

'Well, my pet?'

'There is something I would rather have than all the bracelets in the world.'

'What is that, Annie?'

'The sight of my home, and of my dear father and mother. Oh, George, why can I not write to them and tell them that I am your wife?'

'You are foolish, and don't know what you are saying. A little while ago, when you first came here, you said if you could let them know that you were well and happy it would content you. I allowed you to write, yet you are unhappy and complaining to me again. I have told you repeatedly that I have most important reasons for wishing to keep our union secret.'

'Yes, I know, but it seems so strange, so unkind.'

'Annie, can you not be patient for a little while? If you loved me as you say, you would obey and trust me.'

'I do trust you,' she returned, 'with all my heart and soul! For your love I have forsaken everything—home, kindred, friends—but when we came away together you promised that in a little time I should return with you to those who are dear to me. I have waited very patiently: but to live on here alone in London, to feel that they think ill of me and are mourning for me far away—oh! I cannot bear it; it breaks my heart!'

'They know that you are alive and well. Surely that is enough.'

'Ah, if you knew how dear I am to them! Since I was a child, until the day I came away with you, I had never left my home. It seems so dreary in London after my happy home! Often when you are gone I sit at the window there and look out on the great city; and when I hear the murmur of the folk it seems like the sound o' the sea.'

'My darling, this is mere sentiment, which you will forget. Surely London, with all its life and gaiety, is merrier than that dreary place where I first found you like a flower in a desert unworthy of such beauty? Come, kiss me, and try to confide in me a little while yet. I wish to make you happy. I love you truly, and dearly; but I have much upon my mind of which I cannot as yet speak freely. Try to be contented here a little longer; then, perhaps, the mystery will end. You *will* try, won't you?'

'Yes, George; I will try!'

So the discussion ended, and for a time things went on as they had done before. His absences became more frequent and more prolonged; but Annie, since that last talk with him, had learned to look with different eyes upon her lot, and bore all without a murmur. She could not blame him, she loved him too

well for that; and after all, she thought, she could not rationally blame him for anything. He had done all that he could do. He had made her his wife, he had given her a home fit for the greatest lady, he had even allowed her to write to her friends, saying that she was happy. He could do no more.

But this blissful state of things was not destined to last. Redruth came to her one day and told her that the house in which she lived had become too expensive for his means; that he had taken rooms for her, and that she must remove to them with all possible speed. Annie was quite content to do as he wished. She had never had much taste for splendid surroundings, and the house, without her husband, was dreary enough. Accordingly, she was removed to the apartments in which I afterwards found her living in the Strand.

'Very little happened to me worth telling,'

said Annie, continuing her narrative, 'until that day when I met you, Hugh. Ah! I shall never forget that day. After you had left me, being dragged away by those men who accused you of murder, I remained in that room stunned and stupefied, utterly incapable of realising what had happened. Then it all came back to me. I seemed to see again your reproachful look—to hear again the dreadful words you uttered when you left me.

'"When the time comes," you said, "may you be as well able to answer for your deeds as I shall answer for mine. The trouble began with *you*. If murder has been done, it is your doing also—remember that!"

'Those were the words, Hugh. Night and day they have never left me, and I think they never will until I die. Ah! if I had only died then! But it is just that I should live on—it

is part of my punishment to live on and see those that I love best in all the world droop and suffer day by day for the wrongs that I have done.

'Well, Hugh, I was stunned, as I tell you; then suddenly I recovered myself, and rushed, screaming, to the door, with some wild idea of saving you, and bringing you back, when I was met at the door by my husband. Whether or not he knew anything of what had taken place, I don't know. I was too much agitated myself to think of him. But in a wild fit of excitement and terror, I clung to him and told him all. When I had finished my tale, he looked at me with such a calm, cold gaze, it nearly drove me mad.

'"It's a very bad job," he said; "but really I don't see what I can do?"

'"Then I will tell you," I answered. "You can take me back to St. Gurlott's, and help me

to prove that my cousin is innocent—as he is, God knows!"

'"Take you back to St. Gurlott's," he said. "In what capacity; as Annie Pendragon, or as my wife?"

'"As your wife," I replied.

'Oh, Hugh, I shall never forget the look that came into his eyes. He smiled as he replied:

'"I cannot do that, because you are not my wife!"

'"Not your wife!" I repeated, scarcely believing that I heard aright; but having once begun, it seemed easy for him to continue.

'"No," he replied, "you are not my wife. If you hadn't been a little fool you would have known it long ago."

'"But we were married," I persisted.

'"We went through a marriage ceremony," he replied, "because I wanted to guard against

long faces and reproachful looks. After the ceremony you were perfectly contented, but I knew that we were no more man and wife then than we had been before. The ceremony was a mock one, the Registrar was an impostor, whose services I had bought; if he hadn't been he would never have performed the ceremony in the evening; if you hadn't been a fool you would have known that a marriage is no marriage if performed after twelve o'clock in the day."

'Again I looked at him in petrified amazement; then, realising what all this meant to me, I fell sobbing at his feet.

'"George," I cried, "tell me you are not in earnest—say it is not true!" but all his love for me seemed to have died away; without a look he turned from me.

'"It is true," he said.

'"Ah! don't say so," I cried, clinging help-

lessly to him. "Say that I am your wife; it is the only comfort I have had left to me during all these weary months that have passed away since I left my home! Do not take that from me! In Heaven's name, have pity! Ah, you would have me think ill of you; but I will not. You would never be so base as to deceive me so! You, whom I loved and trusted so much, would never wreck my life and break my heart. I'll not believe but you are my husband still!"

'I covered my face with my hands, and cried bitterly. After a while he came to me and raised me from the ground.

'"Annie," he said, "my poor little girl, be comforted. I have told you the truth—you are not my wife! You can never be that; the difference in our stations is so great that a marriage with you would be my ruin. I have deceived you cruelly; but my heart is still yours, and till death comes I shall love and

protect you. We will leave this place; we will leave England together. Then, far away, in some freer, brighter land, where these distinctions do not exist, we shall dwell in happiness and peace."

'But I shrank from him.

'"Do not touch me!" I cried; "do not speak to me like that!"

'"What is it you regret?" he asked—"A mere form! Love is still love, despite the world!"

'"Love is not love," I replied, "till sanctified and proved. You have profaned it! You have broken my heart and destroyed my peace for ever."

'"You talk wildly, Annie," he returned. "I tell you I will atone. All I have is yours; and I will devote it to your happiness. Can you not forgive me?"

'"Forgive you?" I replied. "Yes, God help me, I forgive you. Good-bye!"

'"Why, where are you going?"

'"Back to my home."

'Before I could say more, the expression of his face changed.

'"I see," he said; "you wish to ruin me. To publish all over the village the story of what I have done. You will not stand alone disgraced—you would disgrace me, too. But I am not such a fool as to let you. You are with me now; you will remain with me until I choose to let you go."

'At the time, I did not know of anything that had happened at St. Gurlott's since I had left it. I know now he dreaded to be exposed before Madeline Graham. He kept me a prisoner in those rooms for several days; but at last I managed to make my escape. You

know what happened after that, Hugh. I made my way to Falmouth; and there you found me, when I was almost starving. If you had not discovered me I should have died.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RETURN HOME.

Thus I have pieced together the narrative which my cousin retailed to me in little episodes, lingering, as women will, on details which seemed trivial in themselves, but which, when carefully criticised, were full of significant meaning. Lost in astonishment and indignation, I heard till the end—when the whole of George Redruth's villainy was apparent.

My experience of the world was, as the reader knows, most rudimentary ; I knew next to nothing of its viler passions, still less of its great crimes. That any human being calling

himself a man could be capable of cold-blooded treachery to a woman whom he promised to love was almost incredible to me ; I had heard of such things, but they had appeared to me always in the nature of romance. But if I was aghast at the record of George Redruth's evil doing, I was no less amazed at Annie's extraordinary patience under wrongs so monstrous. The man had deserved no mercy.

I said as much, in bitter enough language ; but Annie only wept, and shook her head.

'Bad as he has been to me, I am sure he has a kind heart ; and oh ! Hugh, I loved him so much. And he used to love me, I am sure, till Miss Graham came between us.'

'You say that you went through a ceremony of marriage?' I said. 'Annie, I believe you are his wife after all!'

'In the sight of God I am. But Hugh,

dear, if it had been a real marriage, he would never dare to wed again.'

'Such a scoundrel would dare anything,' I cried, fiercely. 'It is well you came to me, for there is yet time. He shall do you justice! If he refuses to do so, I will teach him such a lesson that he will never again dare to hold his head up before the world!'

