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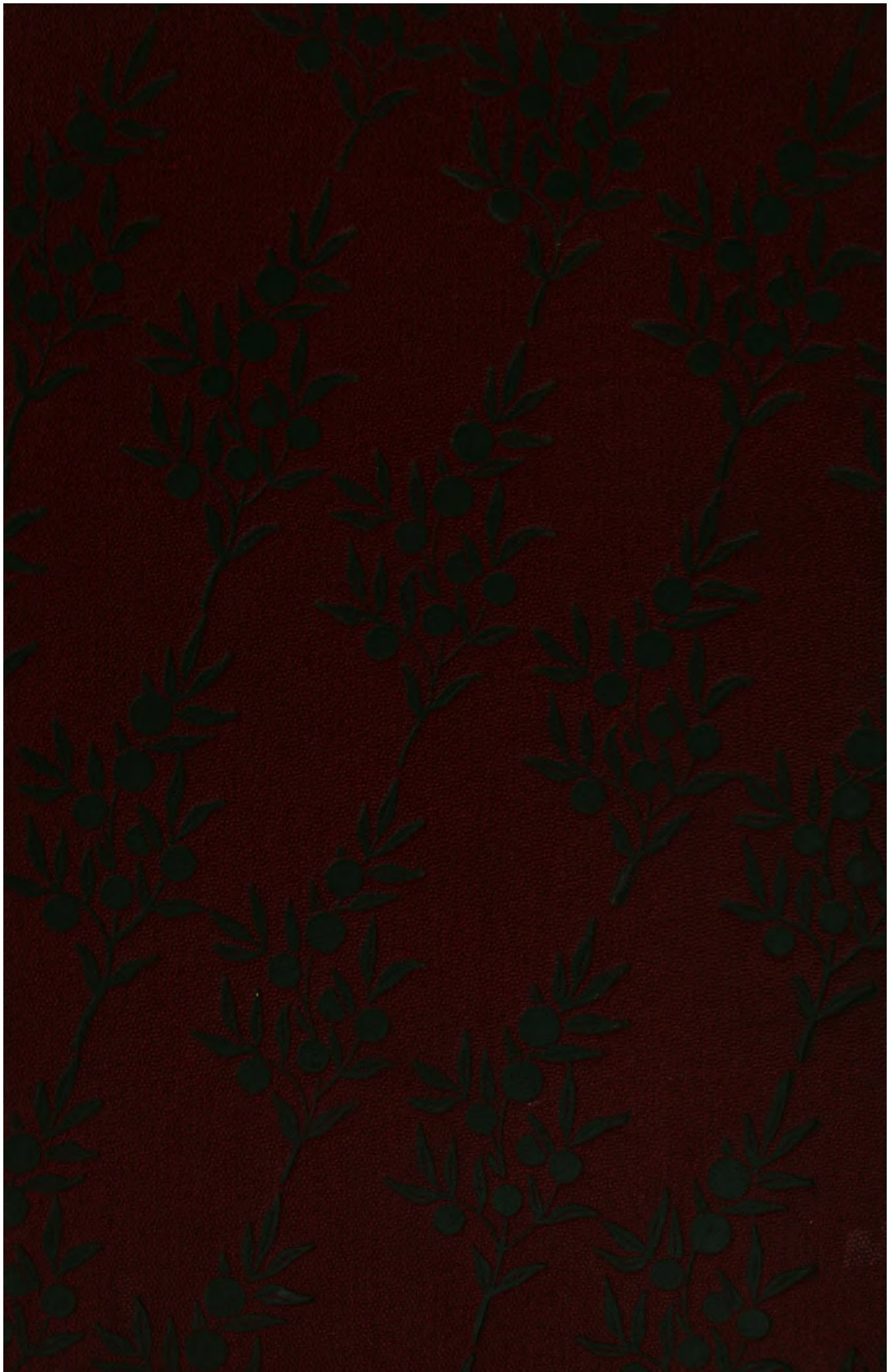
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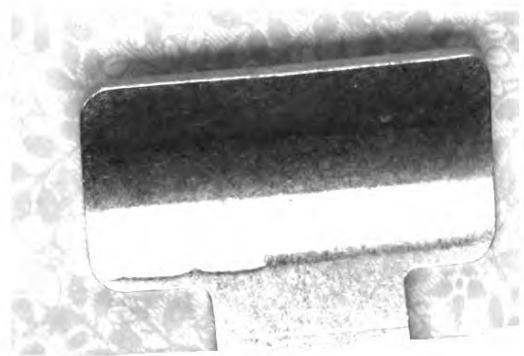
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# E V E

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
JOHN HERRING' 'MEHALAH' &c.



IN TWO VOLUMES

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# E V E.

## CHAPTER I.

### MORWELL.

THE river Tamar can be ascended by steamers as far as Morwell, one of the most picturesque points on that most beautiful river. There also, at a place called 'New Quay,' barges discharge their burdens of coal, bricks, &c, which thence are conveyed by carts throughout the neighbourhood. A new road, admirable as one of those of Napoleon's construction in France, gives access to this quay—a road constructed at the outlay of a Duke of Bedford, to whom belongs all the land that was once owned by the Abbey of Tavistock. This skilfully engineered road descends by zigzags from the elevated moorland on the Devon side of the Tamar, through dense woods of oak and fir, under crags of weathered rock wreathed with heather. From

the summit of the moor this road runs due north, past mine shafts and 'ramps,' or rubble heaps thrown out of the mines, and meets other roads uniting from various points under the volcanic peak of Brent Tor, that rises in solitary dignity out of the vast moor to the height of twelve hundred feet, and is crowned by perhaps the tiniest church in England.

Seventy or eighty years ago no such roads existed. The vast upland was all heather and gorse, with tracks across it. An old quay had existed on the river, and the ruins remained of the buildings about it erected by the abbots of Tavistock; but quay and warehouses had fallen into decay, and no barges came so far up the river.

The crags on the Devon side of the Tamar rise many hundred feet in sheer precipices, broken by gulfs filled with oak coppice, heather, and dogwood.

In a hollow of the down, half a mile from the oak woods and crags, with an ancient yew and Spanish chestnut before it, stood, and stands still, Morwell House, the hunting-lodge of the abbots of Tavistock, built where a moor-well—a spring of clear water—gushed from amidst the golden gorse brakes, and after a short course ran down the steep side of the hill, and danced into the Tamar.

Seventy or eighty years ago this house was in a better and worse condition than at present: worse, in that it was sorely dilapidated; better, in that it had not suffered tasteless modern handling to convert it into a farm with labourers' cottages. Even forty years ago the old banqueting hall and the abbot's parlour were intact. Now all has been restored out of recognition, except the gatehouse that opens into the quadrangle. In the interior of this old hall, on the twenty-fourth of June, just eighty years ago, sat the tenant: a tall, gaunt man with dark hair. He was engaged cleaning his gun, and the atmosphere was foul with the odour exhaled by the piece that had been recently discharged, and was now being purified. The man was intent on his work, but neither the exertion he used, nor the warmth of a June afternoon, accounted for the drops that beaded his brow and dripped from his face.

Once—suddenly—he placed the muzzle of his gun against his right side under the rib, and with his foot touched the lock. A quiver ran over his face, and his dim eyes were raised to the ceiling. Then there came from near his feet a feeble sound of a babe giving token with its lips that it was dreaming of food. The man sighed, and looked down at a cradle that was before him. He placed the gun between his

knees, and remained for a moment gazing at the child's crib, lost in a dream, with the evening sun shining through the large window and illumining his face. It was a long face with light blue eyes, in which lurked anguish mixed with cat-like treachery. The mouth was tremulous, and betrayed weakness.

Presently, recovering himself from his abstraction, he laid the gun across the cradle, from right to left, and it rested there as a bar sinister on a shield, black and ominous. His head sank in his thin shaking hands, and he bowed over the cradle. His tears or sweat, or tears and sweat combined, dropped as a salt rain upon the sleeping child, that gave so slight token of its presence.

All at once the door opened, and a man stood in the yellow light, like a mediæval saint against a golden ground. He stood there a minute looking in, his eyes too dazzled to distinguish what was within, but he called in a hard, sharp tone, 'Eve! where is Eve?'

The man at the cradle started up, showing at the time how tall he was. He stood up as one bewildered, with his hands outspread, and looked blankly at the new comer.

The latter, whose eyes were becoming accustomed to the obscurity, after a moment's pause repeated his question, 'Eve! where is Eve?'

The tall man opened his mouth to speak, but no words came.

‘Are you Ignatius Jordan?’

‘I am,’ he answered with an effort.

‘And I am Ezekiel Babb. I am come for my daughter.’

Ignatius Jordan staggered back against the wall, and leaned against it with arms extended and with open palms. The window through which the sun streamed was ancient; it consisted of two lights with a transom, and the sun sent the shadow of mullion and transom as a black cross against the further wall. Ignatius stood unconsciously spreading his arms against this shadow like a ghastly Christ on his cross. The stranger noticed the likeness, and said in his harsh tones, ‘Ignatius Jordan, thou hast crucified thyself.’ Then again, as he took a seat unmasked, ‘Eve! where is Eve?’

The gentleman addressed answered with an effort, ‘She is no longer here. She is gone.’

‘What!’ exclaimed Babb; ‘no longer here? She was here last week. Where is she now?’

‘She is gone,’ said Jordan in a low tone.

‘Gone!—her child is here. When will she return?’

‘Return!’—with a sigh—‘never.’

‘Cursed be the blood that flows in her veins!’ shouted the new comer. ‘Restless,

effervescing, fevered, fantastic! It is none of it mine, it is all her mother's.' He sprang to his feet and paced the room furiously, with knitted brows and clenched fists. Jordan followed him with his eye. The man was some way past the middle of life. He was strongly and compactly built. He wore a long dark coat and waistcoat, breeches, and blue worsted stockings. His hair was grey; his protruding eyebrows met over the nose. They were black, and gave a sinister expression to his face. His profile was strongly accentuated, hawklike, greedy, cruel.

'I see it all,' he said, partly to himself; 'that cursed foreign blood would not suffer her to find rest even here, where there is prosperity. What is prosperity to her? What is comfort? Bah! all her lust is after tinsel and tawdry.' He raised his arm and clenched fist. 'A life accursed of God! Of old our forefathers, under the righteous Cromwell, rose up and swept all profanity out of the land, the jesters, and the carol singers, and theatrical performers, and pipers and tumblers. But they returned again to torment the elect. What saith the Scripture? Make no marriage with the heathen, else shall ye be unclean, ye and your children.'

He reseated himself. 'Ignatius Jordan,' he said, 'I was mad and wicked when I took her



mother to wife ; and a mad and wicked thing you did when you took the daughter. As I saw you just now—as I see you at present—standing with spread arms against the black shadow cross from the window, I thought it was a figure of what you chose for your lot when you took my Eve. I crucified myself when I married her mother, and now the iron enters your side.’ He paused ; he was pointing at Ignatius with out-thrust finger, and the shadow seemed to enter Ignatius against the wall. ‘The blood that begins to flow will not cease to run till it has all run out.’

Again he paused. The arms of Jordan fell.

‘So she has left you,’ muttered the stranger, ‘she has gone back to the world, to its pomps and vanities, its lusts, its lies, its laughter. Gone back to the players and dancers.’

Jordan nodded ; he could not speak.

‘Dead to every call of duty,’ Babb continued, with a scowl on his brow, ‘dead to everything but the cravings of a cankered heart ; dead to the love of lawful gain ; alive to wantonness, and music, and glitter. Sit down, and I will tell you the story of my folly, and you shall tell me the tale of yours.’ He looked imperiously at Jordan, who sank into his chair beside the cradle.

‘I will light my pipe.’ Ezekiel Babb struck

a light with flint and steel. 'We have made a like experience, I with the mother, you with the daughter. Why are you downcast? Rejoice if she has set you free. The mother never did that for me. Did you marry her?'

The pale man opened his mouth, and spread out, then clasped, his hands nervously, but said nothing.

'I am not deaf that I should be addressed in signs,' said Babb. 'Did you marry my daughter?'

'No.'

'The face of heaven was turned on you,' said Babb, discontentedly, 'and not on me. I committed myself, and could not break off the yoke. I married.'

The child in the cradle began to stir. Jordan rocked it with his foot.

'I will tell you all,' the visitor continued. 'I was a young man when I first saw Eve—not your Eve, but her mother. I had gone into Totnes, and I stood by the cloth market at the gate to the church. It was the great fair-day. There were performers in the open space before the market. I had seen nothing like it before. What was performed I do not recall. I saw only her. I thought her richly, beautifully dressed. Her beauty shone forth above all. She had hair like chestnut, and brown

eyes, a clear, thin skin, and was formed delicately as no girl of this country and stock. I knew she was of foreign blood. A carpet was laid in the market-place, and she danced on it to music. It was like a flame flickering, not a girl dancing. She looked at me out of her large eyes, and I loved her. It was witchcraft, the work of the devil. The fire went out of her eyes and burnt to my marrow; it ran in my veins. That was witchcraft, but I did not think it then. There should have been a heap of wood raised and fired, and she cast into the flames. But our lot is fallen in evil days. The word of the Lord is no longer precious, and the Lord has said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." That was witchcraft. How else was it that I gave no thought to Tamsine Bovey, of Buncombe, till it was too late, though Buncombe joins my land, and so Buncombe was lost to me for ever? Quiet that child if you want to hear more. Hah! Your Eve has deserted you and her babe, but mine had not the good heart to leave me.'

The child in the cradle whimpered. The pale man lifted it out, got milk and fed it, with trembling hand, but tenderly, and it dozed off in his arms.

'A girl?' asked Babb. Jordan nodded.

'Another Eve—a third Eve?' Jordan

nodded again. 'Another generation of furious, fiery blood to work confusion, to breed desolation. When will the earth open her mouth and swallow it up, that it defile no more the habitations of Israel?'

Jordan drew the child to his heart, and pressed it so passionately that it woke and cried.

'Still the child or I will leave the house,' said Ezekiel Babb. 'You would do well to throw a wet cloth over its mouth, and let it smother itself before it work woe on you and others. When it is quiet, I will proceed.' He paused. When the cries ceased he went on: 'I watched Eve as she danced. I could not leave the spot. Then a rope was fastened and stretched on high, and she was to walk that. A false step would have dashed her to the ground. I could not bear it. When her foot was on the ladder, I uttered a great cry and ran forward; I caught her, I would not let her go. I was young then.' He remained silent, smoking, and looking frowningly before him. 'I was not a converted man then. Afterwards, when the word of God was precious to me, and I saw that I might have had Tamsine Bovey, and Buncombe, then I was sorry and ashamed. But it was too late. The eyes of the unrighteous are sealed. I was a fool. I married that dancing girl.'

He was silent again, and looked moodily at his pipe.

‘I have let the fire die out,’ he said, and rekindled as before. ‘I cannot deny that she was a good wife. But what availed it me to have a woman in the house who could dance like a feather, and could not make scald cream? What use to me a woman who brought the voice of a nightingale with her into the house, but no money? She knew nothing of the work of a household. She had bones like those of a pigeon, there was no strength in them. I had to hire women to do her work, and she was thriftless and thoughtless, so the money went out when it should have come in. Then she bore me a daughter, and the witchery was not off me, so I called her Eve—that is your Eve, and after that she gave me sons, and then’—angrily—‘then, when too late, she died. Why did she not die half a year before Tamsine Bovey married Joseph Warmington? If she had, I might still have got Buncombe—now it is gone, gone for ever.’

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and put it into his pocket.

‘Eve was her mother’s darling; she was brought up like a heathen to love play and pleasure, not work and duty. The child sucked in her mother’s nature with her mother’s milk.

When the mother died, Eve—your Eve—was a grown girl, and I suppose home became unendurable to her. One day some play actors passed through the place on their way from Exeter, and gave a performance in our village. I found that my daughter, against my command, went to see it. When she came home, I took her into the room where is my great Bible, and I beat her. Then she ran away, and I saw no more of her; whether she went after the play actors or not I never inquired.'

'Did you not go in pursuit?'

'Why should I? She would have run away again. Time passed, and the other day I chanced to come across a large party of strollers, when I was in Plymouth on business. Then I learned from the manager about my child, and so, for the first time, heard where she was. Now tell me how she came here.'

Ignatius Jordan raised himself in his chair, and swept back the hair that had fallen over his bowed face and hands.

'It is passed and over,' he said.

'Let me hear all. I must know all,' said Babb. 'She is my daughter. Thanks be, that we are not called to task for the guilt of our children. The soul that sinneth it shall surely die. She had light and truth set before her on one side as surely as she had darkness and

lies on the other, Ebal and Gerizim, and she went after Ebal. It was in her blood. She drew it of her mother. One vessel is for honour—such am I; another for dishonour—such are all the Eves from the first to the last, that in your arms. Vessels of wrath, ordained to be broken. Ah! you may cherish that little creature in your arms. You may strain it to your heart, you may wrap it round with love, but it is in vain that you seek to save it, to shelter it. It is wayward, wanton, wicked clay; ordained from eternity to be broken. I stood between the first Eve and the shattering that should have come to her. That is the cause of all my woes. Where is the second Eve? Broken in soul, broken may-be in body. There lies the third, ordained to be broken.’ He folded his arms, was silent a while, and then said: ‘Tell me your tale. How came my daughter to your house?’

## CHAPTER II.

## THE LITTLE MOTHER.

‘LAST Christmas twelve month,’ said Ignatius Jordan slowly, ‘I was on the moor—Morwell Down it is called. Night was falling. The place—where the road comes along over the down, from Beer Alston and Beer Ferris. I dare say you came along it, you took boat from Plymouth to Beer Ferris, and thence the way runs—the packmen travel it—to the north to Launceston. It was stormy weather, and the snow drove hard; the wind was so high that a man might hardly face it. I heard cries for help. I found a party of players who were on their way to Launceston, and were caught by the storm and darkness on the moor. They had a sick girl with them——’ His voice broke down.

‘Eve?’ asked Ezekiel Babb.

Jordan nodded. After a pause he recovered himself and went on. ‘She could walk no



further, and the party was distressed, not knowing whither to go or what to do. I invited them to come here. The house is large enough to hold a score of people. Next day I set them on their way forward, as they were pressed to be at Launceston for the Christmas holidays. But the girl was too ill to proceed, and I offered to let her remain here till she recovered. After a week had passed the actors sent here from Launceston to learn how she was, and whether she could rejoin them, as they were going forward to Bodmin, but she was not sufficiently recovered. Then, a month later, they sent again, but though she was better I would not let her go. After that we heard no more of the players. So she remained at Morwell, and I loved her, and she became my wife.'

'You said that you did not marry her.'

'No, not exactly. This is a place quite out of the world, a lost, unseen spot. I am a Catholic, and no priest comes this way. There is the ancient chapel here where the Abbot of Tavistock had mass in the old time. It is bare, but the altar remains, and though no priest ever comes here, the altar is a Catholic altar. Eve and I went into the old chapel and took hands before the altar, and I gave her a ring, and we swore to be true to each other'—his voice shook, and then a sob broke from his

breast. 'We had no priest's blessing on us, that is true. But Eve would never tell me what her name was, or whence she came. If we had gone to Tavistock or Brent Tor to be married by a Protestant minister, she would have been forced to tell her name and parentage, and that, she said, nothing would induce her to do. It mattered not, we thought. We lived here out of the world, and to me the vow was as sacred when made here as if confirmed before a minister of the established religion. We swore to be all in all to each other.'

He clasped his hands on his knees, and went on with bent head: 'But the play actors returned and were in Tavistock last week, and one of them came up here to see her, not openly, but in secret. She told me nothing, and he did not allow me to see him. She met him alone several times. This place is solitary and sad, and Eve of a lively nature. She tired of being here. She wearied of me.'

Babb laughed bitterly. 'And now she is flown away with a play-actor. As she deserted her father, she deserts her husband and child, and the house that housed her. See you,' he put out his hand and grasped the cradle: 'Here lies vanity of vanities, the pomps of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, nestled in that crib, that self-same strain of

leaping, headlong, wayward blood, that never will rest till poured out of the veins and rolled down into the ocean, and lost—lost—lost !’

Jordan sprang from his seat with a gasp and a stifled cry, and fell back against the wall.

Babb stooped over the cradle and plucked out the child. He held it in the sunlight streaming through the window, and looked hard at it. Then he danced it up and down with a scoffing laugh.

‘See, see!’ he cried; ‘see how the creature rejoices and throws forth its arms. Look at the shadow on the wall, as of a Salamander swaying in a flood of fire. Ha! Eve—blood! wanton blood! I will crucify thee too!’ He raised the babe aloft against the black cross made by the shadow of the mullion and transom, as the child had thrown up its tiny arms.

‘See,’ he exclaimed, ‘the child hangs also!’

Ignatius Jordan seized the babe, snatched it away from the rude grasp of Babb, clasped it passionately to his breast, and covered it with kisses. Then he gently replaced it, crowing and smiling, in its cradle, and rocked it with his foot.

‘You fool!’ said Babb; ‘you love the strange blood in spite of its fickleness and falseness. I will tell you something further. When I heard from the players that Eve was

here, at Morwell, I did not come on at once, because I had business that called me home. But a fortnight after I came over Dartmoor to Tavistock. I did not come, as you supposed, up the river to Beer Ferris and along the road over your down; no, I live at Buckfastleigh by Ashburton, right away to the east across Dartmoor. I came thence as far as Tavistock, and there I found the players once more, who had come up from Plymouth to make sport for the foolish and ungodly in Tavistock. They told me that they had heard you lived with my Eve, and had not married her, so I did not visit you, but waited about till I could speak with her alone, and I sent a message to her by one of the players that I was wanting a word with her. She came to me at the place I had appointed once—ay! and twice—and she feigned to grieve that she had left me, and acted her part well as if she loved me—her father. I urged her to leave you and come back to her duty and her God and to me, but she would promise nothing. Then I gave her a last chance. I told her I would meet her finally on that rocky platform that rises as a precipice above the river, last night, and there she should give me her answer.'

Ignatius Jordan's agitation became greater,

his lips turned livid, his eyes were wide and staring as though with horror, and he put up his hands as if warding off a threatened blow.

‘ You—you met her on the Raven Rock ? ’

‘ I met her there twice, and I was to have met her there again last night, when she was to have given me her final answer, what she would do—stay here, and be lost eternally, or come back with me to Salvation. But I was detained, and I could not keep the engagement, so I sent one of the player-men to inform her that I would come to-day instead. So I came on to-day, as appointed, and she was not there, not on the Raven Rock, as you call it, and I have arrived here,—but I am too late.’

Jordan clasped his hands over his eyes and moaned. The babe began to wail.

‘ Still the yowl of that child ! ’ exclaimed Babb. ‘ I tell you this as a last instance of her perfidy.’ He raised his voice above the cry of the child. ‘ What think you was the reason she alleged why she would not return with me at once—why did she ask time to make up her mind ? She told me that you were a Catholic, she told me of the empty, worthless vow before an old popish altar in a deserted chapel, and I knew her soul would be lost if she remained with you ; you would drag her into idolatry.

And I urged her, as she hoped to escape hell fire, to flee Morwell and not cast a look behind, desert you and the babe and all for the Zoar of Buckfastleigh. But she was a dissembler. She loved neither me nor you nor her child. She loved only idleness and levity, and the butterfly career of a player, and some old sweetheart among the play company. She has gone off with him. Now I wipe my hands of her altogether.'

Jordan swayed himself, sitting as one stunned, with an elbow on each knee and his head in the hollow of his hands.

'Can you not still the brat?' cried Ezekiel Babb; 'now that the mother is gone, who will be the mother to it?'

'I—I—I!' the cry of an eager voice. Babb looked round, and saw a little girl of six, with grey eyes and dark hair, a quaint, premature woman, in an old, long, stiff frock. Her little arms were extended; 'Baby-sister!' she called, 'don't cry!' She ran forward, and, kneeling by the cradle, began to caress and play with the infant.

'Who is this?' asked Ezekiel.

'My Barbara,' answered Ignatius in a low tone; 'I was married before, and my wife died, leaving me this little one.'

The child, stooping over the cradle, lifted

the babe carefully out. The infant crowed and made no resistance, for the arms that held it, though young, were strong. Then Barbara seated herself on a stool, and laid the infant on her lap, and chirped and snapped her fingers and laughed to it, and snuggled her face into the neck of the babe. The latter quivered with excitement, the tiny arms were held up, the little hands clutched in the child's long hair and tore at it, and the feet kicked with delight. 'Father! father!' cried Barbara, 'see little Eve; she is dancing and singing.'

'Dancing and singing!' echoed Ezekiel Babb, 'that is all she ever will do. She comes dancing and singing into the world, and she will go dancing and singing out of it—and then—then,' he brushed his hand through the air, as though drawing back a veil. The girl-nurse looked at the threatening old man with alarm.

'Keep the creature quiet,' he said, impatiently; 'I cannot sit here and see the ugly, evil sight. Dancing and singing! she begins like her mother, and her mother's mother. Take her away, the sight of her stirs my bile.'

At a sign from the father Barbara rose, and carried the child out of the room, talking to it fondly, and a joyous chirp from the little

one was the last sound that reached Babb's ears as the door shut behind them.

'Naught but evil has the foreign blood, the tossing fever-blood, brought me. First it came without a dower, and that was like original sin. Then it prevented me from marrying Tamsine Bovey and getting Buncombe. That was like sin of malice. Now Tamsine is dead and her husband, Joseph Warmington, wants to sell. I did not want Tamsine, but I wanted Buncombe; at one time I could not see how Buncombe was to be had without Tamsine. Now the property is to be sold, and it joins on to mine as if it belonged to it. What Heaven has joined together let not man put asunder. It was wicked witchcraft stood in the way of my getting my rightful own.'

'How could it be your rightful own?' asked Ignatius; 'was Tamsine Bovey your kinswoman?'

'No, she was not, but she ought to have been my wife, and so Buncombe have come to me. I seem as if I could see into the book of the Lord's ordinance that so it was written. There's some wonderful good soil in Buncombe. But the Devil allured me with his Eve, and I was bewitched by her beautiful eyes and little hands and feet. Cursed be the day that shut me out of Buncombe. Cursed be the strange



blood that ran as a dividing river between Owlacombe and Buncombe, and cut asunder what Providence ordained to be one. I tell you,' he went on fiercely, 'that so long as all that land remains another's and not mine, so long shall I feel only gall, and no pity nor love, for Eve, and all who have issued from her—for all who inherit her name and blood. I curse——' his voice rose to a roar, and his grey hair bristled like the fell of a wolf, 'I curse them all with——'

The pale man, Jordan, rushed at him and thrust his hand over his mouth.

'Curse not,' he said vehemently; then in a subdued tone, 'Listen to reason, and you will feel pity and love for my little one who inherits the name and blood of your Eve. I have laid by money: I am in no want. It shall be the portion of my little Eve, and I will lend it you for seventeen years. This day, the 24th of June, seventeen years hence, you shall repay me the whole sum without interest. I am not a Jew to lend on usury. I shall want the money then for my Eve, as her dower. *She*'—he held up his head for a moment—'*she* shall not be portionless. In the mean time take and use the money, and when you walk over the fields you have purchased with it,—bless the name.'

A flush came in the sallow face of Ezekiel

Babb. He rose to his feet and held out his hand.

‘You will lend me the money, two thousand pounds?’

‘I will lend you fifteen hundred.’

‘I will swear to repay the sum in seventeen years. You shall have a mortgage.’

‘On this day.’

‘This 24th day of June, so help me God.’

A ray of orange light, smiting through the window, was falling high up the wall. The hands of the men met in the beam, and the reflexion was cast on their faces,—on the dark hard face of Ezekiel, on the white quivering face of Ignatius.

‘And you bless,’ said the latter, ‘you bless the name of Eve, and the blood that follows it.’

‘I bless. Peace be to the restless blood.’

## CHAPTER III.

## THE WHISH-HUNT.

ON a wild and blustering evening, seventeen years after the events related in the two preceding chapters, two girls were out, in spite of the fierce wind and gathering darkness, in a little gig that accommodated only two, the body perched on very large and elastic springs. At every jolt of the wheels the body bounced and swayed in a manner likely to trouble a bad sailor. But the girls were used to the motion of the vehicle, and to the badness of the road. They drove a very sober cob, who went at his leisure, picking his way, seeing ruts in spite of the darkness.

The moor stretched in unbroken desolation far away on all sides but one, where it dropped to the gorge of the Tamar, but the presence of this dividing valley could only be guessed, not perceived by the crescent moon. The distant Cornish moorland range of Hingston and the

dome of Kit Hill seemed to belong to the tract over which the girls were driving.

These girls were Barbara and Eve Jordan. They had been out on a visit to some neighbours, if those can be called neighbours who lived at a distance of five miles, and were divided from Morwell by a range of desolate moor. They had spent the day with their friends, and were returning home later than they had intended.

‘I do not know what father would say to our being abroad so late, and in the dark, unattended,’ said Eve, ‘were he at home. It is well he is away.’

‘He would rebuke me, not you,’ said Barbara.

‘Of course he would ; you are the elder, and responsible.’

‘But I yielded to your persuasion.’

‘Yes, I like to enjoy myself when I may. It is vastly dull at Morwell. Tell me, Bab, did I look well in my figured dress?’

‘Charming, darling ; you always are that.’

‘You are a sweet sister,’ said Eve, and she put her arm round Barbara, who was driving.

Mr. Jordan, their father, was tenant of the Duke of Bedford. The Jordans were the oldest tenants on the estate, which had come to the Russells on the sequestration of the abbey.

The Jordans had been tenants under the abbot, and they remained on after the change of religion and owners, without abandoning their religion or losing their position. The Jordans were not accounted squires, but were reckoned as gentry. They held Morwell on long leases of ninety-nine years, regularly renewed when the leases lapsed. They regarded Morwell House almost as their freehold; it was bound up with all their family traditions and associations.

As a vast tract of country round belonged to the duke, it was void of landed gentry residing on their estates, and the only families of education and birth in the district were those of the parsons, but the difference in religion formed a barrier against intimacy with these. Mr. Jordan, moreover, was living under a cloud. It was well-known throughout the country that he had not been married to Eve's mother, and this had caused a cessation of visits to Morwell. Moreover, since the disappearance of Eve's mother, Mr. Jordan had become morose, reserved, and so peculiar in his manner, that it was doubted whether he were in his right mind.

Like many a small country squire, he farmed the estate himself. At one time he had been accounted an active farmer, and was credited

with having made a great deal of money, but for the last seventeen years he had neglected agriculture a good deal, to devote himself to mineralogical researches. He was convinced that the rocks were full of veins of metal—silver, lead, and copper, and he occupied himself in searching for the metals in the wood, and on the moor, sinking pits, breaking stones, washing and melting what he found. He believed that he would come on some vein of almost pure silver or copper, which would make his fortune. Bitten with this craze, he neglected his farm, which would have gone to ruin had not his eldest daughter, Barbara, taken the management into her own hands.

Mr. Jordan was quite right in believing that he lived on rocks rich with metal: the whole land is now honeycombed with shafts and adits: but he made the mistake in thinking that he could gather a fortune out of the rocks unassisted, armed only with his own hammer, drawing only out of his own purse. His knowledge of chemistry and mineralogy was not merely elementary, but incorrect; he read old books of science mixed up with the fantastic alchemical notions of the middle ages, believed in the sympathies of the planets with metals, and in the virtues of the divining rod.

‘Does a blue or a rose ribbon suit my hair

best, Bab?' asked Eve. 'You see my hair is chestnut, and I doubt me if pink suits the colour so well as forget-me-not.'

'Every ribbon of every hue agrees with Eve,' said Barbara.

'You are a darling.' The younger girl made an attempt to kiss her sister, in return for the compliment.

'Be careful,' said Barbara, 'you will upset the gig.'

'But I love you so much when you are kind.'

'Am not I always kind to you, dear?'

'O yes, but sometimes much kinder than at others.'

'That is, when I flatter you.'

'O, if you call it flattery——' said Eve, pouting.

'No—it is plain truth, my dearest.'

'Bab,' broke forth the younger suddenly, 'do you not think Bradstone a charming house? It is not so dull as ours.'

'And the Cloberrys—you like them?'

'Yes, dear, very much.'

'Do you believe that story about Oliver Cloberry, the page?'

'What story?'

'That which Grace Cloberry told me.'

‘I was not with you in the lanes when you were talking together. I do not know it.’

‘Then I will tell you. Listen, Bab, and shiver.’

‘I am shivering in the cold wind already.’

‘Shiver more shiveringly still. I am going to curdle your blood.’

‘Go on with the story, but do not squeeze up against me so close, or I shall be pushed out of the gig.’

‘But, Bab, I am frightened to tell the tale.’

‘Then do not tell it.’

‘I want to frighten you.’

‘You are very considerate.’

‘We share all things, Bab, even our terrors. I am a loving sister. Once I gave you the measles. I was too selfish to keep it all to myself. Are you ready? Grace told me that Oliver Cloberry, the eldest son, was page boy to John Copplestone, of Warleigh, in Queen Elizabeth’s reign, you know—wicked Queen Bess, who put so many Catholics to death. Squire Copplestone was his godfather, but he did not like the boy, though he was his godchild and page. The reason was this: he was much attached to Joan Hill, who refused him and married Squire Cloberry, of Bradstone, instead. The lady tried to keep friendly with



her old admirer, and asked him to stand godfather to her first boy, and then to take him as his page; but Coplestone was a man who long bore a grudge, and the boy grew up the image of his father, and so—Coplestone hated him. One day, when Coplestone was going out hunting, he called for his stirrup cup, and young Cloberry ran and brought it him. But as the squire raised the wine to his lips he saw a spider in it; and in a rage he dashed the cup and the contents in the face of the boy. He hit Oliver Cloberry on the brow, and when the boy staggered to his feet, he muttered something. Coplestone heard him, and called to him to speak out, if he were not a coward. Then the lad exclaimed, "Mother did well to throw you over for my father." Some who stood by laughed, and Coplestone flared up; the boy, afraid at what he had said, turned to go, then Coplestone threw his hunting dagger at him, and it struck him in the back, entered his heart, and he fell dead. Do you believe this story, Bab?'

'There is some truth in it, I know. Prince, in his "Worthies," says that Coplestone only escaped losing his head for the murder by the surrender of thirteen manors.'

'That is not all,' Eve continued; 'now comes the creepy part of the story. Grace

Cloberry told me that every stormy night the Whish Hounds run over the downs, breathing fire, pursuing Coplestone, from Warleigh to Bradstone, and that the murdered boy is mounted behind Coplestone, and stabs him in the back all along the way. Do you believe this?’

‘Most assuredly not.’

‘Why should you not, Bab? Don’t you think that a man like Coplestone would be unable to rest in his grave? Would not that be a terrible purgatory for him to be hunted night after night? Grace told me that old Squire Cloberry rides and blows his horn to egg-on the Whish Hounds, and Coplestone has a black horse, and he strikes spurs into its sides when the boy stabs him in the back, and screams with pain. When the Judgment Day comes, then only will his rides be over. I am sure I believe it all, Bab. It is so horrible.’

‘It is altogether false, a foolish superstition.’

‘Look there, do you see, Bab, we are at the white stone with the cross cut in it that my father put up where he first saw my mother. Is it not strange that no one knows whence my mother came? You remember her just a little. Whither did my mother go?’

‘I do not know, Eve.’

‘There, again, Bab. You who sneer and

toss your chin when I speak of anything out of the ordinary, must admit this to be passing wonderful. My mother came, no one knows whence; she went, no one knows whither. After that, is it hard to believe in the Whish Hounds and Black Coplestone?’

‘The things are not to be compared.’

‘Your mother was buried at Buckland, and I have seen her grave. You know that her body is there, and that her soul is in heaven. But as for mine, I do not even know whether she had a human soul.’

‘Eve! What do you mean?’

‘I have read and heard tell of such things. She may have been a wood-spirit, an elf-maid. Whoever she was, whatever she was, my father loved her. He loves her still. I can see that. He seems to me to have her ever in his thoughts.’

‘Yes,’ said Barbara sadly, ‘he never visits my mother’s grave; I alone care for the flowers there.’

‘I can look into his heart,’ said Eve. ‘He loves me so dearly because he loved my mother dearer still.’

Barbara made no remark to this.

Then Eve, in her changeful mood, went back to the former topic of conversation.

‘Think, think, Bab! of Black Coplestone

riding nightly over these wastes on his black mare, with her tail streaming behind, and the little page standing on the crupper, stabbing, stabbing, stabbing; and the Whish Hounds behind, giving tongue, and Squire Cloberry in the rear urging them on with his horn. O Bab! I am sure father believes in this. I should die of fear were Coplestone hunted by dogs to pass this way. Hold! Hark!' she almost screamed.

The wind was behind them; they heard a call, then the tramp of horses' feet.

Barbara even was for the moment startled, and drew the gig aside, off the road upon the common. A black cloud had rolled over the sickle of the moon, and obscured its feeble light. Eve could neither move nor speak. She quaked at Barbara's side like an aspen.

In another moment dark figures of men and horses were visible, advancing at full gallop along the road. The dull cob the sisters were driving plunged, backed, and was filled with panic. Then the moon shone out, and a faint, ghastly light fell on the road, and they could see the black figures sweeping along. There were two horses, one some way ahead of the other, and two riders, the first with slouched hat. But what was that crouched on the crupper, clinging to the first rider?

As he swept past, Eve distinguished the imp-like form of a boy. That wholly unnerved her. She uttered a piercing shriek, and clasped her hands over her eyes.

The first horse had passed, the second was abreast of the girls when that cry rang out. The horse plunged, and in a moment horse and rider crashed down, and appeared to dissolve into the ground.

## CHAPTER IV.

## EVE'S RING.

SOME moments elapsed before Barbara recovered her surprise, then she spoke a word of encouragement to Eve, who was in an ecstasy of terror, and tried to disengage herself from her arms, and master the frightened horse sufficiently to allow her to descend. A thorn tree tortured by the winds stood solitary at a little distance, at a mound which indicated the presence of a former embankment. Barbara brought the cob and gig to it, there descended, and fastened the horse to the tree. Then she helped her sister out of the vehicle.

‘Do not be alarmed, Eve. There is nothing here supernatural to dismay you, only a pair of farmers who have been drinking, and one has tumbled off his horse. We must see that he has not broken his neck.’ But Eve clung to her in frantic terror, and would not allow her to disengage herself. In the mean time, by the

sickle moon, now sailing clear of the clouds, they could see that the first rider had reined in his horse and turned.

‘Jasper!’ he called, ‘what is the matter?’

No answer came. He rode back to the spot where the second horse had fallen, and dismounted.

‘What has happened?’ screamed the boy. ‘I must get down also.’

The man who had dismounted pointed to the white stone and said, ‘Hold the horse and stay there till you are wanted. I must see what cursed mischance has befallen Jasper.’

Eve was somewhat reassured at the sound of human voices, and she allowed Barbara to release herself, and advance into the road.

‘Who are you?’ asked the horseman.

‘Only a girl. Can I help? Is the man hurt?’

‘Hurt, of course. He hasn’t fallen into a feather bed, or—by good luck—into a furze brake.’

The horse that had fallen struggled to rise.

‘Out of the way,’ said the man, ‘I must see that the brute does not trample on him.’ He helped the horse to his feet; the animal was much shaken and trembled. ‘Hold the bridle, girl.’ Barbara obeyed. Then the man went to his fallen comrade and spoke to him, but

received no answer. He raised his arms, and tried if any bones were broken, then he put his hand to the heart. 'Give the boy the bridle, and come here, you girl. Help me to loosen his neck-cloth. Is there water near?'

'None; we are at the highest point of the moor.'

'Damn it! There is water everywhere in over-abundance in this country, except where it is wanted.'

'He is alive,' said Barbara, kneeling and raising the head of the prostrate, insensible man. 'He is stunned, but he breathes.'

'Jasper!' shouted the man who was unhurt, 'for God's sake, wake up. You know I can't remain here all night.'

No response.

'This is desperate. I must press forward. Fatalities always occur when most inconvenient. I was born to ill-luck. No help, no refuge near.'

'I am by as help; my home not far distant,' said Barbara, 'for a refuge.'

'O yes—you! What sort of help is that? Your house! I can't diverge five miles out of my road for that.'

'We live not half an hour from this point.'

'O yes—half an hour multiplied by ten.'



You women don't know how to calculate distances, or give a decent direction.'

'The blood is flowing from his head,' said Barbara; 'it is cut. He has fallen on a stone.'

'What the devil is to be done? I cannot stay.'

'Sir,' said Barbara, 'of course you stay by your comrade. Do you think to leave him half dead at night to the custody of two girls, strangers, on a moor?'

'You don't understand,' answered the man; 'I cannot and I will not stay.' He put his hand to his head. 'How far to your home?'

'I have told you, half-an-hour.'

'Honour bright—no more?'

'I said, half-an-hour.'

'Good God, Watt! always a fool?' He turned sharply towards the lad who was seated on the stone. The boy had unslung a violin from his back, taken it from its case, had placed it under his chin, and drawn the bow across the strings.

'Have done, Watt! Let go the horses, have you? What a fate it is for a man to be cumbered with helpless, useless companions.'

'Jasper's horse is lame,' answered the boy, 'so I have tied the two together, the sound and the cripple, and neither can get away.'

‘Like me with Jasper. Damnation—but I must go! I dare not stay.’

The boy swung his bow in the moonlight, and above the raging of the wind rang out the squeal of the instrument. Eve looked at him, scared. He seemed some goblin perched on the stone, trying with his magic fiddle to work a spell on all who heard its tones. The boy satisfied himself that his violin was in order, and then put it once more in its case, and cast it over his back.

‘How is Jasper?’ he shouted; but the man gave him no answer.

‘Half-an-hour! Half an eternity to me,’ growled the man. ‘However, one is doomed to sacrifice self for others. I will take him to your house and leave him there. Who live at your house? Are there many men there?’

‘There is only old Christopher Davy at the lodge, but he is ill with rheumatics. My father is away.’ Barbara regretted having said this the moment the words escaped her.

The stranger looked about him uneasily, then up at the moon. ‘I can’t spare more than half-an-hour.’

Then Barbara said undauntedly, ‘No man, under any circumstances, can desert a fellow in distress, leaving him, perhaps, to die. You must lift him into our gig, and we will convey

him to Morwell. Then go your way if you will. My sister and I will take charge of him, and do our best for him till you can return.'

'Return!' muttered the man scornfully. 'Christian cast his burden before the cross. He didn't return to pick it up again.'

Barbara waxed wroth.

'If the accident had happened to you, would your friend have excused himself and deserted you?'

'Oh!' exclaimed the man carelessly, 'of course *he* would not.'

'Yet you are eager to leave him.'

'You do not understand. The cases are widely different.' He went to the horses. 'Halloo!' he exclaimed as he now noticed Eve. 'Another girl springing out of the turf! Am I among pixies? Turn your face more to the light! On my oath, and I am a judge, you are a beauty!' Then he tried the horse that had fallen; it halted. 'The brute is fit for dogs' meat only,' he said. 'Let the fox-hounds eat him. Is that your gig? We can never lift my brother——'

'Is he your brother?'

'We can never pull him up into that conveyance. No, we must get him astride my horse; you hold him on one side, I on the other, and so we shall get on. Come here,

Watt, and lend a hand ; you help also, Beauty, and see what you can do.'

With difficulty the insensible man was raised into the saddle. He seemed to gather some slight consciousness when mounted, for he muttered something about pushing on.

'You go round on the further side of the horse,' said the man imperiously to Barbara. 'You seem strong in the arm, possibly stronger than I am. Beauty! lead the horse.'

'The boy can do that,' said Barbara.

'He don't know the way,' answered the man. 'Let him come on with your old rattletrap. Upon my word, if Beauty were to throw a bridle over my head, I would be content to follow her through the world.'

Thus they went on ; the violence of the gale had somewhat abated, but it produced a roar among the heather and gorse of the moor like that of the sea. Eve, as commanded, went before, holding the bridle. Her movements were easy, her form was graceful. She tripped lightly along with elastic step, unlike the firm tread of her sister. But then Eve was only leading, and Barbara was sustaining.

For some distance no one spoke. It was not easy to speak so as to be heard, without raising the voice ; and now the way led towards the oaks and beeches and pines about Morwell,

and the roar among the branches was fiercer, louder than that among the bushes of furze.

Presently the man cried imperiously 'Halt!' and stepping forward caught the bit and roughly arrested the horse. 'I am certain we are followed.'

'What if we are?' asked Barbara.

'What if we are!' echoed the man. 'Why, everything to me.' He put his hands against the injured man; Barbara was sure he meant to thrust him out of the saddle, leap into it himself, and make off. She said, 'We are followed by the boy with our gig.'

Then he laughed. 'Ah! I forgot that. When a man has money about him and no firearms, he is nervous in such a blast-blown desert as this, where girls who may be decoys pop out of every furze bush.'

'Lead on, Eve,' said Barbara, affronted at his insolence. She was unable to resist the impulse to say, across the horse, 'You are not ashamed to let two girls see that you are a coward.'

The man struck his arm across the crupper of the horse, caught her bonnet-string and tore it away.

'I will beat your brains out against the saddle if you insult me.'

'A coward is always cruel,' answered

Barbara; as she said this she stood off, lest he should strike again, but he took no notice of her last words, perhaps had not caught them. She said no more, deeming it unwise to provoke such a man.

Presently, turning his head, he asked, 'Did you call that girl—Eve?'

'Yes; she is my sister.'

'That is odd,' remarked the man. 'Eve! Eve!'

'Did you call me?' asked the young girl who was leading.

'I was repeating your name, sweet as your face.'

'Go on, Eve,' said Barbara.

The path descended, and became rough with stones.

'He is moving,' said Barbara. 'He said something.'

'Martin!' spoke the injured man.

'I am at your side, Jasper.'

'I am hurt—where am I?'

'I cannot tell you; heaven knows. In some God-forgotten waste.'

'Do not leave me!'

'Never, Jasper.'

'You promise me?'

'With all my heart.'

'I must trust you, Martin,—trust you.'

Then he said no more, and sank back into half-consciousness.

‘How much farther?’ asked the man who walked. ‘I call this a cursed long half-hour. To women time is nought. But every moment to me is of consequence. I must push on.’

‘You have just promised not to desert your friend, your brother.’

‘It pacified him, and sent him to sleep again.’

‘It was a promise.’

‘You promise a child the moon when it cries, but it never gets it. How much farther?’

‘We are at Morwell.’

They issued from the lane, and were before the old gatehouse of Morwell; a light shone through the window over the entrance door.

‘Old Davy is up there, ill. He cannot come down. The gate is open. We will go in,’ said Barbara.

‘I am glad we are here,’ said the man called Martin; ‘now we must bestir ourselves.’

Thoughtlessly he struck the horse with his whip, and the beast started, nearly precipitating the rider to the ground. The man on it groaned. The injured man was lifted down.

‘Eve!’ said Barbara, ‘run in and tell

Jane to come out, and see that a bed be got ready at once, in the lower room.'

Presently out came a buxom womanservant, and with her assistance the man was taken off the horse and carried indoors.

A bedroom was on the ground-floor opening out of the hall. Into this Eve led the way with a light, and the patient was laid on a bed hastily made ready for his reception. His coat was removed, and Barbara examined the head.

'Here is a gash to the bone,' she said, 'and much blood is flowing from it. Jane, come with me, and we will get what is necessary.'

Martin was left alone in the room with Eve and the man called Jasper. Martin moved, so that the light fell over her; and he stood contemplating her with wonder and admiration. She was marvellously beautiful, slender, not tall, and perfectly proportioned. Her hair was of the richest auburn, full of gloss and warmth. She had the exquisite complexion that so often accompanies hair of this colour. Her eyes were large and blue. The pure oval face was set on a delicate neck, round which hung a kerchief, which she now untied and cast aside.

'How lovely you are!' said Martin. A rich blush overspread her cheek and throat, and tinged her little ears. Her eyes fell. His look was bold.



Then, almost unconscious of what he was doing, as an act of homage, Martin removed his slouched hat, and for the first time Eve saw what he was like, when she timidly raised her eyes. With surprise she saw a young face. The man with the imperious manner was not much above twenty, and was remarkably handsome. He had dark hair, a pale skin, very large, soft dark eyes, velvety, enclosed within dark lashes. His nose was regular, the nostrils delicately arched and chiselled. His lip was fringed with a young moustache. There was a remarkable refinement and tenderness in the face. Eve could hardly withdraw her wondering eyes from him. Such a face she had never seen, never even dreamed of as possible. Here was a type of masculine beauty that transcended all her imaginings. She had met very few young men, and those she did meet were somewhat uncouth, addicted to the stable and the kennel, and redolent of both, more at home following the hounds or shooting than associating with ladies. There was so much of innocent admiration in the gaze of simple Eve that Martin was flattered, and smiled.

‘Beauty!’ he said, ‘who would have dreamed to have stumbled on the likes of you on the moor? Nay, rather let me bless my stars that I have been vouchsafed the privi-

lege of meeting and speaking with a real fairy. It is said that you must never encounter a fairy without taking of her a reminiscence, to be a charm through life.'

Suddenly he put his hand to her throat. She had a delicate blue riband about it, disclosed when she cast aside her kerchief. He put his finger between the riband and her throat, and pulled.

'You are strangling me!' exclaimed Eve, shrinking away, alarmed at his boldness.

'I care not,' he replied, 'this I will have.'

He wrenched at and broke the riband, and then drew it from her neck. As he did so a gold ring fell on the floor. He stooped, picked it up, and put it on his little finger.

'Look,' said he with a laugh, 'my hand is so small, my fingers so slim—I can wear this ring.'