If the truth must be told, Annie's story, painful and terrible as it was, brought me a certain sense of relief. If it were true—and how could I doubt it, coming to me with such sad assurance of truthful tears and protestations?—surely Madeline would never consent to marry the author of such mischief. Whatever happened, she must know the truth without delay; and, all other means failing, she should hear it from my own lips. Yes, face to face with the man who was to be her husband, I would warn her of his unworthi-

ness; not, alas! in any hope that his overthrow could ever be my gain, but purely in the wish to save her from future misery and degradation. If, after having been assured of the truth, she still persisted in the union, she would do so with her eyes open, and I—I should have done my duty. Such a contingency, however, was scarcely possible.

Long after Annie had told me everything she had to tell, John Rudd came in and joined us. He had, doubtless, prolonged his absence, knowing that we had much to say to each other. When I told him that it was my intention to return at once to St. Gurlott's with my cousin, he seemed astonished, but made no remark; nor did Annie herself, though I saw that she was terrified at what might ensue, offer any objection.

Leaving them in the cottage to partake of

some simple refreshment, I walked down to interview Lord ——'s solicitor, and fortunately found him at home. I informed him that domestic circumstances necessitated my return to St. Gurlott's for several days, and that, in the event of his refusing to give me leave of absence, I should simply throw up the situation. I saw he did not wish to lose me, and rather than do so, he assented to my departure, making me promise, however, to return as soon as possible.

Early in the afternoon, we left Gwendovey in the country cart, John Rudd driving, and I seated by Annie's side. On reaching Torborne, I was eager to push on home at once, and succeeded in hiring at the inn a gig and a fast-trotting horse. So we said good-bye to our friend the carrier, whose waggon was waiting for him in the town, and whose business would lead him next morning Falmouth-

wards, and, after nightfall, turned our faces to the west.

It was a long journey; travelling nearly all night, at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, we did not sight the old village till it was almost daybreak. We said little on the way; our hearts were too full for much talk; but now and again I questioned my cousin about the past, and every piece of information I elicited showed me more and more that George Redruth deserved no mercy. All that I heard, too, implicated the murdered man Johnson in the infamous plot for Annie's ruin. Well, *he* had paid the penalty of his guilt—terribly, swiftly, and unexpectedly; and it was some comfort, at least, to know that, although he was not the main mover in the business, he had to a certain extent deserved his fate.

Though the sun was not up, someone was stirring in the cottage, for there was a light in

the window. I jumped to the ground, helped Annie down, and paid the driver, who walked his horse off in the direction of the village.

'Annie,' I said, as we paused at the cottage gate, 'whatever happens, we must keep this from your father. For his sake, and for his sake only, we must act very cautiously. Do you understand?'

'Yes, Hugh,' she answered. Alas! she understood little or nothing of what was really passing in my mind!

The door was unfastened; for, indeed, lock and key were in little request at St. Gurlott's, which was peopled with honest folk. We walked in, and, entering the kitchen, saw my uncle in his shirt-sleeves, reading by the light of a candle. I glanced at the book before him; it was the old Bible, with his own name, his wife's, and Annie's, with the dates of marriage and of birth, on the fly-leaf.

We entered, but he did not look up. A poor scholar, he was spelling his way through a chapter, and muttering the words aloud. But when I drew nearer and spoke to him, he started up with a cry, pale as death, with the sweat standing in great beads upon his wrinkled brow.

'Who be thar?' he cried. 'Help!'

'What, don't you know me?' I said, forcing a laugh. 'It is I, Hugh Trelawney, and Annie, your daughter.'

'Hugh! Annie!' he repeated, drawing his hand nervously across his lips. 'Why, saw it be! Why did 'ee coom upon me so sudden like? I did not hear 'ee. Annie, my lass, I thought you were away at Gwendovey, wi' your cousin. What brings 'ee home saw soon?'

Annie and I exchanged looks, and, after a warning movement of the eyebrows, I replied:

'Oh, it's all simple enough. I was a bit homesick, and was going to run over when Annie turned up. I hope you're glad to see me, uncle? I'm sure I am to see *you*!'

I held out my hand, and he grasped it warmly.

'Glad enough, I reckon; Why, I ha' missed 'ee as if you had been gawn a year.' He added, seeing my gaze rest on the open book before him, 'I were reading a bit, my lad, when you come in; for I were restless like, and couldn't sleep. Your aunt's a-bed, and sound as a tawp, I warrant.'

As he spoke, he closed the page nervously, as if fearing that we should see what portion of the book he had been reading. Annie stooped over him and kissed him tenderly: he looked up with a faint smile, and patted her cheek.

'Hugh, my lad,' he said presently, 'I wish you had never left the mine.'

'Why, uncle?'

'New overseer be a chap fro' Wales, an naw manner o' good. All he thinks o' is to save money for the company, and he dawn't go down hissen once in a se'nnight. Naw the place be wuss than ever. Out alawng to the blue gallery, the sea is safe to come in, some o' these days.'

'I always said so,' I returned. 'It's an infernal shame that nothing has been done.'

'Saw it be, lad. I spoke to Measter Jarge about it last neet, and he ha' promised to take a last look at 'un before he gangs away. I says to him, says I, "I dawn't care for mysen, but I'm afeared for the men, Measter Jarge, and I do hope summat 'll be done." He were kind-spoken, as civil as he allays is, though some folk dawn't like 'un.'

This was a gentle hint to me. Knowing what I did, and how cruelly my uncle's sim-

plicity had been imposed upon, I could hardly refrain from committing myself, but I thought of the possible consequences, and held my tongue.

By-and-by my aunt came down, and we all breakfasted together; after which, my uncle went off to the mine. Not till he was gone did my aunt set free her tongue, but his departure was the signal for a series of questions as to the cause of my unexpected return. The old man's mind was too full of his own troubled thoughts to have much room for conjecture; always simple, he now took things as they came, in a dazed, helpless manner pitiful to behold. With my aunt it was different. With her characteristic common-sense, she perceived that my coming was due to no mere attack of home-sickness, but betokened urgent business on hand.

She soon came to a natural conclusion—that

I had been drawn thither by the news of the approaching marriage.

'You had better ha' stayed away,' she exclaimed. 'Tis the awld tale o' the burnt moth and the candle, lad! When Annie said she were gawing across to see thee, I were glad, thinkin' 'ee might be company till each other; but she took 'ee the news she should ha' kept to hersen, and nawt would please 'ee but coming where you warn't wanted.

'Never mind, aunt,' I said, as cheerfully as possible. 'I am not going to break my heart, at all events.'

'Maybe nawt,' she answered; 'but you was better far away.'

As soon as possible I left the cottage, to think out the situation for myself. Now that I had come home, I felt in full force the awkwardness of my position. How was I to take firm ground in Annie's name, and yet keep the truth

from my uncle, the shock to whose already shattered system I so much dreaded? From every point of view, indeed, the proclamation of the truth would be a calamity and a scandal; yet it must be made, for Annie's sake, for Madeline's. My only course was to proceed as cautiously as possible, first sounding the main actor in the drama and ascertaining what he had to say in his own defence. With this view I determined to go at once to Redruth House.

It was a wild windy day, with frequent showers of rain. As I approached the avenue, I heard the dreary 'sough' of the wind in the trees, and my thoughts went back to the day when I, a boy, met George Redruth, a boy, in that very place. Nothing was changed; the trees, the rusty gate, the quiet road, were all the same; yet what dark vicissitudes had come in all those years!

I had opened the gate, and was passing in,

when a voice called me. I turned and saw my cousin. She had followed me from the cottage, with her shawl thrown over her head to protect her from the rain, which was falling heavily.

'Hugh,' she cried, panting, and placing her hand on my arm, 'where are you going?'

'Up to Redruth House. It was for that I came.'

'Not to-day! Don't go to-day!' she exclaimed, trembling violently.

'I have no time to waste,' I replied, 'and I must have it out at once. Go home, and leave it all to me! I have promised to see you righted, and I will keep my word.'

But she still clung to me, looking piteously into my frowning face.

'If you *must* go, promise me——'

'What?'

'Promise me that you will do nothing

violent. Hugh, dear, he is a gentleman—do not provoke him too much!—and remember—remember—that I love him dearly.'

'Can you still say that, knowing how he has used you?' I answered, almost savagely. 'Well, you best know your own heart; and I know mine. I came to have it out with George Redruth, and I shall not rest until we meet face to face.'