'Give it me back! Let me have it! You must not take it!' Eve was greatly agitated and alarmed. 'I may not part with it. It was my mother's.'

Then, with the same daring insolence with which he had taken the ring, he caught the girl to him, and kissed her.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE LIMPING HORSE.

EVE drew herself away with a cry of anger and alarm, and with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks. At that moment her sister returned with Jane, and immediately Martin reassumed his hat with broad brim. Barbara did not notice the excitement of Eve; she had not observed the incident, because she entered a moment too late to do so, and no suspicion that the stranger would presume to take such a liberty crossed her mind.

Eve stood back behind the door, with hands on her bosom to control its furious beating, and with head depressed to conceal the heightened colour.

Barbara and the maid stooped over the unconscious man, and whilst Martin held a light, they dressed and bandaged his head.

Presently his eyes opened, a flicker of intelligence passed through them, they rested

on Martin; a smile for a moment kindled the face, and the lips moved.

‘He wants to speak to you,’ said Barbara, noticing the direction of the eyes, and the expression that came into them.

‘What do you want, Jasper?’ asked Martin, putting his hand on that of the other.

The candle-light fell on the two hands, and Barbara noticed the contrast. That of Martin was delicate as the hand of a woman, narrow, with taper fingers, and white; that of Jasper was strong, darkened by exposure.

‘Will you be so good as to undress him,’ said Barbara, ‘and put him to bed? My sister will assist me in the kitchen. Jane, if you desire help, is at your service.’

‘Yes, go,’ said Martin, ‘but return speedily, as I cannot stay many minutes.’

Then the girls left the room.

‘I do not want you,’ he said roughly to the serving woman. ‘Take yourself off; when I need you I will call. No prying at the door.’ He went after her, thrust Jane forth and shut the door behind her. Then he returned to Jasper, removed his clothes, somewhat ungently, with hasty hands. When his waistcoat was off, Martin felt in the inner breast-pocket, and drew from it a pocket-book. He opened it, and transferred the contents to his own purse, then

replaced the book and proceeded with the undressing.

When Jasper was divested of his clothes, and laid at his ease in the bed, his head propped on pillows, Martin went to the door and called the girls. He was greatly agitated, Barbara observed it. His lower lip trembled. Eve hung back in the kitchen, she could not return.

Martin said in eager tones, 'I have done for him all I can, now I am in haste to be off.'

'But,' remonstrated Barbara, 'he is your brother.'

'My brother!' laughed Martin. 'He is no relation of mine. He is naught to me and I am naught to him.'

'You called him your brother.'

'That was tantamount to comrade. All sons of Adam are brothers, at least in misfortune. I do not even know the fellow's name.'

'Why,' said Barbara, 'this is very strange. You call him Jasper, and he named you Martin.'

'Ah!' said the man hesitatingly, 'we are chance travellers, riding along the same road. He asked my name and I gave it him—my surname. I am a Mr. Martin—he mistook me; and in exchange he gave me his Christian name. That is how I knew it. If anyone asks about this event, you can say that Mr.

Martin passed this way and halted awhile at your house, on his road to Tavistock.'

'You are going to Tavistock?'

'Yes, that is my destination.'

'In that case I will not seek to detain you. Call up Doctor Crooke and send him here.'

'I will do so. You furnish me with an additional motive for haste to depart.'

'Go,' said Barbara. 'God grant the poor man may not die.'

'Die! pshaw! die!' exclaimed Martin. 'Men aren't such brittle ware as that pretty sister of yours. A fall from a horse don't kill a man. If it did, fox-hunting would not be such a popular sport. To-morrow, or the day after, Mr. Jasper What's-his-name will be on his feet again. Hush! What do I hear?'

His cheek turned pale, but Barbara did not see it; he kept his face studiously away from the light.

'Your horse which you hitched up outside neighed, that is all.'

'That is a great deal. It would not neigh at nothing.'

He went out. Barbara told the maid to stay by the sick man, and went after Martin. She thought that in all probability the boy had arrived driving the gig.

Martin stood irresolute in the doorway.

The horse that had borne the injured man had been brought into the courtyard, and hitched up at the hall door. Martin looked across the quadrangle. The moon was shining into it. A yellow glimmer came from the sick porter's window over the great gate. The large gate was arched, a laden waggon might pass under it. It was unprovided with doors. Through it the moonlight could be seen on the paved ground in front of the old lodge.

A sound of horse-hoofs was audible approaching slowly, uncertainly, on the stony ground ; but no wheels.

'What can the boy have done with our gig?' asked Barbara.

'Will you be quiet?' exclaimed Martin angrily.

'I protest—you are trembling,' she said.

'May not a man shiver when he is cold?' answered the man.

She saw him shrink back into the shadow of the entrance as something appeared in the moonlight outside the gatehouse, indistinctly seen, moving strangely.

Again the horse neighed.

They saw the figure come on haltingly out of the light into the blackness of the shadow of the gate, pass through, and emerge into the moonlight of the court.

Then both saw that the lame horse that had been deserted on the moor had followed, limping and slowly, as it was in pain, after the other horse. Barbara went at once to the poor beast, saying, 'I will put you in a stall,' but in another moment she returned with a bundle in her hand.

'What have you there?' asked Martin, who was mounting his horse, pointing with his whip to what she carried.

'I found this strapped to the saddle.'

'Give it to me.'

'It does not belong to you. It belongs to the other—to Jasper.'

'Let me look through the bundle; perhaps by that means we may discover his name.'

'I will examine it when you are gone. I will not detain you; ride on for the doctor.'

'I insist on having that bundle,' said Martin. 'Give it me, or I will strike you.' He raised his whip.

'Only a coward would strike a woman. I will not give you the bundle. It is not yours. As you said, this man Jasper is naught to you, nor you to him.'

'I will have it,' he said with a curse, and stooped from the saddle to wrench it from her hands. Barbara was too quick for him; she stepped back into the doorway and slammed the door upon him, and bolted it.



He uttered an ugly oath, then turned and rode through the courtyard. 'After all,' he said, 'what does it matter? We were fools not to be rid of it before.'

As he passed out of the gatehouse, he saw Eve in the moonlight, approaching timidly.

'You must give me back my ring!' she pleaded; 'you have no right to keep it.'

'Must I, Beauty? Where is the compulsion?'

'Indeed, indeed you must.'

'Then I will—but not now; at some day in the future, when we meet again.'

'O give it me now! It belonged to my mother, and she is dead.'

'Come! What will you give me for it? Another kiss?'

Then from close by burst a peal of impish laughter, and the boy bounded out of the shadow of a yew tree into the moonlight.

'Halloo, Martin! always hanging over a pretty face, detained by it when you should be galloping. I've upset the gig and broken it; give me my place again on the crupper.'

He ran, leaped, and in an instant was behind Martin. The horse bounded away, and Eve heard the clatter of the hoofs as it galloped up the lane to the moor.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A BUNDLE OF CLOTHES.

BARBARA JORDAN sat by the sick man with her knitting on her lap, and her eyes fixed on his face. He was asleep, and the sun would have shone full on him had she not drawn a red curtain across the window, which subdued the light, and diffused a warm glow over the bed. He was breathing calmly; danger was over.

On the morning after the eventful night, Mr. Jordan had returned to Morwell, and had been told what had happened—at least, the major part—and had seen the sick man. He, Jasper, was then still unconscious. The doctor from Tavistock had not arrived. The family awaited him all day, and Barbara at last suspected that Martin had not taken the trouble to deliver her message. She did not like to send again, expecting him hourly. Then a doubt rose in her mind whether Doctor Crooke might not have refused to come. Her father

had made some slighting remarks about him in company lately. It was possible that these had been repeated and the doctor had taken umbrage.

The day passed, and as he did not arrive, and as the sick man remained unconscious, on the second morning Barbara sent a foot messenger to Beer Alston, where was a certain Mr. James Coyshe, surgeon, a young man, reputed to be able, not long settled there. The gig was broken, and the cob in trying to escape from the upset vehicle had cut himself about the legs, and was unfit for a journey. The Jordans had but one carriage horse. The gig lay wrecked in the lane ; the boy had driven it against a gate-post of granite, and smashed the axle and the splashboard and a wheel.

Coyshe arrived ; he was a tall young man, with hair cut very short, very large light whiskers, prominent eyes, and big protruding ears.

‘He is suffering from congestion of the brain,’ said the surgeon ; ‘if he does not awake to-morrow, order his grave to be dug.’

‘Can you do nothing for him?’ asked Miss Jordan.

‘Nothing better than leave him in your hands,’ said Coyshe with a bow.

This was all that had passed between Barbara and the doctor. Now the third day was gone, and the man's brain had recovered from the pressure on it.

As Barbara knitted, she stole many a glance at Jasper's face ; presently, finding that she had dropped stitches and made false counts, she laid her knitting in her lap, and watched the sleeper with undivided attention and with a face full of perplexity, as though trying to read the answer to a question which puzzled her, and not finding the answer where she sought it, or finding it different from what she anticipated.

In appearance Barbara was very different from her sister. Her face was round, her complexion olive, her eyes very dark. She was strongly built, without grace of form, a sound, hearty girl, hale to her heart's core. She was not beautiful, her features were without chiselling, but her abundant hair, her dark eyes, and the sensible, honest expression of her face redeemed it from plainness. She had practical common sense ; Eve had beauty. Barbara was content with the distribution ; perfectly satisfied to believe herself destitute of personal charms, and ready to excuse every act of thoughtlessness committed by her sister. Barbara rose from her seat, laid aside the

knitting, and went to a carved oak box that stood against the wall, ornamented with the figure of a man in trunk hose, with a pair of eagles' heads in the place of a human face. She raised the lid and looked in. There lay, neatly folded, the contents of Jasper's bundle, a coarse grey and yellow suit—a suit so peculiar in cut and colour that there was no mistaking whence it had come, and what he was who had worn it. Barbara shut the chest and returned to her place, and her look was troubled. Her eyes were again fixed on the sleeper. His face was noble. It was pale from loss of blood. The hair was black, the eyes were closed, but the lashes were long and dark. His nose was aquiline without being over-strongly characterised, his lips were thin and well moulded. The face, even in sleep, bore an expression of gravity, dignity, and integrity. Barbara found it hard to associate such a face with crime, and yet how else could she account for that convict garb she had found rolled up and strapped to his saddle, and which she had laid in the trunk?

Prisoners escaped now and again from the great jail on Dartmoor. This was one of them. As she sat watching him, puzzling her mind over this, his eyes opened, and he smiled. The smile was remarkably sweet. His eyes were

large, dark and soft, and from being sunken through sickness, appeared to fill his face. Barbara rose hastily, and, going to the fireplace, brought from it some beef-tea that had been warming at the small fire. She put it to his lips; he thanked her, sighed, and lay back. She said not a word, but resumed her knitting.

From this moment their positions were reversed. It was now she who was watched by him. When she looked up, she encountered his dark eyes. She coloured a little, and impatiently turned her chair on one side, so as to conceal her face. A couple of minutes after, sensible in every nerve that she was being observed, unable to keep her eyes away, spell-drawn, she glanced at him again. He was still watching her. Then she moved to her former position, bit her lip, frowned, and said, 'Are you in want of anything?'

He shook his head.

'You are sufficiently yourself to remain alone for a few minutes,' she said, stood up, and left the room. She had the management of the house, and, indeed, of the farm on her hands; her usual assistant in setting the labourers their work, old Christopher Davy, was ill with rheumatism. This affair had happened at an untoward moment, but is it not always so? A full hour had elapsed before

Miss Jordan returned. Then she saw that the convalescent's eyes were closed. He was probably again asleep, and sleep was the best thing for him. She reseated herself by his bedside, and resumed her knitting. A moment after she was again aware that his eyes were on her. She had herself watched him so intently whilst he was asleep that a smile came involuntarily to her lips. She was being repaid in her own coin. The smile encouraged him to speak.

‘How long have I been here?’

‘Four days.’

‘Have I been very ill?’

‘Yes, insensible, sometimes rambling.’

‘What made me ill? What ails my head?’

He put his hand to the bandages.

‘You have had a fall from your horse.’

He did not speak for a moment or two. His thoughts moved slowly. After a while he asked, ‘Where did I fall?’

‘On the moor—Morwell Down.’

‘I can remember nothing. When was it?’

‘Four days ago.’

‘Yes—you have told me so. I forgot. My head is not clear, there is singing and spinning in it. To-day is——?’

‘To-day is Monday.’

‘What day was that—four days ago?’

‘Thursday.’

‘Yes, Thursday. I cannot think to reckon backwards. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I can go on, but not backward. It pains me. I can recall Thursday.’ He sighed, and turned his head to the wall. ‘Thursday night—yes. I remember no more.’

After a while he turned his head round to Barbara, and asked, ‘Where am I now?’

‘At Morwell House.’

He asked no more questions for a quarter of an hour. He was taking in and turning over the information he had received. He lay on his back, and closed his eyes. His face was very pale, like marble, but not like marble in this, that across it travelled changes of expression that stirred the muscles. Do what she would, Barbara could not keep her eyes off him. The horrible mystery about the man, the lie given to her thoughts of him by his face, forced her to observe him.

Presently he opened his eyes, and met hers; she recoiled as if smitten, with a guilty feeling at her heart.

‘You have always been with me whilst I was unconscious and rambling,’ he said earnestly.

‘I have been a great deal with you, but not always. The maid, Jane, and an old woman



who comes in occasionally to char, have shared with me the task. You have not been neglected.'

'I know well when you have been by me—and when you have been away. Sometimes I have felt as if I lay on a bank with wild thyme under me——'

'That is because we put thyme with our linen,' said the practical Barbara.

He did not notice the explanation, but went on, 'And the sun shone on my face, but a pleasant air fanned me. At other times all was dark and hot and miserable.'

'That was according to the stages of your illness.'

'No, I think I was content when you were in the room, and distressed when you were away. Some persons exert a mesmeric power of soothing.'

'Sick men get strange fancies,' said Barbara.

He rose on his elbow, and held out his hand.

'I know that I owe my life to you, young lady. Allow me to thank you. My life is of no value to any but myself. I have not hitherto regarded it much. Now I shall esteem it, as saved by you. I thank you. May I touch your hand?'

He took her fingers and put them to his lips.

‘This hand is firm and strong,’ he said, ‘but gentle as the wing of a dove.’

She coldly withdrew her fingers.

‘Enough of thanks,’ she said bluntly. ‘I did but my duty.’

‘Was there——’ he hesitated—‘anyone with me when I was found, or was I alone?’

‘There were two—a man and a boy.’

His face became troubled. He began a question, then let it die in his mouth, began another, but could not bring it to an end.

‘And they—where are they?’ he asked at length.

‘That one called Martin brought you here.’

‘He did!’ exclaimed Jasper, eagerly.

‘That is—he assisted in bringing you here.’ Barbara was so precise and scrupulous about truth, that she felt herself obliged to modify her first assertion. ‘Then, when he saw you safe in our hands, he left you.’

‘Did he—did he say anything about me?’

‘Once—but that I suppose was by a slip, he called you brother. Afterwards he asserted that you were nothing to him, nor he to you.’

Jasper’s face was moved with painful emo-

tions, but it soon cleared, and he said, 'Yes, I am nothing to him—nothing. He is gone. He did well. I was, as he said—and he spoke the truth—nothing to him.'

Then, hastily, to turn the subject, 'Excuse me. Where am I now? And, young lady, if you will not think it rude of me to inquire, who are you to whom I owe my poor life?'

'This, as I have already said, is Morwell, and I am the daughter of the gentleman who resides in it, Mr. Ignatius Jordan.'

He fell back on the bed, a deadly greyness came over his face, he raised his hands: 'My God! my God! this is most wonderful. Thy ways are past finding out.'

'What is wonderful?' asked Barbara.

He did not answer, but partially raised himself again in bed.

'Where are my clothes?' he asked.

'Which clothes?' inquired Barbara, and her voice was hard, and her expression became stern. She hesitated for a moment, then went to the chest and drew forth the suit that had been rolled up on the pommel of the saddle; also that which he had worn when he met with the accident. She held one in each hand, and returned to the bed.

'Which?' she asked gravely, fixing her eyes on him.

He looked from one to the other, and his pale face turned a chalky white. Then he said in a low tremulous tone, 'I want my waistcoat.'

She gave it him. He felt eagerly about it, drew the pocket-book from the breast-pocket, opened it, and fell back.

'Gone!' he moaned, 'gone!'

The garment dropped from his fingers upon the floor, his eyes became glassy and fixed, and scarlet spots of colour formed in his cheeks.

After this he became feverish, and tossed in his bed, put his hand to his brow, plucked at the bandages, asked for water, and his pulse quickened.

Towards evening he seemed conscious that his senses were slipping beyond control. He called repeatedly for the young lady, and Jane, who attended him then, was obliged to fetch Barbara.

The sun was setting when she came into the room. She despatched Jane about some task that had to be done, and, coming to the side of the bed, said in a constrained voice, 'Yes, what do you require? I am here.'

He lifted himself. His eyes were glowing with fever; he put out his hand and clasped her wrist; his hand was burning. His lips quivered; his face was full of a fiery eagerness.

‘I entreat you! you are so good, so kind! You have surprised a secret. I beseech you let no one else into it—no one have a suspicion of it. I am hot, I am in a fever. I am afraid what I may say when others are by me. I would go on my knees to you could I rise. I pray you, I pray you——’ he put his hands together, ‘do not leave me if I become delirious. It is a hard thing to ask. I have no claim on you; but I fear. I would have none but you know what I say, and I may say strange things if my mind becomes deranged with fever. You feel my hand, is it not like a red-hot coal? You know that I am likely to wander. Stay by me—in pity—in mercy—for the love of God—for the love of God!’

His hand, a fiery hand, grasped her wrist convulsively. She stood by his bed, greatly moved, much stung with self-reproach. It was cruel of her to act as she had done, to show him that convict suit, and let him see that she knew his vileness. It was heartless, wicked of her, when the poor fellow was just returned to consciousness, to cast him back into his misery and shame by the sight of that degrading garment.

Spots of colour came into her cheeks almost as deep as those which burnt in the sick man’s face.

‘I should have considered he was ill, that he was under my charge,’ she said, and laid her left hand on his to intimate that she sought to disengage her wrist from his grasp.

At the touch his eyes, less wild, looked pleadingly at her.

‘Yes, Mr. Jasper,’ she said, ‘I——’

‘Why do you call me Mr. Jasper?’

‘That other man gave you the name.’

‘Yes, my name is Jasper. And yours?’

‘Barbara. I am Miss Barbara Jordan.’

‘Will you promise what I asked?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I will stay by you all night, and whatever passes your lips shall never pass mine.’

He smiled, and gave a sigh of relief.

‘How good you are! How good! Barbara Jordan.’

He did not call her Miss, and she felt slightly piqued. He, a convict, to speak of her thus! But she pacified her wounded pride with the consideration that his mind was disturbed by fever.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A NIGHT-WATCH.

BARBARA had passed her word to remain all night with the sick man, should he prove delirious ; she was scrupulously conscientious, and in spite of her father's remonstrance and assurance that old Betty Westlake could look after the fellow well enough, she remained in the sick-room after the rest had gone to bed.

That Jasper was fevered was indubitable ; he was hot and restless, tossing his head from side to side on the pillow, and it was not safe to leave him, lest he should disarrange his bandage, lest, in an access of fever, he should leap from his bed and do himself an injury.

After everyone had retired the house became very still. Barbara poked and made up the fire. It must not become too large, as the nights were not cold, and it must not be allowed to go out.

Jasper did not speak, but he opened his

eyes occasionally, and looked at his nurse with a strange light in his eyes, that alarmed her. What if he were to become frantic? What—worse—were he to die? He was only half-conscious, he did not seem to know who she was. His lips twitched and moved, but no voice came. Then he clasped both hands over his brow, and moaned, and plucked at the bandages. ‘You must not do that,’ said Barbara Jordan, rising from her chair and going beside him. He glared at her from his burning eyes without intelligence. Then she laid her cool hand on his strapped brow, and he let his arms fall, and lay still, and the twitching of his mouth ceased. The pressure of her hand eased, soothed him. Directly she withdrew her hand he began to murmur and move, and cry out, ‘O Martin! Martin!’

Then he put forth his hand and opened it wide, and closed it again, in a wild, restless, unmeaning manner. Next he waved it excitedly, as if in vehement conversation or earnest protest. Barbara spoke to him, but he did not hear her. She urged him to lie quiet and not excite himself, but her words, if they entered his ear, conveyed no message to the brain. He snatched at his bandage.

‘You shall not do that,’ she said, and caught his hand, and held it down firmly on the



coverlet. Then, at once, he was quiet. He continued turning his head on the pillow, but he did not stir his arm. When she attempted to withdraw her hand he would not suffer her. Once, when, almost by main force, she plucked her hand away, he became excited and tried to rise in his bed. In terror, to pacify him, she gave him her hand again. She moved her chair close to the bed, where she could sit facing him, and let him hold her left hand with his left. He was quiet at once. It seemed to her that her cool, calmly flowing blood poured its healing influence through her hand up his arm to his tossing, troubled head. Thus she was obliged to sit all night, hand in hand with the man she was constrained to pity, but whom, for his guilt, she loathed.

He became cooler, his pulse beat less fiercely, his hand was less burning and dry. She saw him pass from vexing dreams into placid sleep. She was unable to knit, to do any work all night. She could do nothing other than sit, hour after hour, with her eyes on his face, trying to unravel the riddle, to reconcile that noble countenance with an evil life. And when she could not solve it, she closed her eyes and prayed, and her prayer was concerned, like her thoughts, with the man who lay in fever and pain, and who clasped her so resolutely. Towards

dawn his eyes opened, and there was no more vacancy and fire in them. Then she went to the little casement and opened it. The fresh, sweet air of early morning rushed in, and with the air came the song of awakening thrushes, the spiral twitter of the lark. One fading star was still shining in a sky that was laying aside its sables.

She went back to the bedside, and said gently, 'You are better.'

'Thank you,' he answered. 'I have given you much trouble.'

She shook her head, she did not speak. Something rose in her throat. She had extinguished the lamp. In the grey dawn the face on the bed looked death-like, and a gush of tenderness, of pity for the patient, filled Barbara's heart. She brought a basin and a sponge, and, leaning over him, washed his face. He thanked her with his sweet smile, a smile that told of pain. It affected Barbara strangely. She drew a long breath. She could not speak. If she had attempted to do so she would have sobbed; for she was tired with her continued watching. To be a nurse to the weak, whether to a babe or a wounded man, brings out all the sweet springs in a woman's soul; and poor Barbara, against her judgment, felt that every gentle vein in her heart was oozing with pity,

love, solicitude, mercy, faith and hope. What eyes that Jasper had! so gentle, soft, and truthful. Could treachery, cruelty, dishonesty lurk beneath them?

A question trembled on Barbara's lips. She longed to ask him something about himself, to know the truth, to have that horrible enigma solved. She leaned her hand on the back of the chair, and put the other to her lips.

'What is it?' he asked suddenly.

She started. He had read her thoughts. Her eyes met his, and, as they met, her eyes answered and said, 'Yes, there is a certain matter. I cannot rest till I know.'

'I am sure,' he said, 'there is something you wish to say, but are afraid lest you should excite me.'

She was silent.

'I am better now; the wind blows cool over me, and the morning light refreshes me. Do not be afraid. Speak.'

She hesitated.

'Speak,' he said. 'I am fully conscious and self-possessed now.'

'Yes,' she said, slowly. 'It is right that I should know for certain what you are.' She halted. She shrank from the question. He remained waiting. Then she asked with a trembling voice, 'Is that convict garment yours?'

He turned away his face sharply.

She waited for the answer. He did not reply. His breast heaved and his whole body shook, the very bed quivered with suppressed emotion.

‘Do not be afraid,’ she said, in measured tones. ‘I will not betray you. I have nursed you and fed you, and bathed your head. No, never! never! whatever your crime may have been, will I betray you. No one in the house suspects. No eyes but mine have seen that garment. Do not mistrust me; not by word or look will I divulge the secret, but I must know all.’

Still he did not reply. His face was turned away, but she saw the working of the muscles of his cheek-bone, and the throb of the great vein in his temple. Barbara felt a flutter of compunction in her heart. She had again over-agitated this unhappy man when he was not in a condition to bear it. She knew she had acted precipitately, unfairly, but the suspense had become to her unendurable.

‘I have done wrong to ask the question,’ she said.

‘No,’ he answered, and looked at her. His large eyes, sunken and lustrous with sickness, met hers, and he saw that tears were trembling on her lids.

‘No,’ he said, ‘you did right to ask;’ then

paused. 'The garment—the prison garment is mine.'

A catch in Barbara's breath; she turned her head hastily and walked towards the door. Near the door stood the oak chest carved with the eagle-headed man. She stooped, threw it open, caught up the convict clothes, rolled them together, and ran up into the attic, where she secreted them in a place none but herself would be likely to look into.

A moment after she reappeared, composed.

'A packman came this way with his wares yesterday,' said Miss Jordan, gravely. 'Amongst other news he brought was this, that a convict had recently broken out from the prison at Prince's Town on Dartmoor, and was thought to have escaped off the moor.' He listened and made no answer, but sighed heavily. 'You are safe here,' she said; 'your secret remains here'—she touched her breast. 'My father, my sister, none of the maids suspect anything. Never let us allude to this matter again, and I hope that as soon as you are sufficiently recovered you will go your way.'

The door opened gently and Eve appeared, fresh and lovely as a May blossom.

'Bab, dear sister,' said the young girl, 'let me sit by him now. You must have a nap. You take everything upon you—you are

tired. Why, Barbara, surely you have been crying?’

‘I——crying!’ exclaimed the elder, angrily. ‘What have I had to make me cry? No; I am tired, and my eyes burn.’

‘Then close them and sleep for a couple of hours.’

Barbara left the room and shut the door behind her. In the early morning none of the servants could be spared to sit with the sick man.

Eve went to the table and arranged a bunch of oxlips, dripping with dew, in a glass of water.

‘How sweet they are!’ she said, smiling. ‘Smell them, they will do you good. These are of the old monks’ planting; they grow in abundance in the orchard, but nowhere else. The oxlips and the orchis suit together perfectly. If the oxlip had been a little more yellow and the orchis a little more purple, they would have made an ill-assorted posy.’

Jasper looked at the flowers, then at her.

‘Are you her sister?’

‘What, Barbara’s sister?’

‘Yes, her name is Barbara.’

‘Of course I am.’

He looked at Eve. He could trace in her no likeness to her sister. Involuntarily he said, ‘You are very beautiful.’

She coloured—with pleasure. Twice within a few days the same compliment had been paid her.

‘What is your name, young lady?’

‘My name is Eve.’

‘Eve!’ repeated Jasper. ‘How strange!’

Twice also, within a few days, had this remark been passed on her name.

‘Why should it be strange?’

‘Because that was also the name of my mother and of my sister.’

‘Is your mother alive?’

He shook his head.

‘And your sister?’

‘I do not know. I remember her only faintly, and my father never speaks of her.’ Then he changed the subject. ‘You are very unlike Miss Barbara. I should not have supposed you were sisters.’

‘We are half-sisters. We had not the same mother.’

He was exhausted with speaking, and turned towards the wall. Eve seated herself in the chair vacated by Barbara. She occupied her fingers with making a cowslip ball, and when it was made she tossed it. Then, as he moved, she feared that she disturbed him, so she put the ball on the table, from which however it rolled off.

Jasper turned as she was groping for it.

‘Do I trouble you?’ she said. ‘Honour bright, I will sit quiet.’

How beautiful she looked with her chestnut hair; how delicate and pearly was her lovely neck; what sweet eyes were hers, blue as a heaven full of sunshine!

‘Have you sat much with me, Miss Eve, whilst I have been ill?’

‘Not much; my sister would not suffer me. I am such a fidget that she thought I might irritate you; such a giddypate that I might forget your draughts and compresses. Barbara is one of those people who do all things themselves, and rely on no one else.’

‘I must have given Miss Barbara much trouble. How good she has been!’

‘Oh, Barbara is good to everyone! She can’t help it. Some people are born good-tempered and practical, and others are born pretty and poetical; some to be good needlewomen, others to wear smart clothes.’

‘Tell me, Miss Eve, did anyone come near me when I met with my accident?’

‘Your friend Martin and Barbara brought you here.’

‘And when I was here who had to do with my clothes?’

‘Martin undressed you whilst my sister



and I got ready what was necessary for you.'

'And my clothes—who touched them?'

'After your friend Martin, only Barbara; she folded them and put them away. Why do you ask?'

Jasper sighed and put his hand to his head. Silence ensued for some time; had not he held his hand to the wound Eve would have supposed he was asleep. Now, all at once, Eve saw the cowslip ball; it was under the table, and with the point of her little foot she could touch it and roll it to her. So she played with the ball, rolling it with her feet, but so lightly that she made no noise.

All at once he looked round at her. Startled, she kicked the cowslip ball away. He turned his head away again.

About five minutes later she was on tiptoe, stealing across the room to where the ball had rolled. She picked it up and laid it on the pillow near Jasper's face. He opened his eyes. They had been closed.

'I thought,' explained Eve, 'that the scent of the flowers might do you good. They are somewhat bruised and so smell the stronger.'

He half nodded and closed his eyes again.

Presently she plucked timidly at the sheet. As he paid no attention she plucked again.

He looked at her. The bright face, like an opening wild rose, was bending over him.

‘Will it disturb you greatly if I ask you a question?’

He shook his head.

‘Who was that young man whom you called Martin?’

He looked earnestly into her eyes, and the colour mounted under the transparent skin of her throat, cheeks, and brow.

‘Eve,’ he said gravely, ‘have you ever been ill—cut, wounded’—he put out his hand and lightly indicated her heart—‘there?’

She shook her pretty head with a smile.

‘Then think and ask no more about Martin. He came to you out of darkness, he went from you into darkness. Put him utterly and for ever out of your thoughts as you value your happiness.’

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BAB.

As Jasper recovered, he saw less of the sisters. June had come, and with it lovely weather, and with the lovely weather the haysel. The air was sweet about the house with the fragrance of hay, and the soft summer breath wafted the pollen and fine strands on its wings into the court and in at the windows of the old house. Hay harvest was a busy time, especially for Barbara Jordan. She engaged extra hands, and saw that cake was baked and beer brewed for the harvesters. Mr. Jordan had become, as years passed, more abstracted from the cares of the farm, and more steeped in his fantastic semi-scientific pursuits. As his eldest daughter put her strong shoulder to the wheel of business, Mr. Jordan edged his from under it, and left the whole pressure upon her. Consequently Barbara was very much engaged. All that was necessary to be done for the con-

valescent was done, quietly and considerately; but Jasper was left considerably to himself. Neither Barbara nor Eve had the leisure, even if they had the inclination, to sit in his room and entertain him with conversation. Eve brought Jasper fresh flowers every morning, and by snatches sang to him. The little parlour opened out of the room he occupied, and in it was her harpsichord, an old instrument, without much tone, but it served to accompany her clear fresh voice. In the evening she and Barbara sang duets. The elder sister had a good alto voice that contrasted well with the warble of her sister's soprano.

Mr. Jordan came periodically into the sick room, and saluted his guest in a shy, reserved manner, asked how he progressed, made some common remark about the weather, fidgeted with the backs of the chairs or the brim of his hat, and went away. He was a timid man with strangers, a man who lived in his own thoughts, a man with a frightened, far-off look in his eyes. He was ungainly in his movements, through nervousness. He made no friends, he had acquaintances only.

His peculiar circumstances, the connection with Eve's mother, his natural reserve, had kept him apart from the gentlefolks around. His reserve had deepened of late, and his

shyness had become painful to himself and to those with whom he spoke.

As Eve grew up, and her beauty was observed, the neighbours pitied the two girls, condemned through no fault of their own to a life of social exclusion. Of Barbara everyone spoke well, as an excellent manager and thrifty housekeeper, kind of heart, in all things reliable. Of Eve everyone spoke as a beauty. Some little informal conclaves had been held in the neighbourhood, and one good lady had said to the Cloberrys, 'If you will call, so will I.' So the Cloberrys of Bradstone, as a leading county family, had taken the initiative and called. As the Cloberry family coach drove up to the gate of Morwell, Mr. Jordan was all but caught, but he had the presence of mind to slip behind a laurel bush, that concealed his body, whilst exposing his legs. There he remained motionless, believing himself unseen, till the carriage drove away. After the Cloberrys had called, other visitors arrived, and the girls received invitations to tea, which they gladly accepted. Mr. Jordan sent his card by his daughters; he would make no calls in person, and the neighbours were relieved not to see him. That affair of seventeen years ago was not forgiven.

Mr. Jordan was well pleased that his

daughters should go into society, or rather that his daughter Eve should be received and admired. With Barbara he had not much in common, only the daily cares of the estate, and these worried him. To Eve, and to her alone, he opened out, and spoke of things that lived within, in his mind, to her alone did he exhibit tenderness. Barbara was shut out from his heart; she felt the exclusion, but did not resent the preference shown to Eve. That was natural, it was Eve's due, for Eve was so beautiful, so bright, so perfect a little fairy. But, though Barbara did not grudge her young sister the love that was given to her, she felt an ache in her heart, and a regret that the father's love was not so full that it could embrace and envelop both.

One day, when the afternoocn sun was streaming into the hall, Barbara crossed it, and came to the convalescent's room.

'Come,' she said, 'my father and I think you had better sit outside the house; we are carrying the hay, and it may amuse you to watch the waggons. The sweet air will do you good. You must be weary of confinement in this little room.'

'How can I be weary where I am so kindly treated!—where all speaks to me of rest and peace and culture!' Jasper was dressed, and

was sitting in an arm-chair reading, or pretending to read, a book.

‘Can you rise, Mr. Jasper?’ she asked.

He tried to leave the chair, but he was still very weak, so she assisted him.

‘And now,’ she said kindly, ‘walk, sir!’

She watched his steps. His face was pale, and the pallor was the more observable from the darkness of his hair. ‘I think,’ said he, forcing a smile, ‘I must beg a little support.’

She went without hesitation to his side, and he put his arm in hers. He had not only lost much blood, but had been bruised and severely shaken, and was not certain of his steps. Barbara was afraid, in crossing the hall, lest he should fall on the stone floor. She disengaged his hand, put her arm about his waist, bade him lean on her shoulder. How strong she seemed!

‘Can you get on now?’ she asked, looking up. His deep eyes met her.

‘I could get on for ever thus,’ he answered.

She flushed scarlet.

‘I dislike such speeches,’ she said; and disengaged herself from him. Whilst her arm was about him her hand had felt the beating of his heart.

She conducted him to a bench in the garden

near a bed of stocks, where the bees were busy.

‘How beautiful the world looks when one has not seen it for many days!’ he said.

‘Yes, there is a good shear of hay, saved in splendid order.’

‘When a child is born into the world there is always a gathering, and a festival to greet it. I am born anew into the beautiful world to-day. I am on the threshold of a new life, and you have nursed me into it. Am I too presumptuous if I ask you to sit here a very little while, and welcome me into it? That will be a festival indeed.’

She smiled good-humouredly, and took her place on the bench. Jasper puzzled her daily more and more. What was he? What was the temptation that had led him away? Was his repentance thorough? Barbara prayed for him daily, with the excuse to her conscience that it was always well to pray for the conversion of a sinner, and that she was bound to pray for the man whom Providence had cast broken and helpless at her feet. The Good Samaritan prayed, doubtless, for the man who fell among thieves. She was interested in her patient. Her patient he was, as she was the only person in the house to provide and order whatever was done in it. Her patient, Eve



and her father called him. Her patient he was, somehow her own heart told her he was; bound to her doubly by the solicitude with which she had nursed him, by the secret of his life which she had surprised.

He puzzled her. He puzzled her more and more daily. There was a gentleness and refinement in his manner and speech that showed her he was not a man of low class, that if he were not a gentleman by birth he was one in mind and culture. There was a grave religiousness about him, moreover, that could not be assumed, and did not comport with a criminal.

Who was he, and what had he done? How far had he sinned, or been sinned against? Barbara's mind was fretted with these ever-recurring questions. Teased with the enigma, she could not divert her thoughts for long from it—it formed the background to all that occupied her during the day. She considered the dairy, but when the butter was weighed, went back in mind to the riddle. She was withdrawn again by the demands of the cook for groceries from her store closet; when the closet door was shut, she was again thinking of the puzzle. She had to calculate the amount of cake required for the harvesters, and went on from the calculations of currants and sugar

to the balancing of probabilities in the case of Jasper.

She had avoided seeing him of late more than was necessary, she had resolved not to go near him, and let the maid Jane attend to his requirements, aided by Christopher Davy's boy, who cleaned the boots and knives, and ran errands, and weeded the paths, and was made generally useful. Yet for all her resolve she did not keep it; she discovered that some little matter had been neglected, which forced her to enter the room.

When she was there she was impatient to be out of it again, and she hardly spoke to Jasper, was short, busy, and away in a moment.

'It does not do to leave the servants to themselves,' soliloquised Barbara. 'They half do whatever they are set at. The sick man would not like to complain. I must see to everything myself.'

Now she complied with his request to sit beside him, but was at once filled with restlessness. She could not speak to him on the one subject that tormented her. She had herself forbidden mention of it.

She looked askance at Jasper, who was not speaking. He had his hat off, on his lap; his eyes were moist, his lips were moving. She was confident he was praying. He turned in a

moment, re-covered his head, and said with his sweet smile, 'God is good. I have already thanked you. I have thanked Him now.'

Was this hypocrisy? Barbara could not believe it.

She said, 'If you have no objection, may we know your name? I have been asked by my father and others. I mean,' she hesitated, 'a name by which you would care to be called.'

'You shall have my real name,' he said, slightly colouring.

'For myself to know, or to tell others?'

'As you will, Miss Jordan. My name is Babb.'

'Babb!' echoed Barbara. She thought to herself that it was a name as ugly as it was unusual. At that moment Eve appeared, glowing with life, a wreath of wild roses wound about her hat.

'Bab! Bab dear!' she cried, referring to her sister.

Barbara turned crimson, and sprang from her seat.

'The last cartload is going to start,' said Eve, eagerly, 'and the men say that I am the Queen and must sit on the top; but I want half-a-crown, Bab dear, to pay my footing up the ladder to the top of the load.'

Barbara drew her sister away. 'Eve! never call me by that ridiculous pet-name again. When we were children it did not matter. Now I do not wish it.'

'Why not?' asked the wondering girl. 'How hot you are looking, and yet you have been sitting still!'

'I do not wish it, Eve. You will make me very angry, and I shall feel hurt if you do it again. Bab—think, darling, the name is positively revolting, I assure you. I hate it. If you have any love for me in your heart, any regard for my feelings, you will not call me by it again. Bab——!'

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE POCKET-BOOK.

JASPER drew in full draughts of the delicious air, leaning back on the bench, himself in shade, watching the trees, hearing the hum of the bees, and the voices of the harvesters, pleasant and soft in the distance, as if the golden sun had subdued all the harshness in the tones of the rough voices. Then the waggon drew nigh; the garden was above the level of the farmyard, terraced so that Jasper could not see the cart and horses, or the men, but he saw the great load of grey-green hay move by, with Eve and Barbara seated on it, the former not only crowned with roses, but holding a pole with a bunch of roses and a flutter of ribands at the top. Eve's golden hair had fallen loose and was about her shoulders. She was in an ecstasy of gaiety. As the load travelled along before the garden, both Eve and her sister saw the sick man on his bench.

He seemed so thin, white, and feeble in the midst of a fresh and vigorous nature that Barbara's heart grew soft, and she had to bite her lip to control its quiver. Eve waved her staff topped with flowers and streamers, stood up in the hay and curtsied to him, with a merry laugh, and then dropped back into the hay, having lost her balance through the jolting of the wheels. Jasper brightened, and, removing his hat, returned the salute with comic majesty. Then, as Eve and Barbara disappeared, he fell back against the wall, and his eyes rested on the fluttering leaves of a white poplar, and some white butterflies that might have been leaves reft from the trees, flickering and pursuing each other in the soft air. The swallows that lived in a colony of inverted clay domes under the eaves were darting about, uttering shrill cries, the expression of exuberant joy of life. Jasper sank into a summer dream.

He was roused from his reverie by a man coming between him and the pretty garden picture that filled his eyes. He recognised the surgeon, Mr.—or as the country people called him, Doctor—Coyshe. The young medical man had no objection to being thus entitled, but he very emphatically protested against his name being converted into Quash, or even Squash. Coyshe is a very respectable and

ancient Devonshire family name, but it is a name that lends itself readily to phonetic degradation, and the young surgeon had to do daily battle to preserve it from being vulgarised. 'Good afternoon, patient!' said he cheerily; 'doing well, thanks to my treatment.'

Jasper made a suitable reply.

'Ah! I dare say you pull a face at seeing me now, thinking I am paying visits for the sake of my fee, when need for my attendance is past. That, let me tell you, is the way of some doctors; it is, however, not mine. Lord love you, I knew a case of a man who sent for a doctor because his wife was ill, and was forced to smother her under pillows to cut short the attendance and bring the bill within the compass of his means. Bless your stars, my man, that you fell into my hands, not into those of old Crooke.'

'I am assured,' said Jasper, 'that I am fallen into the best possible hands.'

'Who assured you of that?' asked Coyshe sharply; 'Miss Eve or the other?'

'I am assured by my own experience of your skill.'

'Ah! an ordinary practitioner would have trepanned you; the whole run of them, myself and myself only excepted, have an itch in their fingers for the saw and the scalpel. There is

far too much bleeding, cupping, and calomel used in the profession now—but what are we to say? The people love to have it so, to see blood and have a squeal for their money. I've had before now to administer a bread pill and give it a Greek name.'

Mr. Jordan from his study, the girls from the stackyard (or moway as it is locally called), saw or heard the surgeon. He was loud in his talk and made himself heard. They came to him into the garden. Eve, with her natural coquetry, retained the crown of roses and her sceptre.

'You see,' said Mr. Coyshe, rubbing his hands, 'I have done wonders. This would have been a dead man but for me. Now, sir, look at me,' he said to Jasper; 'you owe me a life.'

'I know very well to whom I owe my life,' answered Jasper, and glanced at Barbara. 'To my last hour I shall not forget the obligation.'

'And do you know *why* he owes me his life?' asked the surgeon of Mr. Jordan. 'Because I let nature alone, and kept old Crooke away. I can tell you the usual practice. The doctor comes and shrugs his shoulders and takes snuff. When he sees a proper impression made, he says, "However, we will do our best,



only we don't work miracles." He sprinkles his victim with snuff, as if about to embalm the body. If the man dies, the reason is clear. Crooke was not sent for in time. If he recovers, Crooke has wrought a miracle. That is not my way, as you all know.' He looked about him complacently.

'What will you take, Mr. Coyshe?' asked Barbara; 'some of our haysel ale, or claret? And will you come indoors for refreshment?'

'Indoors! O dear me, no!' said the young doctor; 'I keep out of the atmosphere impregnated with four or five centuries of dirt as much as I can. If I had my way I would burn down every house with all its contents every ten years, and so we might get rid of half the diseases which ravage the world. I wouldn't live in your old ramshackle Morwell if I were paid ten guineas a day. The atmosphere must be poisoned, charged with particles of dust many centuries old. Under every cupboard, ay, and on top of it, is fluff, and every stir of a gown, every tread of a foot, sets it floating, and the currents bring it to your lungs or pores. What is that dust made up of? Who can tell? The scrapings of old monks, the scum of Protestant reformers, the detritus of any number of Jordans for ages, some of whom have had measles, some scarlet-

fever, some small-pox. No, thank you. I'll have my claret in the garden. I can tell you without looking what goes to make up the air in that pestilent old box; the dog has carried old bones behind the cupboard, the cat has been set a saucer of milk under the chest, which has been forgotten and gone sour. An old stocking which one of the ladies was mending was thrust under a sofa cushion, when the front door bell rang, and she had to receive callers—and that also was forgotten.'

Miss Jordan waxed red and indignant. 'Mr. Coyshe,' she said, 'I cannot hear you say this, it is not true. Our house is perfectly sweet and clean; there is neither a store of old bones, nor a half-darned stocking, nor any of the other abominations you mentioned about it.'

'Your eyes have not seen the world through a microscope. Mine have,' answered the unabashed surgeon. 'When a ray of sunlight enters your rooms, you can see the whole course of the ray.'

'Yes.'

'Very well, that is because the air is dirty. If it were clean you would be unable to see it. No, thank you. I will have my claret in the garden; perhaps you would not mind having it sent out to me. The air out of doors is pure compared to that of a house.'

A little table, wine, glasses, and cake were sent out. Barbara and Eve did not reappear.

Mr. Jordan had a great respect for the young doctor. His self-assurance, his pedantry, his boasting, imposed on the timid and half-cultured mind of the old man. He hoped to get information from the surgeon about tests for metals, to interest him in his pursuits without letting him into his secrets; he therefore overcame his shyness sufficiently to appear and converse when Mr. Coyshe arrived.

‘What a very beautiful daughter you have got!’ said Coyshe; ‘one that is only to be seen in pictures. A man despairs of beholding such loveliness in actual life, and see, here, at the limit of the world, the vision flashes on one! Not much like you, Squire, not much like her sister; looks as if she belonged to another breed.’

Jasper Babb looked round startled at the audacity and rudeness of the surgeon. Mr. Jordan was not offended; he seemed indeed flattered. He was very proud of Eve.

‘You are right. My eldest daughter has almost nothing in common with her younger sister—only a half-sister.’

‘Really,’ said Coyshe, ‘it makes me shiver for the future of that fairy being. I take it for granted she will be yoked to some county booby

of a squire, a Bob Acres. Good Lord! what a prospect! A jewel of gold in a swine's snout, Solomon says.'

'Eve shall never marry one unworthy of her,' said Ignatius Jordan vehemently. 'She will be under no constraint. She will be able to afford to shape her future according to her fancy. She will be comfortably off.'

'Comfortably off fifty years ago means pinched now, and pinched now means screwed flat fifty years hence. Everything is becoming costly. Living is a luxury only for the well-to-do. The rest merely exist under sufferance.'

'Miss Eve will not be pinched,' answered Mr. Jordan, unconscious that he was being drawn out by the surgeon. 'Seventeen years ago I lent fifteen hundred pounds, which is to be returned to me on Midsummer Day. To that I can add about five hundred; I have saved something since—not much, for somehow the estate has not answered as it did of old.'

'You have two daughters.'

'Oh, yes, there is Barbara,' said Jordan in a tone of indifference. 'Of course she will have something, but then—she can always manage for herself—with the other it is different.'

'Are you ill?' asked Coyshe, suddenly, observing that Jasper had turned very pale, and

dark under the eyes. 'Is the air too strong for you?'

'No, let me remain here. The sun does me good.'

Mr. Jordan was rather glad of this opportunity of publishing the fortune he was going to give his younger daughter. He wished it to be known in the neighbourhood, that Eve might be esteemed and sought by suitable young men. He often said to himself that he could die content were Eve in a position where she would be happy and admired.

'When did Miss Eve's mother die?' asked Coyshe, abruptly. Mr. Jordan started.

'Did I say she was dead? Did I mention her?'

Coyshe mused, put his hand through his hair and ruffled it up; then folded his arms and threw out his legs.

'Now tell me, squire, are you sure of your money?'

'What do you mean?'

'That money you say you lent seventeen years ago. What are your securities?'

'The best. The word of an honourable man.'

'The word!' Mr. Coyshe whistled. 'Words! What are words?'

'He offered me a mortgage, but it never

came,' said Mr. Jordan. 'Indeed, I never applied for it. I had his word.'

'If you see the shine of that money again, you are lucky.' Then looking at Jasper: 'My patient is upset again—I thought the air was too strong for him. He must be carried in. He is going into a fit.'

Jasper was leaning back against the wall, with distended eyes, and hands and teeth clenched as with a spasm.

'No,' said Jasper, faintly, 'I am not in a fit.'

'You looked much as if going into an attack of lock-jaw.'

At that moment Barbara came out, and at once noticed the condition of the convalescent.

'Here,' said she, 'lean on me as you did coming out. This has been too much for you. Will you help me, Doctor Coyshe?'

'Thank you,' said Jasper. 'If Miss Jordan will suffer me to rest on her arm, I will return to my room.'

When he was back in his arm-chair and the little room he had occupied, Barbara looked earnestly in his face and said, 'What has troubled you? I am sure something has.'

'I am very unhappy,' he answered, 'but you must ask me no questions.'

Miss Jordan went in quest of her sister.

‘Eve,’ she said, ‘our poor patient is exhausted. Sit in the parlour and play and sing, and give a look into his room now and then. I am busy.’

The slight disturbance had not altered the bent of Mr. Jordan’s thoughts. When Mr. Coyshe rejoined him, which he did the moment he saw Jasper safe in his room, Mr. Jordan said, ‘I cannot believe that I ran any risk with the money. The man to whom I lent it is honourable. Besides, I have his note of hand acknowledging the debt; not that I would use it against him.’

‘A man’s word,’ said Coyshe, ‘is like india-rubber that can be made into any shape he likes. A word is made up of letters, and he will hold to the letters and permute their order to suit his own convenience, not yours. A man will stick to his word only so long as his word will stick to him. It depends entirely on which side it is licked. Hark! Is that Miss Eve singing? What a voice! Why, if she were trained and on the stage——’

Mr. Jordan stood up, agitated and angry.

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Coyshe. ‘Does the suggestion offend you? I merely threw it out in the event of the money lent not turning up.’

Just then his eyes fell on something that lay

under the seat. 'What is that? Have you dropped a pocket-book?'