'Hugh, for God's sake——'

'There, there, do not be afraid,' I said, 'but do as I tell you—go home and wait for my return. I promise you that I will be careful. If only for my uncle's sake, I wish to avoid a public scene. But he must be made to confess, and Miss Graham must be warned.'

I left her standing in the road, and looking after me as I ran rather than walked up the dreary avenue. At the last bend, just before I sed from sight, I turned, and there she stood

still, watching. I waved my hand to her before I disappeared. As I came in sight of the house, I endeavoured to keep very calm; but, in spite of the effort, my excitement grew—and no wonder, seeing the nature of my errand! But the chief cause of my emotion was the fact that I should soon, in all probability, see Madeline Graham.

I walked boldly up to the front door and rang the bell. In a few moments the door was opened by a man-servant.

'Is your master at home?' I asked.

'Mr. Redruth is in the drawing-room,' replied the fellow. 'What name shall I say?'

'I will announce myself,' I answered, stepping into the hall.

Having already visited the house, I knew my way. As I strode across the hall the man followed me, and tried to bar my passage; but I pushed him aside.

'Stand out of the way,' I said, and, placing my hand on the drawing-room door, I threw it open. The man fell back in astonishment, and I strode in.

For my own part I felt very like a savage; but I was in no sense of the word master of myself. I had the grace, however, to take off my hat.

I found myself in a large, elegantly furnished room, looking to the south and opening on a garden terrace. To my simple, unsophisticated gaze, it was splendid enough for a room in a palace; but in my present temper I was not to be daunted, even by the presence of a king.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FACE TO FACE.

Once inside the room, I looked keenly about me, to discover who the occupants might be. I could see only two—George Redruth and his mother. The old lady, looking very white and stately in her robe of black velvet, her snowy hair neatly arranged under some black lace, sat bolt upright in a quaint oak chair, working at some fancy-work. Near to her was her son, lounging carelessly in a low easy-chair, with his legs crossed, and an open book upon his knee. He certainly looked very handsome in his spotless clothes and snowy

linen; and I wondered little that his mother's eyes rested upon him with such a look of affection, or that poor Annie was tempted beyond her strength when she saw that handsome face smiling upon her and heard those lips whisper so lovingly in her ear. George Redruth was not a man who bore upon his person the impress of his soul. He had a fair face and a specious manner; and any stranger looking at him would have believed him utterly incapable of cruelty or wrong-doing.

My unceremonious entry startled both mother and son. They both looked at me with an expression which was by no means amiable. They both asked what my business was there that night.

Before speaking, I looked again around the room. I wished to ascertain if Madeline was there. Apparently, she was not. Then I looked at the old lady, and hesitated again.

After all, she was his mother, and she loved him. Where was the use of giving her pain? So I turned to him and said, as quietly as I could:

'My business is with *you*, sir. What I have to say had better be said to you alone.'

He moved uneasily in his seat, and darted at me from under his brows a look of bitter hatred. I thought his face grew very pale, but he made an effort to preserve his cold manner.

'You are very mysterious,' he replied; 'but since you have thought it worth your while to force your way upon us as you have done, you had better say your say and go, before I order the servants to turn you out.'

'You had better be careful,' I replied. 'Once more I warn you—what you have to hear had better be heard by you alone!'

He looked in my face again, and something he saw there convinced him of the truth of my words. He rose, and, throwing his book aside, said, with well-assumed carelessness:

'Very well, since you will have it so; come out on the terrace and speak there.'

He made a movement forward, and I was about to follow him, when there was another interruption of a most unexpected kind. Old Mrs. Redruth rose, and, making a stately motion with her hand, said:

'George, you will stay here.'

She was very white, and her hands were twitching nervously. Seeing this, Redruth stepped forward with a look of deep anxiety on his face.

'Mother,' he said, 'don't agitate yourself, for God's sake! Let me go with him for a moment.' But this she refused to do.

'You shall not leave me, George,' she

answered. 'If he means to insult you, let him do so before your mother's face!'

The strange turn things were taking amazed me, and I cried:

'*I* insult *him*? You don't know what you are saying when you talk to me like that. I have returned to my home to obtain Justice; to force a bitter wrong to be righted. I am here for that now.'

It was now George Redruth's turn to be agitated. Turning on me a face livid with terror, he said:

'My mother is not well. Leave the house, I implore you, or God knows how this interview will end!'

This I refused to do.

'Whatever happens,' I said, 'no blame can be attached to me. I am willing to speak to you alone, but speak I mean to before I leave this house to-night. Tell me—is it true

that in two days you propose to wed Miss Graham?'

He was about to answer me, but his mother interrupted him.

'Yes,' she replied; 'it *is* true. Now, sir, what have you to say?'

'This: that your son had better think well before he goes to lead that lady to the altar; because he knows as well as I that that marriage can never be.'

'George, what does he mean?' asked the old lady, gazing from one to another in trembling agitation.

'For God's sake, mother, keep calm!' said George Redruth, who was himself terribly agitated; then he turned again to me. 'Trelawney, leave the house,' he said. 'If you have anything to say to me seek me again; my mother is ill, and a scene such as this promises to be will kill her!'

'I told you I was willing to speak to you alone,' I said; 'but since that can't be, other folk must hear. I am here to-day to ask for justice; you best know why and for whom. Do you mean to do it?'

He hesitated for a moment; then he said, glancing nervously about him:

'You speak in riddles, which I fail to understand.'

'You had best try,' I returned, irritated beyond measure by the strange coldness of his manner. 'You know that you have done a wrong—do you mean to right it?'

By this time he had apparently made up his mind as to his course of conduct, for he replied, with that same cold sneer upon his lips:

'Again, I tell you, I fail to understand you.'

'Then I will make my meaning clear. I

am speaking of the woman whose heart you have broken and whose life you have destroyed. In the name of my cousin, Annie Pendragon, I refuse to allow this marriage to go on!'

I expected to see him cower before this blow, but I was mistaken; he was evidently prepared for anything I might say.

'My good man,' he said, coolly, 'you are raving, or worse. You take, I know, a very tender interest in Miss Graham's welfare; and think, I presume, that anything you may be pleased to state will be believed by her, and you will thus be able to degrade me in her eyes. But you are mistaken. Both Miss Graham and my mother know me too well to believe one word of what you say!'

I must confess that the perfect frankness of his manner succeeded for a moment in putting me at a disadvantage. I could hardly bring

myself to believe that he was lying, yet it must be so.

'Do you deny,' I said, 'the story which I have heard from my cousin's lips?'

'What your cousin may or may not have told you is no concern of mine. What is she to me?'

'She is your wife,' I returned.

Still he retained his cold, impassive manner; but the old lady looked at him with troubled eyes. It was nothing to her that he had broken a heart or wrecked a home. According to her, the labourer was like the beast of burden: born to bear his load uncomplainingly, and to be trampled in the dust, if necessary, at his master's feet. But the fear that her darling had been made to link himself to one beneath him was terrible to her.

'George,' she cried, imploringly, 'what does he mean?'

He shook his head; but I replied:

'I mean, madam, that it was your son, and none other, who brought all the trouble to our home. Through him, and him alone, murder has been done; and simple trusting hearts have been broken. He came with his specious smiling face and lying tongue, and wrought the ruin of as good a lass as ever breathed. Finding her to be good and pure, he heaped falsehood upon falsehood until he got her in his power; then, coward that he was, he told her of the trap into which she had fallen—and left her to the mercy of a merciless world. Cowardly treacherous cur as he is, he has betrayed one woman, but he does not betray another. Let him go to the altar with Miss Graham; and, so sure as he stands living before me now, I will denounce him before them all.'

'You villain! do you mean to threaten

me?' exclaimed Redruth, losing for the first time some of his self-command.

'And if I do,' I returned, 'I don't threaten what I can't perform. My cousin has been silent hitherto because she wished to spare you; she has returned good for evil, cruelty with kindness; but now that she has spoken—now that I know the truth—I am determined that she shall receive justice. Do you think that she alone is to suffer—that she must stand alone in her shame, to be pointed at by every honest woman? I say again she is your wife; if not by the laws of man, at least in the sight of God; and so long as she lives you shall not wed another woman!'

I paused and looked at him; his face was quite livid. He pointed to the door.

'Leave this house!' he cried, 'or by Heaven I'll have you handed over to the police.'

'I refuse to stir,' I replied, 'until I have your answer. It is in your power to partially retrieve the past by doing one act of justice. Villain as you have been, bitterly as she has been made to suffer, I believe my poor cousin loves you still. Make that mock ceremony a true one; take her to you as your honoured wife; it is but justice; it is what I ask in her name.'