A rough large leather pocket-book that was to which he pointed. Mr. Jordan stooped and took it up. He examined it attentively and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

'Well,' said the surgeon, mockingly, 'is the money come, dropped from the clouds at your feet?'

'No,' answered Mr. Jordan, under his breath, 'but this is most extraordinary, most mysterious! How comes this case here? It is the very same which I handed over, filled with notes, to that man seventeen years ago! See! there are my initials on it; there on the shield is my crest. How comes it here?'

'The question, my dear sir, is not how comes it here? but what does it contain?'

'Nothing.'

The surgeon put his hands in his pockets, screwed up his lips for a whistle, and said, 'I foretold this, I am always right.'

'The money is not due till Midsummer Day.'

'Nor will come till the Greek kalends. Poor Miss Eve!'



## CHAPTER X.

## BARBARA'S PETITION.

MIDSUMMER-DAY was come. Mr. Jordan was in suspense and agitation. His pale face was more livid and drawn than usual. The fears inspired by the surgeon had taken hold of him.

Before the birth of Eve he had been an energetic man, eager to get all he could out of the estate, but for seventeen years an unaccountable sadness had hung over him, damping his ardour; his thoughts had been carried away from his land, whither no one knew, though the results were obvious enough.

With Barbara he had little in common. She was eminently practical. He was always in a dream. She was never on an easy footing with her father, she tried to understand him and failed, she feared that his brain was partially disturbed. Perhaps her efforts to make him out annoyed him; at any rate he was cold towards her, without being inten-

tionally unkind. An ever-present restraint was upon both in each other's presence.

At first, after the disappearance of Eve's mother, things had gone on upon the old lines. Christopher Davy had superintended the farm labours, but as he aged and failed, and Barbara grew to see the necessity for supervision, she took the management of the farm as well as of the house upon herself. She saw that the men dawdled over their work, and that the condition of the estate was going back. The coppices had not been shredded in winter and the oak was grown into a tangle. The reuding for bark in spring was done unsystematically. The hedges became ragged, the ploughs out of order, the thistles were not cut periodically and prevented from seeding. There were not men sufficient to do the work that had to be done. She had not the time to attend to the men as well as the maids, to the farmyard as well as the house. She had made up her mind that a proper bailiff must be secured, with authority to employ as many labourers as the estate required. Barbara was convinced that her father, with his lost, dreamy head, was incapable of managing their property, even if he had the desire. Now that the trusty old Davy was ill, and breaking up, she had none to advise her.

She was roused to anger on Midsummer Day by discovering that the hayrick had never been thatched, and that it had been exposed to the rain which had fallen heavily, so that half of it had to be taken down because soaked, lest it should catch fire or blacken. This was the result of the carelessness of the men. She determined to speak to her father at once. She had good reason for doing so.

She found him in his study arranging his specimens of mundic and peacock copper.

'Has anyone come, asking for me?' he said, looking up with fluttering face from his work.

'No one, father.'

'You startled me, Barbara, coming on me stealthily from behind. What do you want with me? You see I am engaged, and you know I hate to be disturbed.'

'I have something I wish to speak about.'

'Well, well, say it and go.' His shaking hands resumed their work.

'It is the old story, dear papa. I want you to engage a steward. It is impossible for us to go on longer in the way we have. You know how I am kept on the run from morning to night. I have to look after all your helpless men, as well as my own helpless maids. When I am in the field, there is mischief done

in the kitchen ; when I am in the house, the men are smoking and idling on the farm. Eve cannot help me in seeing to domestic matters, she has not the experience. Everything devolves on me. I do not grudge doing my utmost, but I have not the time for everything, and I am not ubiquitous.'

'No,' said Mr. Jordan, 'Eve cannot undertake any sort of work. That is an understood thing.'

'I know it is. If I ask her to be sure and recollect something, she is certain with the best intentions to forget ; she is a dear beautiful butterfly, not fit to be harnessed. Her brains are thistledown, her bones cherry stalks.'

'Yes, do not crush her spirits with uncongenial work.'

'I do not want to. I know as well as yourself that I must rely on her for nothing. But the result is that I am overtasked. Now—will you credit it? The beautiful hay that was like green tea is spoiled. Those stupid men did not thatch it. They said they had no reed, and waited to comb some till the rain set in. When it did pour, they were all in the barn talking and making reed, but at the same time the water was drenching and spoiling the hay. Oh, papa, I feel disposed to cry!'

‘I will speak to them about it,’ said Mr. Jordan, with a sigh, not occasioned by the injury to his hay, but because he was disturbed over his specimens.

‘My dear papa,’ said the energetic Barbara, ‘I do not wish you to be troubled about these tiresome matters. You are growing old, daily older, and your strength is not gaining. You have other pursuits. You are not heartily interested in the farm. I see your hand tremble when you hold your fork at dinner; you are becoming thinner every day. I would spare you trouble. It is really necessary, I must have it—you must engage a bailiff. I shall break down, and that will be the end, or we shall all go to ruin. The woods are running to waste. There are trees lying about literally rotting. They ought to be sent away to the Devonport dockyard where they could be sold. Last spring, when you let the rending, the barkers shaved a whole copse wood, as if shaving a man’s chin, instead of leaving the better sticks standing.’

‘We have enough to live on.’

‘We must do our duty to the land on which we live. I cannot endure to see waste anywhere. I have only one head, one pair of eyes, and one pair of hands. I cannot think of, see to, and do everything. I lie awake

night after night considering what has to be done, and the day is too short for me to do all I have determined on in the night. Whilst that poor gentleman has been ill, I have had to think of him in addition to everything else; so some duties have been neglected. That is how, I suppose, the doctor came to guess there was a stocking half-darned under the sofa cushion. Eve was mending it, she tired and put it away, and of course forgot it. I generally look about for Eve's leavings, and tidy her scraps when she has gone to bed, but I have been too busy. I am vexed about that stocking. How those protruding eyes of the doctor managed to see it I cannot think. He was, however, wrong about the saucer of sour milk.'

Mr. Jordan continued nervously sorting his minerals into little white card boxes.

'Well, papa, are you going to do anything?'

'Do—do—what?'

'Engage a bailiff. I am sure we shall gain money by working the estate better. The bailiff will pay his cost, and something over.'

'You are very eager for money,' said Mr. Jordan sulkily; 'are you thinking of getting married, and anxious to have a dower?'

Barbara coloured deeply, hurt and offended.

‘This is unkind of you, papa ; I am thinking of Eve. I think only of her. You ought to know that’—the tears came into her eyes. ‘Of course Eve will marry some day ;’ then she laughed, ‘no one will ever come for me.’

‘To be sure,’ said Mr. Jordan.

‘I have been thinking, papa, that Eve ought to be sent to some very nice lady, or to some very select school, where she might have proper finishing. All she has learnt has been from me, and I have had so much to do, and I have been so unable to be severe with Eve—that—that—I don’t think she has learned much except music, to which she takes instinctively as a South Sea islander to water.’

‘I cannot be parted from Eve. It would rob my sky of its sun. What would this house be with only you—I mean without Eve to brighten it?’

‘If you will think the matter over, father, you will see that it ought to be. We must consider Eve, and not ourselves. I would not have her, dear heart, anywhere but in the very best school,—hardly a school, a place where only three or four young ladies are taken, and they of the best families. That will cost money, so we must put our shoulders to the

wheel, and push the old coach on.' She laid her hands on the back of her father's chair and leaned over his shoulder. She had been standing behind him. Did she hope he would kiss her? If so, her hope was vain.

'Do, dear papa, engage an honest, superior sort of man to look after the farm. I will promise to make a great deal of money with my dairy, if he will see to the cows in the fields. Try the experiment, and, trust me, it will answer.'

'All in good time.'

'No, papa, do not put this off. There is another reason why I speak. Christopher Davy is bedridden. You are sometimes absent, then we girls are left alone in this great house, all day, and occasionally nights as well. You know there was no one here on that night when the accident happened. There were two men in this house, one, indeed, insensible. We know nothing of them, who they were, and what they were about. How can you tell that bad characters may not come here? It is thought that you have saved money, and it is known that Morwell is unprotected. You, papa, are so frail, and with your shaking hand a gun would not be dangerous.'

He started from his chair and upset his specimens.



‘Do not speak like that,’ he said, trembling.

‘There, I have disturbed you even by alluding to it. If you were to level a gun, and had your finger——’

He put his hand, a cold, quivering hand, on her lips: ‘For God’s sake—silence!’ he said.

She obeyed. She knew how odd her father was, yet his agitation now was so great that it surprised her. It made her more resolute to carry her point.

‘Papa, you are expecting to have about two thousand pounds in the house. Will it be safe? You have told the doctor, and that man, our patient, heard you. Excuse my saying it, but I think it was not well to mention it before a perfect stranger. You may have told others. Mr. Coyshe is a chatterbox, he may have talked about it throughout the neighbourhood—the fact may be known to everyone, that to-day you are expecting to have a large sum of money brought you. Well—who is to guard it? Are there no needy and unscrupulous men in the county who would rob the house, and maybe silence an old man and two girls who stood in their way to a couple of thousand pounds?’

‘The sum is large. It must be hidden away,’ said Mr. Jordan, uneasily. ‘I had not

considered the danger'—he paused—'if it be paid——'

'*If*, papa? I thought you were sure of it.'

'Yes, quite sure; only Mr. Coyshe disturbed me by suggesting doubts.'

'Oh, the doctor!' exclaimed Barbara, shrugging her shoulders.

'Well, the doctor,' repeated Mr. Jordan, captiously. 'He is a very able man. Why do you turn up your nose at him? He can see through a stone wall, and under a cushion to where a stocking is hidden, and under a cupboard to where a saucer of sour milk is thrust away; and he can see into the human body through the flesh and behind the bones, and can tell you where every nerve and vein is, and what is wrong with each. When things are wrong, then it is like stockings and saucers where they ought not to be in a house.'

'He was wrong about the saucer of sour milk, utterly wrong,' persisted Barbara.

'I hope and trust the surgeon was wrong in his forecast about the money—but my heart fails me——'

'He was wrong about the saucer,' said the girl encouragingly.

'But he was right about the stocking,' said her father dispiritedly.

## CHAPTER XI.

## GRANTED !

As the sun declined, Mr. Jordan became uneasy. He could not remain in his study. He could not rest anywhere. The money had not been returned. He had taken out of his strong box Ezekiel Babb's acknowledgment and promise of payment, but he knew that it was so much waste-paper to him. He could not or would not proceed against the borrower. Had he not wronged him cruelly by living with his daughter as if she were his wife, without having been legally married to her? Could he take legal proceedings for the recovery of his money, and so bring all the ugly story to light and publish it to the world? He had let Mr. Babb have the money to pacify him, and make some amends for the wrong he had done. No! If Mr. Babb did not voluntarily return the money, Ignatius Jordan foresaw that it was lost to him, lost to Eve, and poor Eve's future was

unprovided for. The estate must go to Barbara, that is, the reversion in the tenure of it; the ready money he had intended for Eve. Mr. Jordan felt a bitterness rise in his heart against Barbara, whose future was assured, whilst that of Eve was not. He would have liked to leave Morwell to his younger daughter, but he was not sure that the Duke would approve of this, and he was quite sure that Eve was incompetent to manage a farm and dairy.

At the time of which we treat, it was usual for every squire to farm a portion of his own estate, his manor house was backed with extensive outbuildings for cattle, and his wife and daughters were not above superintending the dairy. Indeed, an ancestress of the author took farm after farm into her own hands as the leases fell in, and at last farmed the entire parish. She died in 1795. The Jordans were not squires, but perpetual tenants under the Dukes of Bedford, and had been received by the country gentry on an equal footing, till Mr. Jordan compromised his character by his union with Eve's mother. The estate of Morwell was a large one for one man to farm; if the Duke had exacted a large rent, of late years Mr. Jordan would have fallen into arrears, but the Duke had not raised his rent at the last renewal. The Dukes were the most indulgent of landlords.

Mr. Jordan came into the hall. It was the same as it had been seventeen years before ; the same old clock was there, ticking in the same tone, the same scanty furniture of a few chairs, the same slate floor. Only the cradle was no longer to be seen. The red light smote into the room just as it had seventeen years before. There against the wall it painted a black cross as it had done seventeen years ago.

Ignatius Jordan looked up over the great fireplace. Above it hung the musket he had been cleaning when Ezekiel Babb entered. It had not been taken down and used since that day. Seventeen years! It was an age. The little babe that had lain in the cradle was now a beautiful marriageable maiden. Time had made its mark upon himself. His back was more bent, his hand more shaky, his walk less steady ; a careful, thrifty man had been converted into an abstracted, half-crazed dreamer. Seventeen years of gnawing care and ceaseless sorrow! How had he been able to bear it? Only by the staying wings of love, of love for his little Eve—for *her* child. Without his Eve, *her* child, long ago he would have sunk and been swallowed up, the clouds of derangement of intellect would have descended on his brain, or his bodily health would have given way.

Seventeen years ago, on Midsummer Day,

there had stood on the little folding oak table under the window a tumbler full of china roses, which were drooping, and had shed their leaves over the polished, almost black, table top. They had been picked some days before by his wife. Now, in the same place stood a glass, and in it were roses from the same tree, not drooping, but fresh and glistening, placed that morning there by *her* daughter. His eye sought the clock. At five o'clock, seventeen years ago, Ezekiel Babb had come into that hall through that doorway, and had borrowed his money. The clock told that the time was ten minutes to five. If Mr. Babb did not appear to the hour, he would abandon the expectation of seeing him. He must make a journey to Buckfastleigh over the moor, a long day's journey, and seek the defaulter, and know the reason why the loan was not repaid.

He thought of the pocket-book on the gravel. How came it there? Who could have brought it? Mr. Jordan was too fully impressed with belief in the supernatural not to suppose it was dropped at his feet as a warning that his money was gone.

Mr. Jordan's eyes were fixed on the clock. The works began to whir-r. Then followed the strokes. One—two—three—four—FIVE.

At the last stroke the door of Jasper's sick-

room opened, and the convalescent slowly entered the hall and confronted his host.

The last week had wrought wonders in the man. He had rapidly recovered flesh and vigour after his wounds were healed.

As he entered, and his eyes met those of Mr. Jordan, the latter felt that a messenger from Ezekiel Babb stood before him, and that his money was not forthcoming.

‘Well, sir?’ he said.

‘I am Jasper, the eldest son of Ezekiel Babb, of Owlacombe in Buckfastleigh,’ he said. ‘My father borrowed money of you this day seventeen years ago, and solemnly swore on this day to repay it.’

‘Well?’

‘It is not well. I have not got the money.’

A moan of disappointment broke from the heart of Ignatius Jordan, then a spasm of rage, such as might seize on a madman, transformed his face; his eye blazed, and he sprang to his feet and ran towards Jasper. The latter, keeping his eye on him, said firmly, ‘Listen to me, Mr. Jordan. Pray sit down again, and I will explain to you why my father has not sent the money.’

Mr. Jordan hesitated. His face quivered. With his raised hand he would have struck Jasper, but the composure of the latter awed

him. The paroxysm passed, and he sank into his chair, and gave way to depression.

‘My father is a man of honour. He gave you his word, and he intended to keep it. He borrowed of you a large sum, and he laid it out in the purchase of some land. He has been fairly prosperous. He saved money enough to repay the debt, and perhaps more. As the time drew nigh for repayment he took the sum required from the bank in notes, and locked them in his bureau. Others knew of this. My father was not discreet: he talked about the repayment, he resented having to make it, complained that he would be reduced to great straits without it.’

‘The money was not his, but mine.’

‘I know that,’ said Jasper, sorrowfully. ‘But my father has always been what is termed a close man, has thought much of money, and cannot bear to part with it. I do not say that this justifies, but it explains, his dissatisfaction. He is an old man, and becoming feeble, and clings through force of habit to his money.’

‘Go on; nothing can justify him.’

‘Others knew of his money. One day he was at Totnes, at a great cloth fair. He did not return till the following day. During his absence his bureau was broken open, and the money stolen.’



‘Was the thief not caught? Was the money not recovered?’ asked Mr. Jordan, trembling with excitement.

‘The money was in part recovered.’

‘Where is it?’

‘Listen to what follows. You asked if the—the person who took the money was caught. He was.’

‘Is he in prison?’

‘The person who took the money was caught, tried, and sent to jail. When taken, some of the money was found about him; he had not spent it all. What remained I was bringing you.’

‘Give it me.’

‘I have not got it.’

‘You have not got it?’

‘No, I have lost it.’

Again did Mr. Jordan start up in a fit of rage. He ground his teeth, and the sweat broke out in drops on his brow.

‘I had the money with me when the accident happened, and I was thrown from my horse, and became unconscious. It was lost or taken then.’

‘Who was your companion? He must have robbed you.’

‘I charge no one. I alone am to blame. The money was entrusted to my keeping.’

‘Why did your father give you the money before the appointed day?’

‘When my father recovered part of the money, he would no longer keep it in his possession, lest he should again lose it; so he bade me take it to you at once.’

‘You have spent the money, you have spent it yourself!’ cried Mr. Jordan wildly.

‘If I had done this, should I have come to you to-day with this confession? I had the money in the pocket-book in notes. The notes were abstracted from the book. As I was so long insensible, it was too late to stop them at the bank. Whoever took them had time to change them all.’

‘Cursed be the day I lent the money,’ moaned Ignatius Jordan. ‘The empty, worthless case returns, the precious contents are gone. What is the shell without the kernel? My Eve, my Eve!’ He clasped his hands over his brow.

‘And now once more hearken to me,’ pursued Jasper. ‘My father cannot immediately find the money that he owes you. He does not know of this second loss. I have not communicated with him since I met with my accident. The blame attaches to me. I must do what I can to make amends for my carelessness. I put myself into your hands. To repay

you now, my father would have to sell the land he bought. I do not think he could be persuaded to do this, though, perhaps, you might be able to force him to it. However, as you say the money is for your daughter, will you allow it to lie where it is for a while? I will undertake, should it come to me after my father's death, to sell it or transfer it, so as to make up to Miss Eve at the rate of five per cent. on the loan. I will do more. If you will consent to this, I will stay here and work for you. I have been trained in the country, and know about a farm. I will act as your foreman, overlooker, or bailiff. I will put my hand to anything. Reckon what my wage would be. Reckon at the end of a year whether I have not earned my wage and much more. If you like, I will work for you as long as my father lives; I will serve you now faithfully as no hired bailiff would serve you. My presence here will be a guarantee to you that I will be true to my undertaking to repay the whole sum with interest. I can see that this estate needs an active man on it; and you, sir, are too advanced in age, and too much given up to scientific pursuits, to cope with what is required.'

Those words, 'scientific pursuits,' softened Mr. Jordan. Jasper spoke in good faith; he had no idea how worthless those pursuits were, how

little true science entered into them. He knew that Mr. Jordan made mineralogical studies, and he supposed they were well directed.

‘Order me to do what you will,’ said Jasper, ‘and I will do it, and will double your gains in the year.’

‘I accept,’ said Ignatius Jordan. ‘There is no help for it. I must accept or be plundered of all.’

‘You accept! let us join hands on the bargain.’

It was strange; as once before, seventeen years ago, hands had met in the golden gleam of sun that shot through the window, ratifying a contract, so was it now. The hands clasped in the sunbeam, and the reflected light from their illuminated hands smote up into the faces of the two men, both pale, one with years and care, the other with sickness.

Mr. Jordan withdrew his hand, clasped both palms over his face and wept. ‘Thus it comes,’ he said. ‘The shadow is on me and on my child. One sorrow follows another.’

At that moment Barbara and Eve entered from the court.

‘Eve! Eve!’ cried the father excitedly, ‘come to me, my angel! my ill-treated child! my martyr!’ He caught her to his heart, put his face on her shoulder, and sobbed. ‘My

darling, you have had your money stolen, the money put away for you when you were in the cradle.'

'Who has stolen it, papa?' asked Barbara.

'Look there!' he cried; 'Jasper Babb was bringing me the money, and when he fell from his horse, it was stolen.'

Neither Barbara nor Eve spoke.

'Now,' continued Mr. Jordan, 'he has offered himself as my hind to look after the farm for me, and promises, if I give him time——'

'Father, you have refused!' interrupted Barbara.

'On the contrary, I have accepted.'

'It cannot, it must not be!' exclaimed Barbara vehemently. 'Father, you do not know what you have done.'

'This is strange language to be addressed by a child to a father,' said Mr. Jordan in a tone of irritation. 'Was there ever so unreasonable a girl before? This morning you pressed me to engage a bailiff, and now that Mr. Jasper Babb has volunteered, and I have accepted him, you turn round and won't have him.'

'No,' she said, with quick-drawn breath, 'I will not. Take anyone but him. I entreat you, papa. If you have any regard for my

opinion, let him go. For pity's sake do not allow him to remain here !'

'I have accepted him,' said her father coldly. 'Pray what weighty reasons have you got to induce me to alter my resolve?'

Miss Jordan stood thinking; the colour mounted to her forehead, then her brows contracted. 'I have none to give,' she said in a low tone, greatly confused, with her eyes on the ground. Then, in a moment, she recovered her self-possession and looked Jasper full in the face, but without speaking, steadily, sternly. In fact, her heart was beating so fast, and her breath coming so quick, that she could not speak. 'Mr. Jasper,' she said at length, controlling her emotions by a strong effort of will, 'I entreat you—go.'

He was silent.

'I have nursed you ; I have given my nights and days to you. You confessed that I had saved your life. If you have any gratitude in your heart, if you have any respect for the house that has sheltered you—go !'

'Barbara,' said her father, 'you are a perverse girl. He shall not go. I insist on his fulfilling his engagement. If he leaves I shall take legal proceedings against his father to recover the money.'

'Do that rather than retain him.'

‘Miss Jordan,’ said Jasper, slowly, and with sadness in his voice, ‘it is true that you have saved my life. Your kind hand drew me from the brink of the grave whither I was descending. I thank you with all my heart, but I cannot go from my engagement to your father. Through my fault the money was lost, and I must make what amends I may for my negligence.’

‘Go back to your father.’

‘That I cannot do.’

She considered with her hand over her lips to hide her agitation. ‘No,’ she said, ‘I understand that. Of course you cannot go back to your native place and to your home; but you need not stay here.’ Then suddenly, in a burst of passion, she extended her hands to her father, ‘Papa!’—then to the young man, ‘Mr. Jasper!—Papa, send him away! Mr. Jasper, do not remain!’

The young man was hardly less agitated than herself. He took a couple of steps towards the door.

‘Stuff and fiddlesticks!’ shouted Mr. Jordan. ‘He shall not go. I forbid him.’

Jasper turned. ‘Miss Barbara,’ he said, humbly, ‘you are labouring under a mistake which I must not explain. Forgive me. I stay.’

She looked at him with moody anger, and muttered, 'Knowing what you do—that I am not blind—that you should dare to settle here under this *honourable* roof. It is unjust! it is ungrateful! it is wicked! God help us! I have done what I could.'



## CHAPTER XII.

## CALLED AWAY.

JASPER was installed in Morwell as bailiff in spite of the remonstrances of Barbara. He was given a room near the gatehouse, and was attended by Mrs. Davy, but he came for his dinner to the table of the Jordans. Barbara had done what she could to prevent his becoming an inmate of the house. She might not tell her father her real reasons for objecting to the arrangement.

She was rendered more uneasy a day or two after by receiving news that an aunt, a sister of her mother, who lived beyond Dartmoor, was dying, and she was summoned to receive her last sigh. She must leave Morwell, leave her father and sister in the house with a man whom she thoroughly mistrusted. Her only comfort was that Jasper was not sufficiently strong and well to be dangerous. What was he? Was there any truth in that story he had told her

father? She could not believe it, because it would not fit in with what she already knew. What place had the convict's garb in that tale? She turned the narrative about in her mind, and rejected it. She was inclined to disbelieve in Jasper being the son of old Mr. Babb. He had assumed the name and invented the story to deceive her father, and form an excuse for remaining in the house.

She hardly spoke to Jasper when they met. She was cold and haughty, she did not look at him; and he made no advances to gain her goodwill.

When she received the summons to her aunt's death-bed, knowing that she must go, she asked where Mr. Babb was, and, hearing that he was in the barn, went thither with the letter in her hand.

He had been examining the horse-turned winnowing machine, which was out of order. As she came to the door he looked up and removed his hat, making a formal salute. The day was hot; he had been taking the machine to pieces, and was warm, so he had removed his coat. He at once drew it on his back again.

Barbara had a curt, almost rough, manner at times. She was vexed now, and angry with him, so she spoke shortly, 'I am summoned to Ashburton. That is close to Buckfastleigh,

where, you say, you lived, to make my father believe it is your home.'

'Yes, Miss Jordan, that is true.'

'You have not written to your home since you have been with us. At least—' she hesitated, and slightly coloured—'you have sent no letter by our boy. Perhaps you were afraid to have it known where you are. No doubt you were right. It is essential to you that your presence here should not be known to anyone but your father. A letter might be opened, or let lie about, and so your whereabouts be discovered. Supposing your story to be true, that is how I account for your silence. If it be false——'

'It is not false, Miss Jordan.'

'I am going to Ashburton, I will assure myself of it there. If it be false I shall break my promise to you, and tell my father everything. I give you fair warning. If it be true——'

'It is true, dear young lady.'

'Do not be afraid of my disclosing your secret, and putting you in peril.'

'I am sure you cannot do that,' he said, with a smile that was sad. 'If you go to Buckfastleigh, Miss Jordan, I shall venture to send word by you to my father where I am, that the money is lost, and what I have undertaken.'

Barbara tossed her head, and flashed an indignant glance at him out of her brown eyes.

‘I cannot, I will not be a porter of lies.’

‘What lies?’

‘You did not lose the money. Why deceive me? I know your object in lurking here, in the most out-of-the-way nook of England you could find. You think that here you are safe from pursuit. You made up the story to impose on my father, and induce him to engage you. O, you are very honourable! discharging a debt!—I hate crime, but I hate falsehood even more.’

‘You are mistaken, Miss Jordan. The story is true.’

‘You have told the whole honest truth?’

‘I do not profess to have told the whole truth. What I have told has been true, though I have not told all.’

‘A pinch of truth is often more false than a bushel of lies. It deceives, the other does not.’

‘It is true that I lost the money confided to me. If you are going to Ashburton, I ask you, as a matter of kindness—I know how kind you can be, alas and I know also how cruel—to see my father.’

She laughed haughtily. ‘This is a fine proposition. The servant sends the mistress to do

his dirty work. I thank you for the honour.' She turned angrily away.

'Miss Barbara,' said Jasper, 'you are indeed cruel.'

'Am I cruel?' She turned and faced him again, with a threatening brow. 'I have reason to be just. Cruel I am not.'

'You were all gentleness at one time, when I was ill. Now——'

'I will not dispute with you. Do you expect to be fed with a spoon still? When you were ill I treated you as a patient, not more kindly than I would have treated my deadliest enemy. I acted as duty prompted. There was no one else to take care of you, that was my motive—my only motive.'

'When I think of your kindness then, I wish I were sick again.'

'A mean and wicked wish. Tired already, I suppose, of doing *honest* work.'

'Miss Barbara,' he said, 'pray let me speak.'

'Cruel,'—she recurred to what he had said before, without listening to his entreaty. 'It is you who are cruel coming here—you with the ugly stain on your life, coming here to hide it in this innocent household. Would it not be cruel in a man with the plague poison in him to steal into a home of harmless women and children, and give them all the pestilence?'

Had I suspected that you intended making Morwell your retreat and skulking den, I would never have passed my promise to keep silence. I would have taken the hateful evidence of what you are in my hand, and gone to the first constable and bid him arrest you in your bed.'

'No,' said Jasper, 'you would not have done it. I know you better than you know yourself. Are you lost to all humanity? Surely you feel pity in your gentle bosom, notwithstanding your bitter words.'

'No,' she answered, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, 'no, I have pity only for myself, because I was weak enough to take pains to save your worthless life.'

'Miss Jordan,' he said, looking sorrowfully at her—and her eyes fell,—'surely I have a right to ask some pity of you. Have you considered what the temptations must be that beset a young man who has been roughly handled at home, maltreated by his father, reared without love—a young man with a soul bounding with hopes, ambition, love of life, with a heart for pleasure, all which are beaten back and trampled down by the man who ought to direct them? Can you not understand how a lad who has been thwarted in every way, without a mother to soothe him in trouble, and encourage him in good, driven desperate by a father's

harshness, may break away and transgress? Consider the case of one who has been taught that everything beautiful—laughter, delight in music, in art, in nature, a merry gambol, a joyous warble—is sinful; is it not likely that the outlines of right and wrong would be so blurred in his conscience, that he might lapse into crime without criminal intent?’

‘Are you speaking of yourself, or are you excusing another?’

‘I am putting a case.’

Barbara sighed involuntarily. Her own father had been unsympathetic. He had never been actually severe, he had been indifferent.

‘I can see that there were temptations to one so situated to leave his home,’ she answered, ‘but this is not a case of truancy, but of crime.’

‘You judge without knowing the circumstances.’

‘Then tell me all, that I may form a more equitable judgment.’

‘I cannot do that now. You shall be told—later.’

‘Then I must judge by what I know——’

‘By what you guess,’ he said, correcting her.

‘As you will.’ Her eyes were on the ground. A white spar was there. She turned it over with her foot, and turned it again.

She hesitated what to say.

‘Should you favour me so far as to visit my father,’ said Jasper, ‘I beg of you one thing most earnestly. Do not mention the name of my companion—Martin.’

‘Why not?’

‘He may suspect him of having robbed me. My father is an energetic, resolute man. He might pursue him, and I alone am to blame. I lost the money.’

‘Who was that Martin?’

‘He told you—that I was nothing to him.’

‘Then why do you seek to screen him?’

‘Can I say that he took the money? If my father gets him arrested—I shall be found.’

Barbara laughed bitterly.

‘Of course, the innocent must not be brought into suspicion because he has ridden an hour alongside of the guilty. No! I will say nothing of Martin.’

She was still turning over the piece of spar with her foot. It sparkled in the sun.

‘How are you going to Ashburton, Miss Jordan?’

‘I ride, and little John Ostler rides with me, conveying my portmanteau.’

Then she trifled with the spar again. There was some peacock copper on it that glistened with all the colours of the rainbow. Abruptly,



at length, she turned away and went indoors.

Next morning early she came in her habit to the gate where the boy who was to accompany her held the horses. She had not seen Jasper that morning, but she knew where he was. He had gone along the lane toward the common to set the men to repair fences and hedges, as the cattle that strayed on the waste-land had broken into the wheat field.

She rode along the lane in meditative mood. She saw Jasper awaiting her on the down, near an old quarry, the rubble heap from which was now blazing with gorse in full bloom. She drew rein, and said, 'I am going to Ashburton. I will take your message, not because you asked me, but because I doubt the truth of your story.'

'Very well, Miss Jordan,' he said respectfully; 'I thank you, whatever your motive may be.'

'I expect and desire no thanks,' she answered, and whipped her horse, that started forward.

'I wish you a favourable journey,' he said. 'Good-bye.'

She did not turn her head or respond. She was very angry with him. She stooped over her pommel and buckled the strap of the

little pocket in the leather for her kerchief. But, before she had ridden far, an intervening gorse bush forced her to bend her horse aside, and then she looked back, without appearing to look, looked back out of her eye-corners. Jasper stood where she had left him, with his hat in his hand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MR. BABB AT HOME.

A LOVELY July day in the fresh air of Dartmoor, that seems to sparkle as it enters the lungs : fresh, but given a sharpness of salt : pure, but tinged with the sweetness of heather bloom and the honey of gorse. Human spirits bound in this air. The scenery of Dartmoor, if bare of trees, is wildly picturesque with granite masses and bold mountain peaks. Barbara could not shake off the anxiety that enveloped her spirits like the haze of a valley till she rose up a long ascent of three miles from the wooded valley of the Tavy to the bald, rock-strewn expanse of Dartmoor. She rode on, attended by her little groom, till she reached Prince's Town, the highest point attained by the road, where, in a desolate plain of bog, but little below the crests of some of the granite tors, stands a prison surrounded by a few mean houses. From

Prince's Town Barbara would have a rough moor-path, not a good road, before her; and, as the horses were exhausted with their long climb, she halted at the little inn, and ordered some dinner for herself, and required that the boy and the horses should be attended to.

Whilst ham and eggs—nothing else was procurable—were being fried, Barbara walked along the road to the prison, and looked at the gloomy, rugged gate built of untrimmed granite blocks. The unbroken desolation swept to the very walls of the prison.<sup>1</sup> At that height the wind moans among the rocks and rushes mournfully; the air is never still. The landlady of the inn came to her.

‘That is the jail,’ she said. ‘There was a prisoner broke out not long ago, and he has not yet been caught. How he managed it none can tell. Where he now is no one knows. He may be still wandering on the moor. Every road from it is watched. Perhaps he may give himself up, finding escape impossible. If not, he will die of hunger among the rocks.’

‘What was the crime for which he was here?’ asked Barbara; but she spoke with an effort.

<sup>1</sup> The author has allowed himself a slight anachronism. The prison was not a convict establishment at the period of this tale.

‘He was a bad man; it was no ordinary wickedness he committed. He robbed his own father.’

‘His own father!’ echoed Barbara, starting.

‘Yes, he robbed him of nigh on two thousand pounds. The father acted sharp, and had him caught before he had spent all the money. The assizes were next week, so it was quick work; and here he was for a few days, and then—he got away.’

‘Robbed his own father!’ murmured Barbara, and now she thought she saw more clearly than before into a matter that looked blacker the more she saw.

‘There’s a man in yonder who set fire to his house to get the insurance. Folks say his house was but a rummagy old place. ’Tis a pity. Now, if he had got away it would not have mattered; but, a rascal who did not respect his own father!—not that I hold with a man prosecuting his own son. That was hard. Still, if one was to escape, I don’t see why the Lord blessed the undertaking of the man who robbed his father, and turned His face away from him who only fired his house to get the insurance.’

The air ceased to sparkle as Miss Jordan rode the second stage of her journey; the sun was less bright, the fragrance of the gorse less

sweet. She did not speak to her young groom the whole way, but rode silently, with compressed lips and moody brow. The case was worse than she had anticipated. Jasper had robbed his father, and all that story of his coming as a messenger from Mr. Babb with the money was false.

One evening, unattended, Barbara Jordan rode to Buckfastleigh, asked for the house of Mr. Babb, and dismounted at the door. The house was a plain, ugly, square modern erection, almost an insult to the beauty of the surroundings. The drive from the entrance gate was grass-grown. There was a stucco porch. The door was painted drab, and the paint was blistered, and had flaked off. The house also was mottled. It had been painted over plaster and cement, and the paint had curled and come off in patches. The whole place had an uncared-for look. There were no flower beds, no creepers against the walls; the rain-shoots to the roof were choked, and the overflowing water had covered the walls where it reached with slime, black and green. At the back of the house was a factory, worked by a water-wheel, for cloth, and a gravel well-trodden path led from the back door of the house to the factory.

Barbara had descended from her cob to

open the gate into the drive; and she walked up to the front door, leading her horse. There she rang the bell, but had doubts whether the wire were sound. She waited a long time, and no one responded. She tried the bell again, and then rapped with the handle of her whip against the door.

Then she saw a face appear at a side window, observe her and withdraw. A moment after, a shuffling tread sounded in the hall, chains and bolts were undone, the door was cautiously opened, and in it stood an old man with white hair, and black beady eyes.

‘What do you want? Who are you?’ he asked.

‘Am I speaking to Mr. Babb?’

‘Yes, you are.’

‘May I have a few words with you in private?’

‘Oh, there is no one in the house, except my housekeeper, and she is deaf. You can say what you want here.’

‘Who is there to take my horse?’

‘You can hold him by the bridle, and talk to me where you stand. There’s no occasion for you to come in.’

Barbara saw into the hall; it was floored with stone, the Buckfastleigh marble, but unpolished. The walls had been papered with

glazed imitation panelling, but the paper had peeled off, and hung in strips. A chair with wooden seat, that had not been wiped for weeks, a set of coat and hat pegs, some broken, on one a very discoloured great coat and a battered hat. In a corner a bulging green umbrella, the silk detached from the whalebone.

‘You see,’ said the old man grimly, half turning, as he noticed that Barbara’s eyes were observing the interior; ‘you see, this is no place for ladies. It is a weaving spider’s web, not a gallant’s bower.’

‘But——’ the girl hesitated, ‘what I have to say is very particular, and I would not be overheard on any account.’

‘Ah! ah!’ he giggled, ‘I’ll have no games played with me. I’m no longer susceptible to fascination, and I ain’t worth it; on my sacred word I’m not. I’m very poor, very poor now. You can see it for yourself. Is this house kept up, and the garden? Does the hall look like a lap of luxury? I’m too poor to be a catch, so you may go away.’

Barbara would have laughed had not the nature of her visit been so serious.

‘I am Miss Jordan,’ she said, ‘daughter of Mr. Jordan of Morwell, from whom you borrowed money seventeen years ago.’



‘Oh!’ he gave a start of surprise. ‘Ah, well, I have sent back as much as I could spare. Some was stolen. It is not convenient to me after this reverse to find all now.’

‘My father has received nothing. What you sent was lost or stolen on the way.’

The old man’s jaw fell, and he stared blankly at her.

‘It is as I say. My father has received nothing.’

‘I sent it by my son.’

‘He has lost it.’

‘It is false. He has stolen it.’

‘What is to be done?’

‘Oh, that is for your father to decide. When my son robbed me, I locked him up. Now let your father see to it. I have done my duty, my conscience is clear.’

Barbara looked steadily, with some curiosity, into his face. The face was repulsive. The strongly marked features which might have been handsome in youth, were exaggerated by age. His white hair was matted and uncombed. He had run his fingers through it whilst engaged on his accounts, and had divided it into rat’s-tails. His chin and jaws were frouzy with coarse white bristles. In his black eyes was a keen twinkle of avarice and cunning. Old age and the snows of the

winter of life soften a harsh face, if there be any love in it; but in this there was none. If a fire had burnt on the hearth of the old man's heart, not a spark remained alive, the hearth was choked with grey ashes. Barbara traced a resemblance between the old man and his son. From his father, Jasper had derived his aquiline nose, and the shape of mouth and chin. But the expression of the faces was different. That of Jasper was noble, that of his father mean. The eyes of the son were gentle, those of Mr. Babb hard as pebbles that had been polished.

As Barbara talked with and observed the old man she recalled what Jasper had said of ill-treatment and lack of love. There was no tenderness to be got out of such a man as that before her.

'Now look you here,' said Mr. Babb. 'Do you see that stretch of field yonder where the cloth is strained in the sun? Very well. That cloth is mine. It is woven in my mill yonder. That field was purchased seventeen years ago for my accommodation. I can't repay the money now without selling the factory or the field, and neither is worth a shilling without the other. No—we must all put up with losses. I have mine; the Lord sends your father his. A wise Providence

orders all that. Tell him so. His heart has been hankering after mammon, and now Heaven has deprived him of it. I've had losses too. I've learned to bear them. So must he. What is your name?—I mean your Christian name?’

‘Barbara.’

‘Oh! not Eve—dear, no. You don't look as if that were your name.’

‘Eve is my sister—my half-sister.’

‘Ah, ha! the elder daughter. And what has become of the little one?’

‘She is well, at home, and beautiful as she is good. She is not at all like me.’

‘That is a good job—for you. I mean, that you are not like her. Is she lively?’

‘Oh, like a lark, singing, dancing, merry.’

‘Of course, thoughtless, light, a feather that flies and tosses in the breath.’

‘To return to the money. It was to have been my sister's.’

‘Well,’ said the old man with a giggle, ‘let it so remain. It *was* to have been. Now it cannot be. Whose fault is that? Not mine. I kept the money for your father. I am a man of my word. When I make a covenant I do not break it. But my son—my son!’

‘Your son is now with us.’

‘ You say he has stolen the money. Let your father not spare him. There is no good in being lenient. Be just. When my son robbed me, I did not spare him. I will not lift a little finger to save Jasper, who now, as you say, has robbed your father. Wait where you are ; I will run in, and write something, which will perhaps satisfy Mr. Jordan ; wait here, you cannot enter, or your horse would run away. What did you give for that cob ? not much. Do you want to sell him ? I don’t mind ten pounds. He’s not worth more. See how he hangs his off hind leg. That’s a blemish that would stand in your way of selling. Would you like to go over the factory ? No charge, you can tip the foreman a shilling. No cloth weaving your way, only wool growing ; and—judging from what I saw of your father—wool-gathering.’ With a cackle the old man slipped in and shut the door in Barbara’s face.

Miss Jordan stood patting the neck of her disparaged horse. ‘ You are not to be parted with, are you, Jock, to an old skinflint who would starve you ? ’

The cob put his nose on her shoulder, and rubbed it. She looked round. Everything spoke of sordidness, only the factory seemed cared for, where money was made. None was

wasted on the adornment, even on the decencies, of life.

The door opened. Mr. Babb had locked it after him as he went in. He came out with a folded letter in his hand.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘give that to your father.’

‘I must tell you, Mr. Babb, that your son Jasper is with us. He professes to have lost the money. He met with an accident and was nearly killed. He remains with us, as a sort of steward to my father, for a while, only for a while.’

‘Let him stay. I don’t want him back, I won’t have him back. I dare say, now, it would do him good to have his Bible. I’ll give you that to take to him. He may read and come to repentance.’

‘It is possible that there may be other things of his he will want. If you can make them up into a bundle, I will send for them. No,’ she said after a pause, ‘I will not send for them. I will take them myself.’

‘You will not mind staying there whilst I fetch them?’ said Mr. Babb. ‘Of course you won’t. You have the horse to hold. If you like to take a look round the garden you may, but there is nothing to see. Visit the mill if you like. You can give twopence to a boy to

hold the horse.' Then he slipped in again and relocked the door.

Barbara was only detained ten minutes. Mr. Babb came back with a jumble of clothes, a Bible, and a violin, not tied together, but in his arms anyhow. He threw everything on the doorstep.

'There,' he said, 'I will hold the bridle, whilst you make this into a bundle. I'm not natty with my fingers.' He took the horse from her. Barbara knelt under the portico and folded Jasper's clothes, and tied all together in an old table cover the father gave for the purpose. 'Take the fiddle,' he said, 'or I'll smash it.'

She looked up at him gravely, whilst knotting the ends.

'Have you a message for your son—of love and forgiveness?'

'Forgiveness! it is your father he has robbed. Love—— There is no love lost between us.'

'He is lonely and sad,' said Barbara, not now looking up, but busy with her hands, tightening the knots and intent on the bundle. 'I can see that his heart is aching; night and day there is a gnawing pain in his breast. No one loves him, and he seems to me to be a man

who craves for love, who might be reclaimed by love.'

'Don't forget the letter for your father,' said Mr. Babb.

'What about your son? Have you no message for him?'

'None. Mind that envelope. What it contains is precious.'

'Is it a cheque for the fifteen hundred pounds?'

'Oh, dear me, no! It is a text of scripture.'

Then, hastily, Mr. Babb stepped back, shut the door, and bolted and chained it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A SINE QUA NON.

BARBARA was on her way home from Ashburton. She had attended her aunt's funeral, and knew that a little sum of about fifty pounds per annum was hers, left her by her aunt. She was occupied with her thoughts. Was there any justification for Jasper? The father was hateful. She could excuse his leaving home; that was nothing; such a home must be intolerable to a young man of spirit—but to rob his father was another matter. Barbara could not quite riddle the puzzle out in her mind. It was clear that Mr. Babb had confided the fifteen hundred pounds to Jasper, and that Jasper had made away with them. He had been taken and sent to prison at Prince's Town. Thence he had escaped, and whilst escaping had met with the accident which had brought him to become an inmate of Morwell House. Jasper's story that he had lost the money was false. He had him-



self taken it. Barbara could not quite make it out; she tried to put it from her. What mattered it how the robbery had been committed?—sufficient that the man who took the money was with her father. What had he done with the money? That no one but himself could tell, and that she would not ask him.

It was vain crying over spilt milk. Fifteen hundred pounds were gone, and the loss of that money might affect Eve's prospects. Eve was already attracting admiration, but who would take her for her beauty alone? Eve, Barbara said to herself, was a jewel that must be kept in a velvet and morocco case, and must not be put to rough usage. She must have money. She must marry where nothing would be required of her but to look and be—charming.

It was clear to Barbara that Mr. Coyshe was struck with her sister, and Mr. Coyshe was a promising, pushing man, sure to make his way. If a man has a high opinion of himself he impresses others with belief in him. Mr. Jordan was loud in his praises; Barbara had sufficient sense to dislike his boasting, but she was influenced by it. Though his manner was not to her taste, she was convinced that Mr. Coyshe was a genius, and a man whose name would be known through England.

What was to be done? The only thing she

could think of was to insist on her father making over Morwell to Eve on his death ; as for herself—she had her fifty pounds, and she could go as housekeeper to some lady ; the Duchess of Bedford would recommend her. *She* was not likely to be thought of by any man, with only fifty pounds, and with a plain face.

When Barbara reached this point she laughed, and then she sighed. She laughed because the idea of her being married was so absurd. She sighed because she was tired. Just then, quite uncalled for and unexpected, the form of Jasper Babb rose up before her mind's eye, as she had last seen him, pale, looking after her, waving his hat.

She was returning to him without a word from his father, of forgiveness, of encouragement, of love. She was scheming a future for herself and for Eve ; Jasper had no future, only a horrible past, which cast its shadow forward, and took all hope out of the present, and blighted the future. If she could but have brought him a kind message it would have inspired him to redeem his great fault, to persevere in well-doing. She knew that she would find him watching for her return with a wistful look in his dark full eyes, asking her if she brought him consolation.

Then she reproached herself because she

had left his parting farewell unacknowledged. She had been ungracious ; no doubt she had hurt his feelings.

She had passed through Tavistock, with her groom riding some way behind her, when she heard the sound of a trotting horse, and almost immediately a well-known voice called, ' Glad to see your face turned homewards, Miss Jordan.'

' Good evening, Mr. Coyshe.'

' Our roads run together, to my advantage. What is that you are carrying? Can I relieve you?'

' A violin. The boy is careless, he might let it fall. Besides he is burdened with my valise and a bundle.'

' What! has your aunt bequeathed a violin to you?'

A little colour came into Barbara's cheeks, as she answered, ' I am bringing it home from over the moor.' She blushed to have to equivocate.

' I hope you have had something more substantial left you than an old fiddle,' said the surgeon.

' Thank you, my poor aunt has been good enough to leave me something comfortable, which will enable my dear father to make up to Eve for the sum that has been lost.'

‘I am glad to hear it,’ said Mr. Coyshe.  
‘Charmed!’

‘By the way,’ Barbara began, ‘I wanted to say something to you, but I have not had the opportunity. You were quite in the wrong about the saucer of sour milk, though I admit there was a stocking—but how you saw that, passes my comprehension.’

‘I did not see it, I divined it,’ said the young man, with his protruding light eyes staring at her with an odd mischievous expression in them. ‘It is part of the mysteries of medicine—a faculty akin to inspiration in some doctors, that they see with their inner eyes what is invisible to the outer eye. For instance, I can see right into your heart, and I see there something that looks to me very much like the wound I patched up in Mr. Jasper’s pate. Whilst his has been healing, yours has been growing worse.’

Barbara turned cold and shivered. ‘For heaven’s sake, Mr. Coyshe, do not say such things; you frighten me.’

He laughed.

She remained silent, uneasy and vexed. Presently she said, ‘It is not true; there is nothing the matter with me.’

‘But the stocking was under the sofa-cushion, and you said, Not true, at first. Wait and look.’

‘Doctor, it is not true at all. That is, I have a sort of trouble or pain, but it is all about Eve. I have been very unhappy about the loss of her money, and that has fretted me greatly.’

‘I foresaw it would be lost.’

‘Yes, it is lost, but Eve shall be no loser.’

‘Look here, Miss Jordan, a beautiful face is like a beautiful song, charming in itself, but infinitely better with an accompaniment.’

‘What do you mean, Mr. Coyshe?’

‘A sweet girl may have beauty and amiability, but though these may be excellent legs for the matrimonial stool, a third must be added to prevent an upset, and that—metallic.’

Barbara made no reply. The audacity and impudence of the young surgeon took the power to reply from her.

‘You have not given me that fiddle,’ said Coyshe.

‘I am not sure you will carry it carefully,’ answered Barbara; nevertheless she resigned it to him. ‘When you part from me let the boy have it. I will not ride into Morwell cumbered with it.’

‘A doctor,’ said Coyshe, ‘if he is to succeed in his profession, must be endowed with instinct as well as science. A cat does not know what ails it, but it knows when it is out of sorts; in-

instinct teaches it to swallow a blade of grass. Instinct with us discovers the disorder, science points out the remedy. I may say without boasting that I am brimming with instinct—you have had a specimen or two—and I have passed splendid examinations, so that testifies to my science. Beer Alston cannot retain me long, my proper sphere is London. I understand the Duke has heard of me, and said to someone whom I will not name, that if I come to town he will introduce me. If once started on the rails I must run to success. Now I want a word with you in confidence, Miss Jordan. That boy is sufficiently in the rear not to hear. You will be mum, I trust?’

Barbara slightly nodded her assent.

‘I confess to you that I have been struck with your sister, Miss Eve. Who could fail to see her and not become a worshipper? She is a radiant star; I have never seen anyone so beautiful, and she is as good as she is beautiful.’

‘Indeed, indeed she is,’ said Barbara, earnestly.

‘Montecuculli said,’ continued the surgeon, ‘that in war three things are necessary: money; secondly, money; thirdly, money. In love it is the same. We may regret it, but it is undeniable.’