'George!' cried the old lady, clinging to him in terror; but he only smiled, and said, 'Don't agitate yourself, mother; the man is raving!'

'I have given you your last chance,' I said. 'Do you persist in your refusal to listen to me?'

'Hear me, Trelawney,' he said. 'The story you have fixed upon me is one tissue of lies. If you say it is not, bring your witnesses to prove it; if you cannot do so, your fabrication falls to

the ground. I know nothing of your cousin, and I am not to be driven through fear into marriage with a peasant girl of light character.'

'Good God!' I cried, 'what do you mean?'

'This: that your cousin, whose moral character is well known, will not retrieve her deeds by vamping up this story against me. Women of her class are given to lying: she seems no exception to the rule!'

'Coward and liar!' I exclaimed. Utterly beside myself, I raised my clenched fist, and should have struck him to the ground. There was a shriek, and a heavy thud upon the floor. Terrified and heart-sick, I drew back, and gazed with wild eyes upon the figure of the old lady, which lay, apparently lifeless, at my feet. For a moment, I feared my clenched fist had fallen upon her, and laid her low; but I was soon reassured. She had been over-

excited with the interview, and the fear that I was going to strike her son had deprived her of consciousness. In a moment a woman's figure was beside her, kneeling on the floor, and bending forward with tender solicitude over the wrinkled face. It was Madeline. Where she had come from I could not tell, she seemed to have arisen like a spirit from the earth. She was pale, but quite composed, and she seemed utterly unconscious of any presence save the one—that of the old woman. With tender hands she smoothed back the grey hair; she dipped her fingers in the bowl of water which George Redruth held, and drew them across the wrinkled brow; she pressed her warm red lips to the white cheek, and murmured gently, 'Aunt, dear aunt, open your eyes; it is I—Madeline!'

For a time the old lady lay motionless—I standing by, unable to move hand or foot, but

feeling nothing but pity for her. Suddenly she stirred slightly and heaved a sigh; then Madeline raised her eyes and fixed them upon my face.

'Will you go, please?' she said, 'for *her* sake. If she wakes and sees you it will be terrible.'

That was enough; I was to obey *her* wish: so, utterly weary and heart-broken, I left the house.

CHAPTER XXXI

A LAST FAREWELL

In a strange, bewildered state of mind I left Redruth House, but, instead of going straight back to the cottage, I took a turn across the moor; I knew if I returned to the cottage in my present state of agitation I should betray myself. I must think matters over and come to some definite decision as to my movements in the future. There was no time to be lost; in two days the wedding would take place—therefore my course of action must be mapped out.

The tone which Redruth had chosen to adopt rather nonplussed me, for never for one moment did I take into consideration the fact

that he might deny all knowledge of my cousin; yet now I saw that by so doing he gained considerable advantage. He had called upon me to prove the truth of my statement; how could I do so? For myself, I had been willing enough to accept Annie's version of the story as the true one, but it seemed that that was not enough. For proofs—how could I obtain them? Johnson, the prime mover in the affair, was dead; of the man who performed the marriage ceremony, Annie had no knowledge whatever; and even had it been otherwise, it would have taken time to discover him; and I had no time, since the marriage was to take place in two days. Yes; it was clear that my story must rely for its acceptance upon the word of my cousin; and if he chose to proceed and dispute that word, it was equally clear it could not be substantiated.

The next thing to be considered was my

next move—what that ought to be, I could not determine; the fact that I must keep all knowledge from my uncle bound me hand and foot. If I denounced Redruth publicly, and made an open scandal, the whole truth would be revealed to my uncle, and I positively trembled at the thought of what he might be tempted to do. I walked thus pondering for hours, finally feeling somewhat calmer, but, having arrived at no definite conclusion as to my future plans, I returned to the cottage. My uncle, aunt, and Annie were all there—moreover, there was honest John Rudd partaking of my aunt's tea and hot baked scones.

'It be loike awld times to see Measter Hugh amang us agen,' said he, as I took my seat at the board; 'reckon you'll be stayin' naw, till after the weddin'.'

I replied that since it was to take place so soon, I most certainly should.

'Ah, then you'll ha' some o' the fun!' he continued; 'there'll be rare gawins on, I reckon. They tell me there'll be a tent put up on the fields and a dinner given to all the miners. Be that true, Mr. Pendragon?'

'Mawst likely,' returned my uncle. 'I knaw nought o' that; but one thing be certain—the young measter, he be a gawin' down the mine to-morrow to see to things, and put matters right afore he gang away.'

Listening to this, I inwardly thanked God that my uncle knew nothing of the real character of young Redruth.

During all this time, poor Annie had been moving about busily attending to the table; but I saw that what she did was done more to cover her agitation than from any real necessity. Now and again, placing herself in the shadow, she tried to read my face—in vain. When they spoke of the wedding, her eyes

filled with tears, and her hands trembled violently.

I tried to avoid being alone with her that night, for I dreaded to tell her what had taken place; but she was over-anxious, and would not let the night pass. When the house was quiet, all of us having gone to our rooms, there came a gentle tap at my bedroom door. Then the door opened, very quietly and stealthily, and Annie herself appeared.

'Hugh,' she whispered, 'are you in bed?' I answered 'No;' and she came in, closing the door behind her. She was partially undressed, and had a large cloak wrapped round her. Her beautiful hair was loosened, and fell in a heavy mass upon her shoulders; her face was very pale, and her eyes were still wet with tears. She came up to where I sat on the side of the bed, and looked at me, stretching forth a trembling hand, which I took in mine.

'My poor Annie!' I said, involuntarily.

She seemed to understand all that my tone implied, for, with a pitiful sob, she sank down crying at my feet.

'Don't cry, Annie; don t cry!' I said. 'He is a scoundrel. He is not worth one of those tears. You must forget him!'

'Forget him?' she sobbed. 'Ah, Hugh, dear, it is not so easy to forget; for I love him so much—I never knew how much till now! Hugh, dear, she will not marry him, will she?'

'I cannot tell.'

'But have you told her? Does she know?'

'That I cannot tell.'

She looked at me inquiringly.

'Hugh, do you know what you are saying? Surely, if you told her, you must know.'

'I have not told her; but she may know, for all that. There has been a strange scene, Annie; and I am a bit puzzled to know what

is best to do. One thing, however, we must be careful to do—keep this from your father. He and the young master go down the mine to-morrow. If your father guessed the story you have told me, one of them might not come up again. Do you understand?'

'Yes,' she answered, faintly. 'But, Hugh, you have not told me what he said.'

'I would rather not do so to-night, Annie. He means to go on with this marriage if he can; but I may find a means to prevent it. There is time yet. I must think it over, and see what can be done. But don't you worry yourself, little woman. I tell you he is not worthy to possess one hair of your head.'

At breakfast the next morning my uncle again spoke of the approaching visit of the young master to the mine, and seemed in high spirits about it; nay, more, he seemed quite

proud to think that he should have been selected above all others to take the part of guide.

'Measter dawn't take to the new overseer chap,' said he. 'I doubt but he'd be glad to ha' thee back i' thy awld place, lad.'

I shook my head.

'You mustn't think of that, uncle. I'm well enough placed where I am.'

Soon after breakfast he set out for the mine, where young Redruth was to join him. A couple of hours later a figure entered the kitchen where I sat ruminating, and, looking up, I was astonished to see Madeline.

Her face was very pale and sad, but there was a look of determination about her eyes and mouth which I had never seen there before. She walked in at the open door and then stood hesitating, as if uncertain what to do. She answered my aunt's curtsey with a kindly nod and smile, and then she looked at Annie, who,

pale as death, had shrunk from her. No word of greeting passed between these two, but I thought that the light in Madeline's eyes grew softer as she gazed upon the pale weary face of my cousin, while poor Annie showed in her face the bitter dislike she had taken to the woman who had supplanted her. Madeline turned to me.

'Mr. Trelawney,' she said, 'I wish to speak to you privately. Can I?'

I replied in the affirmative, and asked my aunt and cousin to leave us, which they accordingly did.

Left alone with Madeline, I felt my whole body tremble like a tree bending before the breath of the tempest. But I took courage to look at her, and thus I became somewhat reassured. Her whole demeanour was calm and cold; she made no attempt to approach me; but she walked over to the window, and looked

out, turning only occasionally to glance at me while the interview lasted.

'Mr. Trelawney,' she said, 'when you paid your visit to Redruth House last night I was listening. I was in a remote and shaded part of the drawing-room when you entered; I remained there during the scene which followed. What I witnessed was too stormy to be very lucid. I want you to make it clear to me now.'