Barbara did not know what to say. The

assurance of the young man imposed on her ; she did not like him particularly, but he was superior in culture to most of the young men she knew, who had no ideas beyond hunting and shooting.

After a little while of consideration, she said, 'Do you think you would make Eve happy?'

'I am sure of it. I have all the instincts of the family-man in me. A man may marry a score of times and be father of fifty children, without instinct developing the special features of domesticity. They are born in a man, not acquired. *Pater-familias nascitur, non fit.*'

'Have you spoken to my father?'

'No, not yet ; I am only feeling my way. I don't mind telling you what brought me into notice with the Duke. He was ill last autumn when down at Endsleigh for the shooting, and his physician was sent for. I met the doctor at the Bedford Inn at Tavistock ; some of us of the faculty had an evening together, and his Grace's condition was discussed, casually of course. I said nothing. We were smoking and drinking rum and water. There was something in his Grace's condition which puzzled his physician, and he clearly did not understand how to treat the case. *I* knew. I have instinct. Some rum had been spilled on

the table; I dipped the end of my pipe in it, and scribbled a prescription on the mahogany. I saw the eye of the doctor on it. I have reason to believe he used my remedy. It answered. He is not ungrateful. I say no more. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Beer Alston is a bushel covering a light. Wait.'

Barbara said nothing. She rode on, deep in thought. The surgeon jogged at her side, his protruding water-blue eyes peering in all directions.

'You think your sister will not be penniless?' he said.

'I am certain she will not. Now that my aunt has provided for me, Eve will have Morwell after my father's death, and I am sure she is welcome to what comes to me from my aunt till then.'

'Halt!' exclaimed the surgeon.

Barbara drew rein simultaneously with Mr. Coyshe.

'Who are you there, watching, following us, skulking behind bushes and hedges?' shouted Coyshe.

'What is it?' asked Miss Jordan, surprised and alarmed.

The surgeon did not answer, but raised to his shoulder a stick he carried.



‘Answer! Who are you? Show yourself, or I fire!’

‘Doctor Coyshe,’ exclaimed Barbara, ‘forbear in pity!’

‘My dear Miss Jordan,’ he said in a low tone, ‘set your mind at rest. I have only an umbrella stick, of which all the apparatus is blown away except the catch. Who is there?’ he cried, again presenting his stick.

‘Once, twice!’—click went the catch. ‘If I call three and fire, your blood be on your own head!’

There issued in response a scream, piercing in its shrillness, inhuman in its tone.

Barbara shuddered, and her horse plunged.

A mocking burst of laughter ensued, and then forth from the bushes into the road leaped an impish boy, who drew a bow over the catgut of a fiddle under his chin, and ran along before them, laughing, leaping, and evoking uncouth and shrill screams from his instrument.

‘A pixie,’ said the surgeon. ‘I knew by instinct one was dodging us. Fortunately I could not lay my hand on a riding whip this morning, and so took my old umbrella stick. Now, farewell. So you think Miss Eve will have Morwell, and the matrimonial stool its golden leg? That is right.’

## CHAPTER XV.

## AT THE QUAY.

ON the day of Barbara's departure Eve attended diligently to the duties of the house, and found that everything was in such order that she was content to believe that all would go on of its own accord in the old way, without her supervision, which declined next day, and was pretermitted on the third.

Jasper did not appear for mid-day dinner; he was busy on the old quay. He saw that it must be put to rights. The woods could be thinned, the coppice shredded for bark, and bark put on a barge at the bottom of the almost precipitous slope, and so sent to the tanyards at Devonport. There was waste of labour in carrying the bark up the hills and then carting it to Beer Ferris, some ten miles.

No wonder that, as Mr. Jordan complained, the bark was unremunerative. The profit was

eaten up by the wasteful transport. It was the same with the timber. There was demand for oak and pine at the dockyards, and any amount was grown in the woods of Morwell.

So Jasper asked leave to have the quay put to rights, and Mr. Jordan consented. He must supervise proceedings himself, so he remained the greater part of the day by the river edge. The ascent to Morwell House was arduous if attempted directly up the steep fall, long if he went by the zigzag through the wood. It would take him a stiff three-quarters of an hour to reach the house and half an-hour to return. Accordingly he asked that his dinner might be sent him.

On the third day, to Eve's dismay, she found that she had forgotten to let him have his food, both that day and the preceding. He had made no remark when he came back the day before. Eve's conscience smote her—a convalescent left for nine or ten hours without food.

When she recalled her promise to send it him she found that there was no one to send. In shame and self-reproach, she packed a little basket, and resolved to carry it to him. The day was lovely. She put her broad-brimmed straw hat, trimmed with forget-me-not bows, on her head, and started on her walk.

The bank of the Tamar falls from high moorland many hundreds of feet to the water's edge. In some places the rocks rise in sheer precipices with gullies of coppice and heather between them. Elsewhere the fall is less abrupt, and allows trees to grow, and the richness of the soil and the friable nature of the rock allows them to grow to considerable dimensions. From Morwell House a long *détour* through beautiful forest, affording peeps of mountains and water, gave the easiest descent to the quay, but Eve reserved this road for the ascent, and slid merrily down the narrow corkscrew path in the brushwood between the crags, which afforded the quickest way down to the water's edge.

'Oh, Mr. Jasper!' she exclaimed, 'I have sinned, through my forgetfulness; but see, to make amends, I have brought you a little bottle of papa's Burgundy and a wee pot of red currant jelly for the cold mutton.'

'And you have come yourself to overwhelm me with a sense of gratitude.'

'Oh, Mr. Jasper, I am so ashamed of my naughtiness. I assure you I nearly cried. Bab—I mean Barbara—would never have forgotten. She remembers everything. Her head is a perfect store-closet, where all things are in place and measured and weighed and

on their proper shelves. You had no dinner yesterday.'

'To-day's is a banquet that makes up for all deficiencies.'

Eve liked Jasper; she had few to converse with, very few acquaintances, no friends, and she was delighted to be able to have a chat with anyone, especially if that person flattered her—and who did not? Everyone naturally offered incense before her; she almost demanded it as a right. The Tamar formed a little bay under a wall of rock. A few ruins marked the site of the storehouses and boat-sheds of the abbots. The sun glittered on the water, forming of it a blazing mirror, and the dancing light was reflected back by the flower-wreathed rocks.

'Where are the men?' asked Eve.

'Gone into the wood to fell some pines. We must drive piles into the bed of the river, and lay beams on them for a basement.'

'Oh,' said Eve listlessly, 'I don't understand about basements and all that.' She seated herself on a log. 'How pleasant it is here with the flicker of the water in one's face and eyes, and a sense of being without shadow! Mr. Jasper, do you believe in pixies?'

'What do you mean, Miss?'

'The little imps who live in the mines and

on the moors, and play mischievous tricks on mortals. They have the nature of spirits, and yet they have human shapes, and are like old men or boys. They watch treasures and veins of ore, and when mortals approach the metal, they decoy the trespassers away.'

'Like the lapwing that pretends to be wounded, and so lures you from its precious eggs. Do *you* believe in pixies?'

Eve laughed and shook her pretty head. 'I think so, Mr. Jasper, for I have seen one.'

'What was he like?'

'I do not know, I only caught glimpses of him. Do not laugh satirically. I am serious. I did see something, but I don't know exactly what I saw.'

'That is not a very convincing reason for the existence of pixies.'

Eve drew her little feet together, and folded her arms in her lap, and smiled, and tossed her head. She had taken off her hat, and the sun glorified her shining head.

Jasper looked admiringly at her.

'Are you not afraid of a sunstroke, Miss Eve?'

'O dear no! The sun cannot harm me. I love him so passionately. O Mr. Jasper! I wish sometimes I lived far away in another country where there are no wet days and grey

skies and muggy atmospheres, and where the hedges do not drip, and the lanes do not stand ankle deep in mud, and the old walls exude moisture indoors, and one's pretty shoes do not go mouldy if not wiped over daily. I should like to be in a land like Italy, where all the people sing and dance and keep holiday, and the bells in the towers are ever ringing, and the lads have bunches of gold and silver flowers in their hats, and the girls have scarlet skirts, and the village musicians sit in a cart adorned with birch branches and ribands and roses, and the trumpets go tu-tu! and the drums bung-bung! —I have read about it, and cried for vexation that I was not there.'

'But the pixy?'

'I would banish all pixies and black Copplesones and Whish hounds; they belong to rocks and moors and darkness and storm. I hate gloom and isolation.'

'You are happy at Morwell, Miss Eve. One has but to look in your face and see it. Not a crabbed line of care, not the track of a tear, all smoothness and smiles.'

The girl twinkled with pleasure, and said, 'That is because we are in midsummer; wait till winter and see what becomes of me. Then I am sad enough. We are shut in for five months—six months—seven almost, by mud

and water. O, how the winds howl! How the trees toss and roar! How the rain patters! That is not pleasant. I wish, I do wish, I were a squirrel; then I would coil myself in a corner lined with moss, and crack nuts in a doze till the sun came again and woke me up with the flowers. Then I would throw out all my cracked nut-shells with both paws, and leap to the foot of a tree, run up it, and skip from branch to branch, and swing in the summer sunshine on the topmost twig. O Mr. Jasper, how much wiser than we the swallows are! I would rather be a swallow than a squirrel, and sail away when I felt the first frost to the land of eternal summer, into the blazing eye of the sun.'

'But as you have no wings——'

'I sit and mope and talk to Barbara about cows and cabbages, and to father about any nonsense that comes into my head.'

'As yet you have given me no description of the pixy.'

'How can I, when I scarce saw him? I will tell you exactly what happened, if you will not curl up the corner of your lips, as though mocking me. That papa never does. I tell him all the rhodomontade I can, and he listens gravely, and frightens and abashes me sometimes by swallowing it whole.'



‘Where did you see, or not see, the pixy?’

‘On my way to you. I heard something stirring in the wood, and I half saw what I took to be a boy, or a little man the size of a boy. When I stood still, he stood; when I moved, I fancied he moved. I heard the crackle of sticks and the stir of the bushes. I am sure of nothing.’

‘Were you frightened?’

‘No; puzzled, not frightened. If this had occurred at night, it would have been different. I thought it might have been a red-deer; they are here sometimes, strayed from Exmoor, and have such pretty heads and soft eyes; but this was not. I fancied once I saw a queer little face peering at me from behind a pine tree. I uttered a feeble cry and ran on.’

‘I know exactly what it was,’ said Jasper, with a grave smile. ‘There is a pixy lives in the Raven rock; he has a smithy far down in the heart of the cliff, and there he works all winter at a vein of pure gold, hammering and turning the golden cups and marsh marigolds with which to strew the pastures and water-courses in spring. But it is dull for the pixy sitting alone without light; he has no one to love and care for him, and, though the gold glows in his forge, his little heart is cold. He has been dreaming all winter of a sweet fairy he saw

last summer wearing a crown of marigold, wading in cuckoo flowers, and now he has come forth to capture that fairy and draw her down into his stony palace.'

'To waste her days,' laughed Eve, 'in sighing for the sun, whilst her roses wither and her eyes grow dim, away from the twitter of the birds and the scent of the gorse. He shan't have me.' Then, after a pause, during which she gathered some marigolds and put them into her hat, she said, half seriously, half jestingly, 'Do you believe in pixies?'

'You must not ask me. I have seen but one fairy in all my life, and she now sits before me.'

'Mr. Jasper,' said Eve, with a dimple in her cheek, in recognition of the compliment,—'Mr. Jasper, do you know my mother is a mystery to me as much as pixies and fairies and white ladies?'

'No, I was not aware of that.'

'She was called, like me, Eve.'

'I had a sister of that name who is dead, and my mother's name was Eve. She is dead.'

'I did not think the name was so common,' said the girl. 'I fancied we were the only two Eves that ever were. I do not know what my mother's other name was. Is not that extraordinary?'

Jasper Babb made no reply.

‘I have been reading “Undine.” Have you read that story? O, it has made me so excited. The writer says that it was founded on what he read in an old author, and that author, Paracelsus, is one papa believes in. So, I suppose, there is some truth in the tale. The story of my mother is quite like that of Undine. One night my father heard a cry on the moor, and he went to the place, and found my mother all alone. She was with him for a year and a day, and would have stayed longer if my father could have refrained from asking her name. When he did that she was forced to leave him. She was never seen again.’

‘Miss Eve, this cannot be true.’

‘I do not know. That is what old Betsy Davy told me. Papa never speaks of her. He has been an altered man since she left him. He put up the stone cross on the moor at the spot where he found her. I like to fancy there was something mysterious in her. I can’t ask papa, and Bab was—I mean Barbara—was too young at the time to remember anything about it.’

‘This is very strange.’

‘Betsy Davy says that my father was not properly married to her, because he could not get a priest to perform the ceremony without knowing what she was.’

‘My dear Miss Eve, instead of listening to the cock-and-bull stories——’

‘Mr. Jasper! How can you—how can you use such an expression? The story is very pretty and romantic, and not at all like things of this century. I dare say there is some truth in it.’

‘I am far from any intention of offending you, dear young lady; but I venture to offer you a piece of advice. Do not listen to idle tales; do not encourage people of a lower class to speak to you about your mother; ask your father what you want to know, he will tell you; and take my word for it, romance there always must be in love, but there will be nothing of what you imagine, with a fancy set on fire by “Undine.”’

Her volatile mind had flown elsewhere.

‘Mr. Jasper,’ she said, ‘have you ever been to a theatre?’

‘Yes.’

‘O, I should like it above everything else. I dream of it. We have Inchbald’s “British Theatre” in the library, and it is my dearest reading. Barbara likes a cookery book or a book on farming; I cannot abide them. Do you know what Mr. Coyshe said the other day when I was rattling on before him and papa? He said I had missed my vocation, and ought to have been on the stage. What do you think?’

‘I think a loving and merciful Providence has done best to put such a precious treasure here where it can best be preserved.’

‘I don’t agree with you at all,’ said Eve, standing up. ‘I think Mr. Coyshe showed great sense. Anyhow, I should like to see a theatre—O, above everything in the world! Papa thinks of Rome or the Holy Land; but I say—a theatre. I can’t help it; I think it, and must say it. Good-bye! I have things my sister left that I must attend to. I wish she were back. Oh, Mr. Jasper, do not you?’

‘Everyone will be pleased to welcome her home.’

‘Because I have let everything go to sixes and sevens, eh?’

‘For her own sake.’

‘Well, I do miss her dreadfully, do not you?’

He did not answer. She cast him another good-bye, and danced off into the wood, swinging her hat by the blue ribands.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WATT.

THE air under the pines was balmy. The hot July sun brought out their resinous fragrance. Gleams of fire fell through the boughs and dappled the soil at intervals, and on these sun-flakes numerous fritillary butterflies with silver under-wings were fluttering, and countless flies were humming. The pines grew only at the bottom of the crags, and here and there in patches on the slopes. The woods were composed for the most part of oak, now in its richest, fullest foliage, the golden hue of early spring changing to the duller green of summer. Beech also abounded with their clean stems, and the soil beneath them bare of weed, and here and there a feathery birch with erect silver stem struggled up in the overgrowth to the light. The wood was full of foxgloves, spires of pink dappled bells, and of purple columbine. Wild roses grew wherever a rock allowed them to

wreath in sunshine and burst into abundant bloom over its face. Eve carried her straw hat on her arm, hung by its blue ribands. She needed its shelter in the wood no more than in her father's hall.

She came to a brook, dribbling and tinkling on its way through moss and over stone. The path was fringed with blazing marigolds. Eve had already picked some, she now halted, and brimmed the extemporised basket with more of the golden flowers.

The gloom, the fragrant air, the flicker of colour made her think of the convent chapel at Lanherne, whither she had been sent for her education, but whence, having pined under the restraint, she had been speedily removed. As she walked she swung her hat like a censer. From it rose the fresh odour of flowers, and from it dropped now and then a marigold like a burning cinder. Scarce thinking what she did, Eve assumed the slow and measured pace of a religious procession, as she had seen one at Lanherne, still swinging her hat, and letting the flowers fall from it whilst she chanted meaningless words to a sacred strain. Then she caught her straw hat to her, and holding it before her in her left arm, advanced at a quicker pace, still singing. Now she dipped her right hand in the crown and strewed the

blossoms to left and right, as did the little girls in the Corpus Christi procession round the convent grounds at Lanherne. Her song quickened and brightened, and changed its character as her flighty thoughts shifted to other topics, and her changeful mood assumed another complexion. Her tune became that of the duet *Là ci darem la mano*, in 'Don Giovanni,' which she had often sung with her sister. She sang louder and more joyously, and her feet moved in rhythm to this song, as they had to the ecclesiastical chant; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed.

It seemed to her that a delicate echo accompanied her—very soft and spiritual, now in snatches, then low, rolling, long-drawn-out. She stopped and listened, then went on again. What she heard was the echo from the rocks and tree boles.

But presently the road became steeper, and she could no longer spare breath for her song; now the sacred chant was quite forgotten, but the sweet air of Mozart clung to her memory, as the scent of pot-pourri to a parlour, and there it would linger the rest of the day.

As she walked on she was in a dream. What must it be to hear these songs accompanied by instruments, and with light and scenery, and acting on the stage? Oh, that she



could for once in her life have the supreme felicity of seeing a real play!

Suddenly a flash of vivid golden light broke before her, the trees parted, and she stood on the Raven Rock, a precipice that shoots high above the Tamar and commands a wide prospect over Cornwall—Hingston Hill, where Athelstan fought and beat the Cornish in the last stand the Britons made, and Kitt Hill, a dome of moorclad mountain. As she stepped forth on the rock to enjoy the light and view and air, there rushed out of the oak and dogwood bushes a weird boy, who capered and danced, brandished a fiddle, clapped it under his chin, and still dancing, played *Là ci darem* fast, faster, till his little arms went faster than Eve could see.

The girl stood still, petrified with terror. Here was the Pixy of the Raven Rock Jasper had spoken of. The malicious boy saw and revelled in her fear, and gambolled round her, grimacing and still fiddling till his tune led up to and finished in a shriek.

‘There, there,’ said he, at length, lowering the violin and bow; ‘how I have scared you, Eve!’

Eve trembled in every limb, and was too alarmed to speak. The scenery, the rock, the boy, swam in a blue haze before her eyes.

‘There, Eve, don’t be frightened. You led me on with your singing. I followed in your flowery traces. Don’t you know me?’

Eve shook her head. She could not speak.

‘You have seen me. You saw me that night when I came riding over your downs at the back of Martin, when poor Jasper fell—you remember me. I smashed your rattle-trap gig. What a piece of good luck it was that Jasper’s horse went down and not ours. I might have broken my fiddle. I’d rather break a leg, especially that of another person.’

Eve had not thought of the boy since that eventful night. Indeed, she had seen little of him then.

‘I remember,’ she said, ‘there was a boy.’

‘Myself. Watt is my name, or in full, Walter. If you doubt my humanity touch my hand; feel, it is warm.’ He grasped Eve and drew her out on the rocky platform.

‘Sit down, Eve. I know you better than you know me. I have heard Martin speak of you. That is how I know about you. Look me in the face.’

Eve raised her eyes to his. The boy had a strange countenance. The hair was short-cropped and black, the skin olive. He had protruding and large ears, and very black keen eyes.

‘What do you think is my age?’ asked the boy. ‘I am nineteen. I am an ape. I shall never grow into a man.’ He began again to skip and make grimaces. Eve shrank away in alarm.

‘There! Put your fears aside, and be reasonable,’ said Watt, coming to a rest. ‘Jasper is below, munching his dinner. I have seen him. He would not eat whilst you were by. He did not suspect I was lying on the rock overhead in the heath, peering down on you both whilst you were talking. I can skip about, I can scramble anywhere, I can almost fly. I do not wish Jasper to know I am here. No one must know but yourself, for I have come here on an errand to you.’

‘To me!’ echoed Eve, hardly recovered from her terror.

‘I am come from Martin. You remember Martin? Oh! there are not many men like Martin. He is a king of men. Imagine an old town, with ancient houses and a church tower behind, and the moon shining on it, and in the moonlight Martin in velvet, with a hat in which is a white feather, and his violin, under a window, thinking you are there, and singing *Deh, vieni alla finestra*. Do you know the tune? Listen.’ The boy took his fiddle, and touching the strings with his fingers, as though

playing a mandolin, he sang that sweet minstrel song.

Eve's blue eyes opened wonderingly, this was all so strange and incomprehensible to her.

'See here, Miss Zerlina, you were singing *Là ci darem* just now, try it with me. I can take Giovanni's part and you that of Zerlina.'

'I cannot. I cannot, indeed.'

'You shall. I shall stand between you and the wood. You cannot escape over the rock, you would be dashed to pieces. I will begin.'

Suddenly a loud voice interrupted him as he began to play—'Watt!'

Standing under the shadow of the oaks, with one foot on the rocky platform, was Jasper.

'Watt, how came you here?'

The boy lowered his violin and stood for a moment speechless.

'Miss Eve,' said Jasper, 'please go home. After all, you have encountered the pixy, and that a malicious and dangerous imp. Stand aside, Watt.'

The boy did not venture to resist. He stood back near the edge of the rock and allowed Eve to pass him.

When she was quite gone, Jasper said

gravely to the boy, 'What has brought you here?'

'That is a pretty question to ask me, Jasper. We left you here, broken and senseless, and naturally Martin and I want to know what condition you are in. How could we tell whether you were alive or dead? You know very well that Martin could not come, so I have run here to obtain information.'

'I am well,' answered Jasper, 'you may tell Martin, everywhere but here,' he laid his hand on his heart.

'With such a pretty girl near I do not wonder,' laughed the boy. 'I shall tell poor Martin of the visits paid you at the water's edge.'

'That will do,' said Jasper; 'this joking offends me. Tell Martin I am here, but with my heart aching for him.'

'No occasion for that, Jasper. Not a cricket in the grass is lighter of spirit than he.'

'I dare say,' said the elder, 'he does not feel matters acutely. Tell him the money must be restored. Here I stay as a pledge that the debt shall be paid. Tell him that I insist on his restoring the money.'

'Christmas is coming, and after that Easter, and then, all in good time, Christmas again; but money once passed, returns no more.'

‘I expect Martin to restore what he took. He is good at heart, but inconsiderate. I know Martin better than you. You are his bad angel. He loves me and is generous. He knows what I have done for him, and when I tell him that I must have the money back he will return it if he can.’

‘If he can!’ repeated the boy derisively. ‘It is well you have thrown in that proviso. I once tossed my cap into the Dart and ran two miles along the bank after it. I saw it for two miles bobbing on the ripples, but at last it went over the weir above Totnes and disappeared. I believe that cap was fished up at Dartmouth and is now worn by the mayor’s son. It is so with money. Once let it out of your hands and it avails nothing to run after it. It disappears and comes up elsewhere to profit others.’

‘Where is Martin now?’

‘Anywhere and everywhere.’

‘He is not in this county, I trust.’

‘Did you never hear of the old lady who lost the store closet key and hunted everywhere except in her own pocket? What is under your nose is overlooked.’

‘Go back to Martin. Tell him, as he values his safety and my peace of mind, to keep out of the country, certainly out of the county.’

Tell him to take to some honest work and stick to it, and to begin his repentance by——’

‘There! if I carry a preachment away with me I shall never reach Martin. I had a surfeit of this in the olden days, Jasper. I know a sailor lad who has been fed on salt junk at sea till if you put but as much as will sit on the end of your knife under his nose when he is on land he will upset the table. It is the same with Martin and me. No sermons for us, Jasper. So—see, I am off at the first smell of a text.’

He darted into the wood and disappeared, singing at the top of his voice ‘Life let us cherish.’

## CHAPTER XVII.

## FORGET-ME-NOT !

THAT night Eve could not sleep. She thought of her wonderful adventure. Who was that strange boy? And who was Martin? And, what was the link between these two and Jasper?

Towards morning, when she ought to have been stirring, she fell asleep, and laughed in her dreams. She woke with the sun shining in on her, and her father standing by her bed, watching her.

After the visions in which she had been steeped full of fair forms and brilliant colours, it was a shock to her to unclose her eyes on the haggard face of her father, with sunken eyes.

‘What is it, papa?’

‘My dear, it is ten o’clock. I have waited for my breakfast. The tea is cold, the toast has lost its crispness, and the eggs are like the tea—cold.’



‘O papa!’ she said sorrowfully, sitting up in bed; ‘I have overslept myself. But, you will not begrudge me the lovely dreams I have had. Papa! I saw a pixy yesterday.’

‘Where, child?’

‘On the Raven Rock.’

He shut his eyes, and put his hand over his mouth. Then he heaved a deep sigh, said nothing, turned, and went out of the room.

Eve was the idol of her father’s heart. He spoiled her, by allowing her her own way in everything, by relieving her of every duty, and heaping all responsibilities on the shoulders of his eldest daughter.