'What do you wish me to do?'

'I wish you to tell me, if you will, the whole of your cousin's unfortunate story.'

I did as she requested; not dwelling too much upon it, but making every point clear. When I had finished, Madeline said, quietly:

'How long have you known this story, Mr. Trelawney?'

'Two or three days. It seems that Annie

had given some promise not to betray that man, and this promise she religiously kept until——'

'Yes, until—— ?'

'Until she was driven to desperation by the announcement of his approaching marriage. Sick and heart-broken, she came to me and told me the story. Horrified beyond measure, I thought of you; and I dreaded to think what your life would be married to such a villain. I came here determined to face him; and, if possible, to prevent the marriage. I went to him in all good faith—you best know how I was received.'

'Do you believe that his marriage with your cousin is legal?'

'No; I honestly believe it to be false.'

'Then you mean to expose him? Since your cousin cannot get justice, do you mean to make her wrongs known?'

I looked at her for a moment, then I answered:

'No; I have done all that I can do. To humiliate him *now* would be to humiliate you —moreover, it would lead to his certain death!'

'His death! What do you mean?'

'This: that if I pointed him out as the betrayer of Annie Pendragon, my uncle would assuredly kill him!'

She started and trembled.

'Don't fear for him,' I said; 'he is safe from me. There has been trouble enough here already; God forbid that I should be the means of bringing more!'

There was a long pause. Madeline still stood at the window gazing out with sad wistful eyes. Then she turned and came towards me.

'Mr. Trelawney,' she said, 'I think you are right when you say you will make no

public scandal. Let this matter rest, and perhaps in time all may come well. You think that your cousin still loves Mr. Redruth?'

'God help her! Yes.'

'Then let us pray that her love, and all her patient suffering, will some day be requited.'

'I do not understand!' I said.

'No? then you think more badly of me than I deserve, though Heaven knows I have not deserved that you should think well of me. I told you once that I was marrying my cousin because he was poor and I was rich. What I told you I told him; I knew I could never love him, but I wished to help him, and I should have done so. I should have married him; and once his wife, I think—nay, I am sure—I should have been able to do my duty. But when I gave that promise to him I believed him to be a good and honourable man. Now, all is changed. I believe every word of

your story, Mr. Trelawney; and, believing it, I know I can never be united to him!'

She paused for a moment; but I could not speak. Presently she continued:

'Mr. Trelawney, I want you to give me your hand for a moment in token of your forgiveness. Heaven has not been merciful to either of us, and I think it would have been better for us both if we had never met. I shall leave this place to-morrow; but I shall never forget it, and I shall never forget you. God bless you!'

She pressed my hand warmly in both of hers, and the next moment she was gone. What followed seemed to me a wild dream. I remained for a time stupefied—drunk with mingled joy and sorrow; feeling the grasp of my darling's hand in mine, and hearing still the sound of her loving voice. Then I knew that my aunt and Annie had returned, and

were questioning me as to Madeline's visit; but their questions were soon drowned in a strange murmur which reached us from without, and the next moment a wild group surged up and surrounded the kitchen door.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COMING OF THE SEA.

'WHAT has happened?' I cried, running up and facing the terror-stricken men.

One of them, Michael Penmaur, a stalwart fellow of five-and-twenty, stepped forward and acted as spokesman.

'What you allays said would happen, Measter Hugh. The main shaft be flooded wi' the sea.'

What this betokened I well knew; if the sea had entered, that portion of the mine was destroyed for ever.

'That's a bad look-out, my lads. Well, it

was bound to come about; and if there is no one down below, and no life lost, perhaps 'tis all for the best.'

As I spoke, I saw them look wildly at one another and whisper, and I guessed that they had something more to tell.

'What is it, lads?' I cried. 'Speak!'

'Come outside, Measter Hugh,' answered Michael Penmaur; 'I'll tell 'ee there.'

But my aunt, with a wild cry, sprang forward and grasped him by the arm.

'You shall tell it naw!' she cried. 'I can see it in your face, and my dreams ha' come true. Summat's happened to my man! Hugh, make him speak! I can bear it!'

At that moment Annie entered the room, descending from the chamber above, and the moment she appeared my aunt addressed her wildly.

'You ha' come in time, Annie Pendragon.

All the trouble began wi' 'ee! Bid them speak, then, and tell what's happened to your father!'

'Oh, Hugh, what is it?' exclaimed poor Annie, coming to my side.

I told her that the waters had flooded the mine.

'And father? where is father?' she said, with a sharp presentiment of the truth.

Michael Penmaur exchanged another rapid look with his companions, and then replied:

'Your father be dawn belaw, wi' the young master!'

My aunt uttered a scream, and threw her hands up into the air.

'Dead!' she cried. 'My dream again! You ha' killed him, Annie—you ha' killed your father!'

'No, no, mother! Don't say that!'

'Speak, lads!' I said. 'Tell me everything, for God's sake!'

Then Michael Penmaur, as spokesman, told me, in a few rapid words, all he knew: that in the course of the afternoon George Redruth had descended the mine in company with my uncle for the purpose of inspecting the outer galleries—my uncle, indeed, having fetched him for that very purpose; that suddenly, while all were busy below, the alarm had been given, and, throwing down their tools, the men had rushed up the ladders, while simultaneously they heard a rush and roar like the sound of the entering sea; that as they ascended in wild alarm, the lower ladder broke beneath the weight of some of the men, who were precipitated with it into the darkness; and that, finally, when they collected at the mouth of the mine, they missed, besides several of their comrades, both George Redruth and my uncle.

I rushed to the door. By this time it was quite dark, and it was blowing hard from the

south-west, with hail and rain. I thought with horror of that submarine darkness, and of those who were lying even then within it, alive or dead. My mind was made up in a moment. I did not even wait to speak to Annie or my aunt, but, calling on the men to follow me, ran right away in the direction of the mine.

The men followed me in a body. When we reached the cliffs, we found the wild news had spread, and an excited throng was gathered at the mine-head, some carrying torches, which cast lurid gleams on the rainy darkness. A heavy sea was rolling in on the strand beneath, and the white billows were flashing and crashing.

Suddenly a light hand was placed upon my arm, and turning, I saw Madeline ; close to her, like a gaunt spectre, Mrs. Redruth.

'Thank God you are here!' cried my darling. 'Is there any hope?'

I looked into her white face, and saw in its wild anxiety only love for my rival; but at that supreme moment I felt no jealousy—only supreme pity for her and *him*. Then I glanced at his mother, and heard her quick cry of supplication:

'Save him! Save my son!'

Dazed and horrified, I turned round and addressed the men:

'Is Mr. Redruth below?'

'Ay, ay, Measter!' they answered in chorus.

'Who saw him last?'

'I did,' said Michael Penmaur. 'He were creeping wi' John Pendragon out beyand the bottom shaft.'

I walked to the mouth of the mine, and threw open the wooden lid. Then, kneeling down, I held my ear over the mouth, and listened. A sound like thunder—a horrible

rushing and roaring—came from below. I had no doubt now that the worst had happened.

The sea had entered the mine.

There was only one chance for those below, if by any possibility they survived. Someone must descend and make an inspection, even at the risk of his life; and, without a moment's hesitation, I determined to volunteer for the task. Strange to say, my head became quite cool and clear directly my resolve was made.

'Listen, lads!' I said. 'There's hope yet, and I'm going down.'

A faint cheer, mingled with a terrified murmur, greeted my announcement.

'It be no use, Measter!' cried Michael Penmaur. 'The ladders be clean gawn.'

'I know that,' I answered; 'but if we can get safely down to the middle platform, I can descend from there by a rope. Run down to

the office, some of you, and bring all the ropes and candles you can find.'

They rushed off cheering; and, turning to those who remained, I explained my plan. Several of them, Michael Penmaur among the number, agreed to descend with me to the platform, and to lower me thence down the bottom shaft. In less time than it takes to write these lines, the messengers returned with several coils of rope and candles; I stuck several of the latter about my person, and two or three in my wideawake hat. Then I was ready.

I had set my foot on the first rung of the ladder, and was about to descend, when Madeline bent over me.

'God bless you,' she cried, 'and bring you safe back!'

I reached up, and taking her hand pressed it to my lips.

'If he lives,' I said, 'I'll restore him to you, and to his mother. Don't cry, Miss Graham! There's a chance yet!'

I thought her tears fell for *him*, and yet, strange to say, she had my sympathy; all my wild jealousy seemed to have fallen from me like a discarded garment. What was my amazement therefore when, bending over me, she took my face between her two trembling hands, and kissed me on the forehead!

'God will bring you back!' she sobbed, and turned away.

Scarcely realising the significance of what had occurred, I descended rapidly, followed by Michael and the volunteers. As I went, the roar from below increased, and the solid rock on which the ladder was set seemed to shake as with an earthquake. In pitch darkness I reached the first platform.

Here I paused, and, striking a light, lit the

candles on my person. My companions did the same. The lurid light lit up their pale, anxious faces, and shot faint rays down into the mine.

'Now, then, lads!' I cried, descending the second stage of ladders. Some of these were very shaky, and I had to use great caution; but I knew the way blindfold, and all my old experience of the place stood me in good stead.

At last, with no harm done to anyone, we reached the central platform. Here the roar was deafening, and the solid rock seemed splitting with the sound.

I bent over the abyss, and held down the light, using my hand as a reflector. Sure enough, several of the ladders had broken away, leaving only the precipitous shaft, steep as the sides of a well. I strained my eyes into the darkness, and fancied I discerned, far beneath, something like the gleam of dashing

water! Then I shouted—but my shout was drowned in the subterranean tumult.

On the central platform was a windlass, with a portion of an old disused crane. Round this I passed one of the ropes, instructing the men to hold one end and gradually give way or draw in as I should direct. Then I took the other end, and fastened it securely under my arm-pits.

'It be naw use, Measter Hugh!' cried Michael Penmaur. 'Dawnt 'ee go. It be gawing to your death!'

But finding that I was not to be persuaded, the brave fellow wrung my hand, and promised to do his best to help me; nor were the others less kindly and sympathetic. As they lowered me over the platform, I partially supported myself against the slimy rocks; but the next moment I was suspended in air. Slowly, carefully, they let me down, the candles on my

person flickering and flaming, and lighting up the damp and oozy walls. At last, some twenty yards down, my foot rested on a ladder, descending which I reached the lowest platform of all.

Looking up, I saw far above me, as in a narrow frame, the faces of the men. I shouted to them, but they could not hear; but I waved a signal to them, and they answered back. Then I released myself from the rope, and prepared to look around.

Suddenly my foot struck against something soft, like a body; and, stooping down, light in hand, I saw two of the miners lying among the débris of the broken ladder, stone dead, and dreadfully disfigured. One was Jem Tredgar, a colossal young fellow from Penzance, six feet high, and weighing over fifteen stone. The fall had smashed him like an egg, and death had been instantaneous.

Full of a new horror, I leant over the platform and looked down. As I did so, my head went round, and I should have fallen had I not clutched again at the rope which swung loose, close to my hands.

Right under me, flooding the bottom of the mine, roared the sea, boiling backwards and forwards with wild pulsations along the shafts and galleries through which it had broken in. A salt spume rose from it, and the walls of the shaft were dripping and dashed with clots of foam. From the point where I stood, the last ladders had been entirely washed or broken away.

The roar was deafening, but I shouted with all my might. I paused and listened; no answer came.

Again I shouted; again I paused and listened.

Suddenly, from the darkness beneath, I heard a faint voice answering me.

My heart stood still. Then, with an effort, I shouted again.

The faint cry was repeated.

'Who's there?' I called; but the sound of my voice was blown away, and only the same faint cry came in answer.

I seized the rope, and, looking up to the men above me, pointed downward; they signalled, and seemed to understand. Then I secured the rope again under my arm-pits, and, signalling to them to give way, swung over the platform.

My instructions to the men had been simple. When I tugged once at the rope they were to lower away, when I tugged twice they were to stop lowering, when I tugged three times, sharply, they were to haul in. The further I descended, the greater grew my peril; for the

rope was not a strong one, and many of the outjutting points of rock were sharp enough to sever it by friction ; add to which, that the long swing at such a distance rendered it liable to break should there be anywhere a weak or rotten strand.

As I went down, I was conscious of flying spray and splashing water; and when I had descended some fifteen yards my feet touched the sea. However, I made no sign, but, entering the water, found myself waist-deep, but touching the bottom. Then I tugged twice at the rope, and looked about me.

The spot where I stood formed a sort of submerged shingle, sloping down to the deeper portions of the shafts and galleries. On every side the sea rushed and boiled. As I stood there, it surged up to my breast and extinguished the lights I carried on my person—only those

escaping which were stuck, miner-fashion, in my hat.

I shouted again, almost despairing of an answer. To my amaze, a voice answered close by, and, straining my eyes, I saw, crouching on a ledge of rock just flush with the water, two human figures.

One sat recumbent, with his head against the wall; the other lay senseless, resting his head on the first one's lap. More like gnomes or wild beasts they seemed, dripping wet, and covered with filth and ooze. But even in the faint light I recognised them.

The man sitting was my uncle, John Pendragon. The man lying senseless was George Redruth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TWO MEN.

'HUGH, my lad!' said my uncle, stretching out his hands.

I waded through the water till I came close to him.

'Ay, here I am!' I answered. 'Thank God you are safe: but *he* . . . is he dead or living?'

'Lawd knaws!' was the reply. 'He ha' lain like that these two hours, and I thought the waters were rising to wash us away.'

So loud was the thunder on every side of us, that we had to shout at each other in order to be heard; and even our shouts sounded

like mere whispers, though we were so close together.

I took a light from my hat, and reaching out of the water, looked into the young master's face. It was ghastly pale, but there was a mark on the temple, as of blood. I put my hand upon his heart, and discovered that it was faintly beating.

'He lives still,' I said; then, without more parley, I disengaged myself from the rope, and proceeded to make it fast to the senseless man. As I did so, the water almost swept me away, but I held on to the rock and kept my place. When the rope was firmly secured under George Redruth's arm-pits, I shook him sharply, and, to my joy, he opened his eyes, partially recovering from his torpor.

Then I touched the rope, and pointed upward, making signs that he was to be drawn up. He seemed scarcely to understand; but,

lifting him in my arms, I placed him in position, and then tugged three times, as a signal for the men to haul in.

There was a momentary pause; then the rope tightened, and the light body began slowly to ascend. Still waist-deep in the sea, I watched it journey upwards—lax and loose as a dead thing, now rasping against the damp walls, now quivering and turning round and round; till it passed the first platform. Far, far above it, I saw the faint gleam from the spot where the men were gathered. At last it disappeared from sight, and I knew that, if life lasted, George Redruth was saved!

Then I clambered on the ledge beside my uncle, who was still lying in the same position, with his head leaning back against the dripping wall.

I took his hands in mine, and pressed them eagerly. As I did so, I saw, to my horror,

that the breast of his mining-shirt was saturated with blood, that his face was ghastly white, and that there was on his lips a light stain of red.

'Are you hurt?' I said, with my lips close to his ear.

He inclined his head gently, and groaned as if in great pain.

It was neither the time nor the place to question him further; but I pressed his hand again in token of sympathy. Our eyes met, and his were full of some strange speechless sorrow.

Presently, I saw the rope descending, weighted with a small bar of iron; down it came till it touched the water's edge. I leapt down, and wading out, drew it towards the ledge.

'Uncle,' I cried, 'see!—it is your turn!'

And I pointed upward.

He shook his head feebly.

'Na, na, lad,' he said. 'Lea' me here to die!'

It was not to be thought of. Wildly, in dumb show, I besought him to make an effort to ascend, and at last he assented.

'I'll try, lad; I'll try!' he said. 'But I doubt my back be broke. A lump o' rock fell on me as I were carrying young master here.'

I looked at him in surprise. To tell the truth, I had had a wild suspicion, ever since the news of the accident, that it might have been caused by foul play on my uncle's part. I knew him to be mad with trouble, and if by any chance he had discovered young Redruth's guilt, God alone knew what he might have done. But if he spoke the truth, and I knew well that he was not a man to lie, I had deeply wronged him. Instead of attempting to destroy, he had actually imperilled his own

life to save the betrayer of his daughter's honour.

Gently and tenderly, I secured the rope around him, but he moaned with pain as I raised him to launch him upward. As the rope tightened, he uttered a cry of agony. However, it was too late to avoid the risk, and it was the last chance.

Supporting him in my arms as long as possible, I saw him drawn upward. When his full weight fell upon the rope his agony grew terrible, and I think he fainted away; for he hung in the air like a dead man, with limbs and arms pendent. I watched him rise slowly, and felt no little anxiety lest the rope should yield beneath his weight; for he was a heavy man, compared to whom George Redruth was a very feather.

However, the rope stood the test, and he was drawn safely up the abyss. After a long

interval, during which I waited in sickening terror, with the waters thundering and the rocks quaking around me, the rope again descended. I seized it, secured it under my arm-pits, and, giving the signal, was drawn upward.

On reaching the bottom platform, I rested a moment; then I signalled again, and rose once more into the air. By this time the lights in my hat were extinguished, and I was in total darkness; but as I gained the middle platform, half a dozen hands were stretched out to grasp me, till, tottering and trembling, I stood upon my feet.

Wildly and joyfully, the men surrounded me, almost kissing me in their rapture at my reappearance. I looked round for George Redruth. He had recovered from his faintness, they said, and had been helped by two of the men up to the mouth of the mine. But

lying on the platform, his head supported on Michael Penmaur's knee, was my uncle, white and bleeding, like a man whose time had come.

I knelt by his side, and took his hand. He looked up into my face; and I saw that his eyes were filmy and dim. The air of the mine, even up there, was fetid and foul, and I saw that he breathed with difficulty.

'Hugh, my lad!' he said, faintly. 'Come close—I want to whisper to 'ee. Can you forgive me?'

'Forgive you?' I cried, greatly moved. 'What have I to forgive?'

'Listen, lad, and I'll tell 'ee!'

He paused, his head fell back, and I thought that he was gone; but the next moment he recovered, and gazed into my face again. Just then the two men who had gone up with George Redruth re-descended, and one

of them held out to me a flask of brandy. I took it eagerly, and held it to my uncle's lips. He drank a little, and the spirit seemed to revive him.

'Hugh! are you thar, my lad?'

'Yes,' I answered, fairly sobbing.

'Is that your hand in mine?'

'Yes, yes!'

'Put down your head, and listen. I be dying, sure enough, and afore I die I want to ha' your forgiveness. They would ha' hung 'ee, lad, for what I did. 'Twas *I* that killed the overseer!'

I had guessed as much, but when the truth came from my uncle's own lips, I started in horror. He clutched my hand, as if fearing that I would shrink away.

''Twere all on account o' my Annie, my poor little lass. We met out on the cliff beyant the mine, and I taxed him wi' bringing her

trouble upon her, and he said summat that made me murdering mad. He said she were a light lass, light and bad; and, Lawd forgive me! afore I had time to think, I struck at 'un wi' my knife! Then he staggered back. . . . 'twere on the very edge of the crag . . . . and the earth seemed to give way under him, and he went o'er—screaming—he went o'er to his death, on the rocks below. That was how it cam' about! I didn't mean to kill 'un, but 'twere done like a flash o' lightning—and the next marning . . . . the next marning . . . . they found 'un lying, dead and bloody, on the shore.'

The confession came in stifled whispers, often so faint that I could scarcely hear; but other ears heard and understood it as well as mine, and when he ceased, a horrified murmur passed from man to man!

'May God forgive you!' I murmured, still bending over him.

He did not seem to hear me. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, his hand clutched mine like a vice. Suddenly he leant forward, drew his hand from mine, and pointed.

'See there!' he cried. 'Tis hisself all bloody, and beckoning wi' his finger. And wha be that standing by 'un, all in white? Annie! Annie, my lass! speak to father! speak to . . . . speak to . . . . father!'

The last word died away in his throat, where it met the death rattle; there was a struggle, a last convulsion, and he fell back like a lump of lead.

I think I too must have lost my senses for a time. The next thing I remember was standing in the open air, and staggering like a drunken man, with kindly arms supporting me on either

side. I looked round wildly. An excited crowd of women and men surrounded me; and close by, not far from the mine-mouth, the dead body of my uncle lay in the sunlight, with Annie and my aunt bending over it and bitterly weeping.

I sank down upon a rock, and hid my face. When I looked up again, I saw George Redruth and his mother standing near me, and with them Madeline.

The young master seemed quite himself, though greatly agitated.

'Trelawney,' he said, 'this is a sad affair. Well, I owe you my life.'

I looked him coldly in the face; his eyes sank beneath my gaze.

'No, sir,' I replied. 'You owe your life to the poor martyr lying yonder, and you know best what cause he had to love you!'

'You are right,' he said. 'He began the

task which you completed. When the outer rock gave way, and the sea rushed in upon us, I must have fainted; and Pendragon bore me to the place where you found me. I will take care that those he leaves behind are well rewarded.'

Again I looked him in the face.

'Too late for that,' I answered.

He returned my look, with something of the old dislike. All my spirit revolted against him, thinking of the sorrow he had wrought.

'It is well for you,' I said, 'that John Pendragon did not know what I know. Had he done so, perhaps he would have left you to the mercy of the sea.'

'What do you mean?' cried Redruth, turning pale as death.

'Ask your own heart. God has spared you, and taken a better man. Had you met with your deserts, you would be lying in his place.'

'Take care, Trelawney! I owe you my life, as I said, but——'

'You owe me nothing,' I returned. 'I helped you, as I would have helped my bitterest enemy, at such a moment. But now that it is done, I almost wish it were undone; and *you* know why!'

With an impatient exclamation, he turned away.

'Come, mother! Come, Madeline! You see how this fellow hates me. I would gladly own my debt to him, but it is useless. Perhaps, when he is cooler, he will permit me to be of service to him. If not—why, I cannot help it. Come!'

Mother and son walked slowly away, but Madeline did not stir. She remained where she had been, with her gentle eyes fixed on me.

George Redruth turned and saw her.

'Come, Madeline,' he cried; 'we are not wanted here.'

'I think *I* am wanted,' she replied. 'Mr. Trelawney, shall I go?'

And as she spoke she held out both her hands to me with a loving gesture. I looked at her in wonder. Then suddenly the whole meaning of her attitude dawned upon me, and, taking her hands with a joyful cry, I drew her to my bosom.

Pale and trembling, George Redruth returned and confronted us.

'Madeline, what does this mean?'

'It means that I have found my love where you found your life—in the arms of this brave man!'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

It was the supreme moment of my life; and, standing there before my darling, dazed and joyfully bewildered, with her beautiful face turned, radiant with love, on mine, well might I have echoed the ecstatic cry of the lover of lovers—

> If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate!

But the words which were bliss to me were gall and wormwood to the soul of George Redruth.

Livid with pain, he looked at her who uttered them; then, glancing round at the wild groups surrounding us, he said :

'You must be mad to speak like that. Trelawney, a word with *you*. There shall be an end to this once and for ever; come apart, and let us speak together!'

He walked a short distance along the cliffs, I following, with Madeline by my side. When we were out of earshot of any soul there, he turned and faced us. His self-control was now remarkable; a stranger, looking at him, and observing his manner, would never have gathered that he was a prey to the acutest suffering of mortified pride and passion.

'I might have guessed this from the first,' he said, in a low voice. 'You, Trelawney, always hated me—and, God knows, I returned the compliment! I can see now why you saved my life. To crush and humiliate me before my

cousin, over whose mind you have obtained some malign influence.'

I looked at him, but made no reply. He continued, with apparent calmness, addressing Madeline:

'I am to understand, then, that our engagement is at an end.'

'Yes,' she answered.

'Very well. You know as well as I what that means to me—ruin, perhaps disgrace; but I am not going to whine over the inevitable. Trelawney, I congratulate you,' he added, with a curious smile; 'you have won the game.'

He turned as if to go, but Madeline, with an impulsive cry, interposed.

'George, do not talk like that!' she cried. 'There is a chance yet of retrieving the past, and if you will do so, I shall still be your friend. It was not fated that I should ever be your wife; only one woman living has a right to that

title, and to your atonement. Let me go to her! Let me tell her that you will make amends!'

'I fail to understand you,' he answered, coldly. 'Of whom are you speaking?'

'Of Annie Pendragon, the poor girl whose heart you have nearly broken! You see I know everything. George—for my sake——'

His face darkened, while his lips twitched convulsively.

'How kind you are, how solicitous for my moral welfare! It is very good of you, I acknowledge, to offer to provide me with a helpmate, but I must politely decline your kind offices. Annie Pendragon is nothing to me. I am a gentleman, I believe: she is——'

'Take care!' I cried. 'Utter one word against her, at your peril. I do not ask you now to acknowledge her—it is too late for that; and even if it could be, I think she is better as she is, than she could ever become.

more closely united to a man like you. But she is sacred, and I forbid you even to utter her name.'

'You mistake my meaning,' he returned, still retaining his self-possession. 'All I was going to say was that we are not equals. I deeply regret what has occurred—I acknowledge my own folly—my own guilt, if you like it better; but from this time forth we are nothing to each other.'

'George, George!' cried my darling in despair. 'Have you no heart?'

'I suppose so; but blame yourself, if it is somewhat leaden on the present occasion. I am not used to humiliation, you see, and though I take my punishment as calmly as possible, I still feel it.'

I could have strangled him, he was so utterly cold-blooded.

'If there is justice,' I cried, 'God will punish

you! You have not only wrecked one life, but you have destroyed two others. Do you know that my uncle, God help him! confessed with his last breath that he had killed your accomplice, the man Johnson? That man's death, as well as John Pendragon's, lies at your door!'

He started in surprise, but conquered himself in a moment.

'I had my suspicions,' he said; 'but I was silent, for his daughter's sake! I fail to see, however, that I am responsible for the mad act of a murderer.'

'*You* are the murderer, not *he*,' I cried.

'Nonsense,' he answered; and still mastering himself, he walked away.

I turned and looked at Madeline. She was gazing after him, with a face pale as death.

'Madeline,' I said, 'do not think I am fallen so low as to presume upon the hasty

words you spoke just now. I know that, when this sorrowful day is over, you will forget them—you *must* forget them, in duty to yourself. It will be happiness enough for me to know that, when I most needed it, I had your sympathy: that if I had been other than I am, I might have had your love. And now, shall we say good-bye?'

I held out my hand to her; she gazed at me as if in wonder.

'Then you did not understand?' she said, gently. 'Or perhaps—you *did* understand, and I was mistaken in thinking that you cared for me—so much?'

'Care for you?' I repeated, passionately. 'Ever since I can remember, my heart, my whole life, has been yours. It is not *that*! My love, strong as it is, and ever has been, is not precious enough to purchase yours. Do not think that I am so lost, so selfish, as to

think that the distance been us can be bridged over by your heavenly pity. I am a poor man; you are a rich lady. I know what that means; I have known it from the beginning.'

As I spoke, my heart was so stirred that I had to turn my face aside to hide the gathering tears. But she crept close to me, and I felt the soft touch of her hand upon my arm.

'I do not blame you for thnking that,' she said. 'A little while ago I thought so too; but Hugh, dear—may I call you so? God has opened my eyes. I think I always loved you; but never so much as to-day.'

'Don't speak of it! It can't be! Oh, Madeline, let us say farewell!'

'Hugh, dear Hugh, listen! You *must* listen! Ah, do not be unkind!'

'Unkind—to *you*!' I murmured. 'God knows I would die for you!'

'Had you died down in the mine, I should

still have been faithful to you; I should never have loved another man. May I tell you the whole truth? I will, and you will understand. When I saw you going to your death—going, in your great goodness and noble courage, to save your enemy's life at the peril of your own —I knew for the first time that all my heart was yours. I did not deter you, but I prayed to God for you, and as I prayed, I swore before my God that, if He restored you to me I would lay my heart bare to you, and ask you to make me your wife. God was good; you came back, as from the grave. And now, will you turn away from me? Will you refuse me the one thing remaining that can make life sweet and sacred to me—your forgiveness and your love?'

It was too much. The spell of the old passion came upon me, as, sobbing and trembling, I took my darling to my heart.

Thus it came to pass that I, Hugh Trelawney, a man of the people, became the accepted lover of Madeline Graham. Looking back at it all now, after a lapse of so many years, it still seems an incredible thing, unreal and visionary; but raising my eyes from the paper whereon these lines are written, I see beside me the sweet assurance that it is true. When I began the story of my life, I said that it was also the story of my love. It has lasted so long; it will last, God willing, till death, and after death.

'Is it not so, my darling?' She smiles, and bends over me to kiss her answer. She watches the pen as it moves over the paper, and she waits for the last word, knowing my tale is almost done.

Love is by nature selfish; and in the first flush of my new joy I almost forgot the sorrow

in our poor home. But when I quitted my darling, and joined the little procession which followed my poor uncle across the heath, I reproached myself for having felt so happy.

The miners had procured a rude stretcher, often used when accidents took place in the mine, and the dead body was laid upon it, with a cloak thrown lightly over it to hide the piteous disfigured face set in its sad grey hair; but one hand hung uncovered, and this hand Annie held, as we walked slowly homeward, four of the men carrying the load. I followed, helping my aunt, who was simply heartbroken.

They bore him into the cottage, and women came to do the last sad offices. While they were thus occupied, I spoke to Annie, trying to console her. White as marble, and now quite tearless, she seemed like one whose reason had bereft her, under the weight of some violent physical blow. But when we went upstairs

together, and saw my uncle lying as if asleep, his white hair decently arranged, his face composed, his thin hands folded on his breast, his whole expression one of mysterious peace, she knelt beside him and kissed his cold brow, and her tears again flowed freely. My aunt stood beside her, weeping and looking on.

'God has taken him!' I said, solemnly. 'He is happy now.'

'Ay, happy wi' God,' sobbed my aunt. 'Forty year we ha' dwelt together i' this house, and he ne'er gave me angry look or crass word. He be gawn, where I'll soon gang too. Wait for me, my bonnie man, wait for me—wait for her that loves 'ee, and is coming to 'ee soon!'

Why should I linger over this scene of sorrow, why should I turn to other scenes which followed it? Time and Death have healed all those wounds; to speak of them, is to open them again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

A YEAR after the flooding of the mine and the death of John Pendragon, I married Madeline Graham. The ceremony took place quietly in London, whither we had gone together; and when it was over, we spent a brief honeymoon abroad. One spring morning, as I sat with my bride in an hotel by the lake of Geneva, I read in the 'Times' an announcement that filled my heart with surprise and pain. It was an advertisement of the approaching sale by auction of Redruth House, St. Gurlott's, Cornwall.

A short time before this the mining company

had passed into liquidation, and I knew that George Redruth was a ruined man. Little or no communication had passed between the cousins, but, when the crash came, Madeline, with my full consent and sympathy, had written to her aunt, offering her a considerable portion of her fortune for George Redruth's use and benefit. This offer had been refused. The next thing we had heard was that mother and son were living together in London, and closely following on that had come the news of the mother's death, an event which filled my darling with no little distress. To the last Mrs. Redruth had refused to forgive her niece, whom she unjustly held responsible for all the misfortunes which had fallen upon her son.

I showed my darling the newspaper, and we forthwith determined to journey down to Cornwall. Thus it happened that, about a week later, we arrived in St. Gurlott's where

we found Annie and my aunt ready to receive us at the old cottage. I then ascertained that George Redruth had left England for America, where he intended to remain. Annie, who was my informant, told me that before leaving the village he had sought her out to say farewell.

'And oh, Hugh,' she cried, 'he asked for my forgiveness, and I forgave him with all my heart. I think, if I had wished it, he would have taken me with him as his wife.'

'You did not wish it?'

She shook her head sadly.

'No, Hugh. After what has happened, it was impossible, and I know it was more in despair and pity, than in love, that he spoke. I scarcely knew him; no one would know him —he was like the ghost of his old self; so worn, so broken, with the trouble and shame which have come upon him, that my heart bled for him.'

'He is justly punished,' I said sadly. 'Annie, you did well. I am glad that he is penitent, but never in this world could you two have come together.'

The reader already knows that, through my darling's goodness, I was a rich man. Now, of all men living, perchance, I best knew the capabilities of the St. Gurlott's Mine. Reckless neglect and ignorance had wrecked it, and it was still to some extent at the mercy of the sea; but I had my own theory that more than one fortune was yet to be discovered there. I spoke to Madeline about it; we went into the matter *con amore*; and the result was an offer was made by me for the old claim to the official liquidator of the company. Things looked despairing, and as my offer was a liberal one, it was accepted. Within another year a fresh company was formed with Hugh Trelawney, Esq., as projector, vendor, and chief owner;

large sums were expended in the improvements, which, if carried out, would long before have saved the concern; the sea was gently persuaded to yield up possession; and before long the old mine was flourishing prosperously, a source of prosperity to all concerned in it, and of blessing to the whole population.

Another fact remains to be chronicled. We bought Redruth House, and it became our home. There my aunt and Annie joined us, dwelling happily with us, till, in due season, my aunt died. Annie lived on, and still lives, a pensive, gracious woman, full of one overshadowing memory, and devoted to our children. The last time she heard of George Redruth, he was a well-to-do merchant, living in the far-away West.

Thus, through the goodness of God, I remained in the old home, able to help those who

in time of need had helped me. St. Gurlott's is now a happy, thriving place: my dear wife is idolised by the simple people; and I, in the fulness of my fortunate days, am the Master of the Mine.

THE END.

S & H.

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