Eve was so full of love and gaiety, that it was impossible to be angry with her when she made provoking mistakes; she was so penitent, so pretty in her apologies, and so sincere in her purpose of amendment.

Eve was warmly attached to her father. She had an affectionate nature, but none of her feelings were deep. Her rippling conversation, her buoyant spirits, enlivened the prevailing gloom of Mr. Jordan. His sadness did not depress her. Indeed, she hardly noticed it. Hers was not a sympathetic nature. She exacted the sympathy of others, but gave nothing more in return than prattle and laughter.

She danced down the stairs when dressed,

without any regret for having kept her father waiting. He would eat a better breakfast for a little delay, she said to herself, and satisfied her conscience.

She came into the breakfast-room in a white muslin dress, covered with little blue sprigs, and with a blue riband in her golden hair. The lovely roses of her complexion, the sparkling eyes, the dimple in her cheeks, the air of perfect content with herself, and with all the world, disarmed what little vexation hung in her father's mood.

'Do you think Bab will be home to-day?' she asked, seating herself at the tea-tray without a word of apology for the lateness of her appearance.

'I do not know what her movements are.'

'I hope she will. I want her home.'

'Yes, she must return, to relieve you of your duties.'

'I am sure the animals want her home. The pigeons find I am not regular in throwing them barley, and I sometimes forget the bread-crumbs after a meal. The little black heifer always runs along the paddock when Bab goes by, and she is indifferent to me. She lows when I appear, as much as to say, Where is Miss Barbara? Then the cat has not been himself for some days, and the little horse is in

the dumps. Do you think brute beasts have souls?’

‘I do not know.’ Then after a pause, ‘What was that you said about a pixy?’

‘O papa! it was a dream.’ She coloured. Something rose in her heart to check her from confiding to him what in her thoughtless freedom she was prepared to tell on first awaking.

He pressed her no further. He doubtless believed she had spoken the truth. She had ever been candid. Now, however, she lacked courage to speak. She remembered that the boy had said ‘I come to you with a message.’ He had disappeared without giving it. What was that message? Was he gone without delivering it?

Mr. Jordan slowly ate his breakfast. Every now and then he looked at his daughter, never steadily, for he could look fixedly long at nothing.

‘I will tell you all, papa,’ said Eve suddenly, shaking her head, to shake off the temptation to be untrue. Her better nature had prevailed. ‘It was not a dream, it was a reality. I did see a pixy on the Raven Rock, the maddest, merriest, ugliest imp in the world.’

‘We are surrounded by an unseen creation,’ said Mr. Jordan. ‘The microscope reveals to us teeming life in a drop of water. Another

generation will use an instrument that will show them the air full of living things. Then the laugh will be no more heard on earth. Life will be grave, if not horrible. This generation is sadder than the last because less ignorant.'

'O papa! He was not a pixy at all. I have seen him before, when Mr. Jasper was thrown. Then he was perched like an ape, as he is, on the cross you set up, where my mother first appeared to you. He was making screams with his fiddle.'

Mr. Jordan looked at her with flickering, frightened eyes. 'It was a spirit—the horse saw it and started—that was how Jasper was thrown,' he said gravely.

'Here Jasper comes,' said Eve, laughing; 'ask him.' But instead of waiting for her father to do this, she sprang up, and danced to meet him with the simplicity of a child, and clapping her palms, she asked, 'Mr. Jasper! My father will have it that my funny little pixy was a spirit of the woods or wold, and will not believe that he is flesh and blood.'

'My daughter,' said Mr. Jordan, 'has told me a strange story. She says that she saw a boy on the—the Raven Rock, and that you know him.'

'Yes, I do.'

‘ Whence comes he ? ’

‘ That I cannot say. ’

‘ Where does he live ? ’

‘ Nowhere. ’

‘ Is he here still ? ’

‘ I do not know. ’

‘ Have you seen him before ? ’

‘ Yes—often. ’

‘ That will do. ’ Mr. Jordan jerked his head and waved his hand, in sign that he did not wish Jasper to remain.

He treated Jasper with rudeness ; he resented the loss of Eve’s money, and being a man of narrow mind and vindictive temper, he revenged the loss on the man who was partly to blame for the loss. He brooded over his misfortune, and was bitter. The sight of Jasper irritated him, and he did not scruple at meals to make allusions to the lost money which must hurt the young man’s feelings. When Barbara was present, she interposed to turn the conversation or blunt the significance of her father’s words. Eve, on the other hand, when Mr. Jordan spoke in a way she did not like to Jasper or Barbara, started up and left the room, because she could not endure discords. She sprang out of the way of harsh words as she turned from a brier. It did not occur to her to save others, she saved herself.

Barbara thought of Jasper and her father, Eve only of herself.

When Jasper was gone, Mr. Jordan put his hand to his head. 'I do not understand, I cannot think,' he said, with a vacant look in his eyes. 'You say one thing, and he another.'

'Pardon me, dearest papa, we both say the same, that the pixy was nothing but a real boy of flesh and blood, but—there, let us think and talk of something else.'

'Take care!' said Mr. Jordan gloomily; 'take care! There are spirits where the wise see shadows; the eye of the fool sees farther than the eye of the sage. My dear Eve, beware of the Raven Rock.'

Eve began to warble the air of the serenade in 'Don Giovanni' which she had heard the boy Watt sing.

Then she threw her arms round her father's neck. 'Do not look so miserable, papa. I am the happiest little being in the world, and I will kiss your cheeks till they dimple with laughter.' But instead of doing so, she dashed away to pick flowers, for she thought, seeing herself in the glass opposite, that a bunch of forget-me-not in her bosom was what lacked to perfect her appearance in the blue-sprigged muslin.

She knew where wild forget-me-nots grew.

The Abbot's Well sent its little silver rill through rich grass towards the wood, where it spilled down the steep descent to the Tamar. She knew that forget-me-not grew at the border of the wood, just where the stream left the meadow and the glare of the sun for its pleasant shadow. As she approached the spot she saw the imp-like boy leap from behind a tree.

He held up his finger, put it to his lips, then beckoned her to follow him. This she would not do. She halted in the meadow, stooped, and, pretending not to see him, picked some of the blue flowers she desired.

He came stealthily towards her, and pointed to a stone a few steps further, which was hidden from the house by the slope of the hill. 'I will tell you nothing unless you come,' he said.

She hesitated a moment, looked round, and advanced to the place indicated.

'I will go no farther with you,' said she, putting her hand on the rock. 'I am afraid of you.'

'It matters not,' answered the boy; 'I can say what I want here.'

'What is it? Be quick, I must go home.'

'Oh, you little puss! Oh, you came out full of business! I can tell you, you came for nothing but the chance of hearing what I

forgot to tell you yesterday. I must give the message I was commissioned to bear before I can leave.'

'Who from?'

'Can you ask? From Martin.'

'But who is Martin?'

'Sometimes he is one thing, then another; he is Don Giovanni. Then he is a king. There—he is an actor. Will that content you?'

'What is his surname?'

'O Eve! daughter of Eve!' jeered the boy, 'all inquisitiveness! What does that matter? An actor takes what name suits him.'

'What is his message? I must run home.'

'He stole something from you—wicked Martin.'

'Yes; a ring.'

'And you—you stole his heart away. Poor Martin has had no peace of mind since he saw you. His conscience has stung him like a viper. So he has sent me back to you with the ring.'

'Where is it?'

'Shut your blue eyes, they dazzle me, and put out your finger.'

'Give me the ring, please, and let me go.'

'Only on conditions—not my conditions—those of Martin. He was very particular in



his instructions to me. Shut your eyes and extend your dear little finger. Next swear never, never to part with the ring I put on your finger.'

'That I never will. Mr. Martin had no right to take the ring. It was impertinent of him; it made me very angry. Once I get it back I will never let the ring go again.' She opened her eyes.

'Shut! shut!' cried the boy; 'and now swear.'

'I promise,' said the girl. 'That suffices.'

'There, then, take the ring.' He thrust the circlet on her finger. She opened her eyes again and looked at her hand.

'Why, boy!' she exclaimed, 'this is not my ring. It is another.'

'To be sure it is, you little fool. Do you think that Martin would return the ring you gave him? No, no. He sends you this in exchange for yours. It is prettier. Look at the blue flower on it, formed of turquoise. Forget-me-not.'

'I cannot keep this. I want my own,' said Eve, pouting, and her eyes filling.

'You must abide Martin's time. Meanwhile retain this pledge.'

'I cannot! I will not!' she stamped her foot petulantly on the oxalis and forget-me-not

that grew beneath the rock, tears of vexation brimming in her eyes. 'You have not dealt fairly by me. You have cheated me.'

'Listen to me, Miss Eve,' said the boy in a coaxing tone. 'You are a child, and have to be treated as such. Look at the beautiful stones, observe the sweet blue flower. You know what that means—Forget-me-not. Our poor Martin has to ramble through the world with a heart-ache, yearning for a pair of sparkling blue eyes, and for two wild roses blooming in the sweetest cheeks the sun ever kissed, and for a head of hair like a beech tree touched by frost in a blazing autumn's sun. Do you think he can forget these? He carries that face of yours ever about with him, and now he sends you this ring, and that means—"Miss, you have made me very unhappy. I can never forget the little maid with eyes of blue, and so I send her this token to bid her forget me not, as I can never forget her."'

And as Eve stood musing with pouting lips, and troubled brow, looking at the ring, the boy took his violin, and with the fingers plucked the strings to make an accompaniment as he sang:—

A maiden stood beside a river,  
And with her pitcher seemed to play;  
Then sudden stooped and drew up water,  
But drew my heart as well away.

And now I sigh beside the river,  
I dream about that maid I saw,  
I wait, I watch, am restless, weeping,  
Until she come again to draw.

A flower is blooming by the river,  
A floweret with a petal blue,  
Forget me not, my love, my treasure !  
My flower and heart are both for you.

He played and sang a sweet, simple and plaintive air. It touched Eve's heart ; always susceptible to music. Her lips repeated after the boy, ' My flower and heart are both for you '

She could not make up her mind what to do. While she hesitated, the opportunity of returning the ring was gone. Watt had disappeared into the bushes.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## DISCOVERIES.

A BEAUTIFUL summer evening. Eve from her window saw Jasper in the garden; he was trimming the flower-beds which had been neglected since Christopher Davy had been ill. The men were busy on the farm, too busy to be taken off for flower gardening. Barbara had said one day that it was a pity the beds were not put to rights; and now Jasper was attending to her wishes during her absence. Mr. Jordan was out. He had gone forth with his hammer, and there was no telling when he would return. Eve disliked being alone. She must talk to someone. She brushed her beautiful hair, looked in the glass, adjusted a scarf round her shoulders, and in a coquettish way tripped into the garden and began to pick the flowers, peeping at Jasper out of the corners of her eyes, to see if he were observing her. He, however, paid no atten-

tion to what she was doing. In a fit of impatience, she flung the auriculas and polyanthus she had picked on the path, and threw herself pouting into the nearest garden seat.

‘Mr. Jasper!’ she called; ‘are you so mightily busy that you cannot afford me a word?’

‘I am always and altogether at your service, dear Miss Eve.’

‘Why have you taken to gardening? Are you fond of flowers?’

‘I am devoted to flowers.’

‘So am I. I pick them.’

‘And throw them away,’ said Jasper, stooping and collecting those she had strewn on the path.

‘Well—I have not the patience to garden. I leave all that to Barbara and old Christopher. I wish things generally, gardens included, would go along without giving trouble. I wish my sister were home.’

‘To relieve you of all responsibility and trouble.’

‘I hate trouble,’ said Eve frankly, ‘and responsibility is like a burr in one’s clothes—detestable. There! you are laughing at me, Mr. Jasper.’

‘I am not laughing, I am sighing.’

‘Oh, you are always sad.’

‘I do not like to hear you talk in this manner. You cannot expect to have your sister at your elbow throughout life, to fan off all the flies that tease you.’

‘If I have not Bab, I shall have someone else.’

‘Miss Barbara might marry—and then——’

‘Barbara marry!’ exclaimed Eve, and clapped her hands. ‘The idea is too absurd. Who would marry her? She is a dear, darling girl, but——’

‘But what, missie?’

‘I dare say I shall marry.’

‘Miss Eve! listen to me. It is most likely that you will be married some day, but what then? You will have a thousand more cares on your shoulders than you have now, duties you will be forced to bear, troubles which will encompass you on all sides.’

‘Do you know,’ said Eve, with a twinkling face, and a sly look in her eyes, ‘do you know, Mr. Jasper, I don’t think I shall marry for ever so long. But I have a glorious scheme in my head. As my money is gone, if anything should happen to us, I should dearly like to go on the stage. That would be simply splendid!’

‘The young crows,’ said Jasper gravely, ‘live on the dew of heaven, and then they ar

covered with a soft shining down. After a while the old birds bring them carrion, and when they have tasted flesh, they no longer have any liking for dew. Then the black feathers sprout, then only.' He raised his dark eyes to those of Eve, and said in a deep, vibrating voice, 'I would have this sweet fledgling sit still in her beautiful Morwell nest, and drink only the sparkling drops that fall into her mouth from the finger of God. I cannot bear to think of her growing black feathers, and hopping about—a carrion crow.'

Eve fidgeted on her seat. She had thrust her pretty feet before her, clad in white stockings and blue leather slippers, one on the other; she crossed and recrossed them impatiently.

'I do not like you to talk to me like this. I am tired of living in the wilds where one sees nobody, and where I can never go to theatre or concert or ball. I should—oh, I should like to live in a town.'

'You are a child, Miss Eve, and think and talk like a child. But the time is coming when you must put away childish things, and face life seriously.'

'It is not wicked to want to go to a town. There is no harm in dreaming that I am an actress. Oh!' she exclaimed, held up her

hands, and laughed, 'that would be too delightful!'

'What has put this mad fancy into your head?'

'Two or three things. I will confide in you, dear Mr. Jasper, if you can spare the time to listen. This morning as I had nothing to do, and no one to talk to, I thought I would search the garrets here. I have never been over them, and they are extensive. Barbara has always dissuaded me from going up there because they are so dusty and hung with cobwebs. There is such a lot of rubbish heaped up and packed away in the attics. I don't believe that Barbara knows what is there. I don't fancy papa does. Well! I went up to-day and found treasures.'

'Pray, what treasures?'

'Barbara is away, and there is no one to scold. There are boxes there, and old chairs, all kinds of things, some are so heavy I could hardly move them. I could not get them back into their places again, if I were to try.'

'So you threw the entire garret into disorder?'

'Pretty well, but I will send up one of the men or maids to tidy it before Barbara comes home. Behind an old broken winnowing machine—fancy a winnowing machine up there!



—and under a pile of old pans and bottomless crocks is a chest, to which I got with infinite trouble, and not till I was very hot and dirty. I found it was locked, but the rust had eaten through the hinges, or the nails fastening them; and after working the lid about awhile I was able to lift it. What do you suppose I found inside?’

‘I cannot guess.’

‘No, I am sure you cannot. Wait—go on with your gardening. I will bring you one of my treasures.’

She darted into the house, and after a few minutes, Jasper heard a tinkling as of brass. Then Eve danced out to him, laughing and shaking a tambourine.

‘I suppose it belonged to you or Miss Jordan when you were children, and was stowed away under the mistaken impression that you had outgrown toys.’

‘No, Mr. Jasper, it never belonged to either Barbara or me. I never had one. Barbara gave me everything of her own I wanted. I could not have forgotten this. I would have played with it till I had broken the parchment, and shaken out all the little bells.’

‘Give it to me. I will tighten the parchment, and then you can drum on it with

your fingers.' He took the instrument from her, and strained the cover. 'Do you know, Miss Eve, how to use a tambourine?'

'No. I shake it, and then all the little bells tingle.'

'Yes, but you also tap the drum. You want music as an accompaniment, and to that you dance with this toy.'

'How do you mean?'

'I will show you how I have seen it played by Italian and gipsy girls.' He took the tambourine, and singing a lively dance air, struck the drum and clinked the brasses. He danced before Eve gravely, with graceful movements.

'That is it!' cried Eve, with eyes that flashed with delight, and with feet that itched to dance. 'Oh, give it me back. I understand thoroughly now, thank you, thank you so heartily, dear Mr Jasper. And now—I have not done. Come up into the garret when I call.'

'What for? To help you to make more rummage, and find more toys?'

'No! I want you to push the winnowing machine back, and to make order in the litter I have created.'

Jasper nodded good-humouredly.

Then Eve, rattling her tambourine over her

head, ran in ; and Jasper resumed his work at the flower-beds. Barbara's heliotrope, from which she so often wore a fragrant flower, had not been planted many weeks. It was straggling, and needed pinning down. Her seedling asters had not been pricked out in a bed, and they were crowding each other in their box. He took them out and divided their interlaced roots.

'Mr. Jasper!' A little face was peeping out of the small window in the gable that lighted the attic. He looked up, waved his hand, and laid down the young asters with a sigh, but covered their roots with earth before leaving them.

Then he washed his hands at the Abbot's Well, and slowly ascended the stair to the attic. It was a newel stone flight, very narrow, in the thickness of the wall.

When he reached the top he threw up a trap in the floor, and pushed his head through.

Then, indeed, he was surprised. The inconsiderate Eve had taken some candle ends and stuck them on the binding beam of the roof, and lighted them. They cast a yellow radiance through the vast space, without illuminating its recesses. All was indistinct save within the radius of a few feet around the candles. In the far-off blackness was one

silvery grey square of light—the little gable window. On the floor the rafter cast its shadow as a bar of ink.

Jasper was not surprised at the illumination, though vexed at the careless manner in which Eve had created it. What surprised him was the appearance of the young girl. She was transfigured. She was dressed in a saffron-yellow skirt with a crimson lattice of ribbon over it, fastened with bows, and covered with spangles. She wore a crimson velvet bodice, glittering with gold lace and bullion thread embroidery. But her eyes sparkled brighter than the tarnished spangles.

The moment Jasper's head appeared through the trap in the floor, she struck the timbrel, and clattered the jingles, and danced and laughed. Then seeing how amazed he was she skipped coquettishly towards him, rattled her drum in his ear, and danced back again under her row of candles. She had caught the very air he had sung recently, when showing her how to manage the instrument. She had heard it that once, but she had seized the melody, and she sang it, and varied it after her own caprice, but without losing the leading thread, and always coming back to the burden with a similar set gesture of arms and feet, and stroke of drum and clash of bells. Then, all at

once, one of the candles fell over on the rafter and dropped to the floor. Eve brought her tambourine down with a crash and jangle; Jasper sprang forward, and extinguished the candle with his foot.

‘There! Is not this witchcraft?’ exclaimed Eve. ‘Go down through the trap again, Mr. Jasper, and I will rejoin you. Not a word to papa, or to Barbie when she returns.’

‘I will not go till the candles are put out and the risk of a fire is past. You can see by the window to take off this trumpery.’

‘Trumpery! Oh, Mr. Jasper! Trumpery!’ she exclaimed in an injured, disappointed tone.

‘Call it what you will. Where did you find it?’

‘In yonder box. There is more in it. Do go now, Mr. Jasper; I will put out the candles, I will, honour bright.’

The bailiff descended, and resumed his work with the asters. He smiled and yet was vexed at Eve’s giddiness. It was impossible to be angry with her, she was but a child. It was hard not to look with apprehension to her future.

Suddenly he stood up, and listened. He heard the clatter of horse’s hoofs in the lane. Who could be coming? The evening had

closed in. The sun was set. It was not dark so near midsummer, but dusk. He went hastily from the garden into the lane, and saw the young groom urging on his fagged horse, and leading another by the bridle, with a lady's saddle on it.

'Where is your mistress? Is anything the matter?'

'Nothing,' answered the lad. 'She is behind. In taking off her glove she lost her ring, and now I must get a lantern to look for it.'

'Nelly,' that was the horse, 'is tired. I will get a light and run back. Whereabouts is she?'

'Oh, not a thousand yards from the edge of the moor. The doctor rode with us part of the way from Tavistock. After he left, Miss Barbara took off her glove and lost her ring. She won't leave the spot till it be found.'

'Go in. I will take the light to her. Tell the cook to prepare supper. Miss Jordan must be tired and hungry.'

## CHAPTER XIX.

## BARBARA'S RING.

JASPER quickly got the lantern out of the stable, and lighted the candle in the kitchen. Then he ran with it along the rough, stone-strewn lane, between walls of moor-stone, till he came to the moor. He followed the track rather than road which traversed it. With evening, clouds had gathered and much obscured the light. Nevertheless the north was full of fine silvery haze, against which stood up the curious conical hill of Brent Tor, crowned with its little church.

When suddenly Jasper came up to Miss Jordan, he took her unawares. She was stooping, searching the ground, and, in her dark-green riding habit, he had mistaken her for a gorse bush. When he arrived with the lantern she arose abruptly, and on recognising the young man the riding-whip dropped from her hand.

‘ Mr. Jasper ! ’ she exclaimed.

‘Miss Barbara!’

They stood still looking at each other in the twilight. One of her white hands was gloveless.

‘What has brought you here?’ asked Barbara, stooping and picking up her whip with one hand, and gathering her habit with the other.

‘I heard that you had lost something.’

‘Yes; I was thoughtless. I was warm, and I hastily whisked off my glove that I might pass my hand over my brow, and I felt as I plucked the glove away that my aunt’s ring came off. It was not a good fit. I was so foolish, so unnerved, that I let drop the glove—and now can find neither. The ring, I suspect, is in the glove, but I cannot find that. So I sent on Johnny Ostler for the lantern. I supposed he would return with it.’

‘I took the liberty of coming myself. He is a boy and tired with his long journey; besides, the horses have to be attended to. I hope you are not displeased.’

‘On the contrary,’ she replied, in her frank, kindly tone, ‘I am glad to see you. When one has been from home a long distance, it is pleasant to meet a messenger from home to say how all are.’

‘And it is pleasant for the messenger to



bring good tidings. Mr. Jordan is well; Miss Eve happy as a butterfly in summer over a clover field.'

If it had not been dusk, and Barbara had not turned her head aside, Jasper would have seen a change in her face. She suddenly bowed herself and recommenced her search.

'I am very, very sorry,' she said, in a low tone; 'I am not able to be a pleasant messenger to you. I am——' She half raised herself, her voice was full of sympathy. 'I am more sorry than I can say.'

He made no reply; he had not, perhaps, expected much. He threw the light of the lantern along the ground, and began to search for the glove.

'You are carrying something,' he said; 'let me relieve you, Miss Jordan.'

'It is—your violin.'

'Miss Barbara! how kind, how good! You have carried it all the way?'

'Not at all. Johnny Ostler had it most part. Then Mr. Coyshe carried it. The boy *could* not take it at the same time that he led my horse; you understand that?' Her voice became cold, her pride was touched; she did not choose that he should know the truth.

'But you thought of bringing it.'

'Not at all. Your father insisted on its

being taken from his house. The boy has the rest of your things, as many as could be carried.'

Nothing further was said. They searched together for the glove. They were forced to search closely together, because the lantern cast but a poor light round. Where the glare did fall, there the tiny white clover leaves, fine moor grass, small delicately-shaped flowers of the milkwort, white and blue, seemed a newly-discovered little world of loveliness. But Barbara had other matters to consider, and scarcely noticed the beauty. She was not susceptible as Eve to the beautiful and picturesque. She was looking for her glove, but her thoughts were not wholly concerned with the glove and ring.

'Mr. Jasper, I saw your father.' She spoke in a low voice, their heads were not far asunder. 'I told him where you were.'

'Miss Barbara, did he say anything to you about me? Did he say anything about the—the loss of the money?'

'He refused to hear about you. He would hardly listen to a word I said.'

'Did he tell you who took the money?'

'No.' She paused. 'Why should he? I know—it was you——'

Jasper sighed.

'I can see,' pursued Barbara, 'that you were hard tried. I know that you had no happy home, that you had no mother, and that your father may have been harsh and exacting, but—but—' her voice shook. 'Excuse me, I am tired, and anxious about my ring. It is a sapphire surrounded with diamonds. I cannot speak much. I ought not to have put the ring on my finger till the hoop had been reduced. It was a very pretty ring.'

Then the search was continued in silence, without result.

'Excuse me,' she said, after a while, 'I may seem engrossed in my loss and regardless of your disappointment. I expected that your father would have been eager to forgive you. The father of the prodigal in the Gospel ran to meet his repentant son. I am sure—I am sure you are repentant.'

'I will do all in my power to redress the wrong that has been done,' said Jasper calmly.

'I entreated Mr. Babb to be generous, to relax his severity, and to send you his blessing. But I could not win a word of kindness for you, Mr. Jasper, not a word of hope and love!'

'Oh, Miss Jordan, how good and kind you are!'

'Mr. Jasper,' she said in a soft tremulous voice, 'I would take the journey readily over

again. I would ride back at once, and alone over the moor, if I thought that would win the word for you. I believe, I trust, you are repentant, and I would do all in my power to strengthen your good resolution, and save your soul.'

Then she touched a gorse bush and made her hand smart with the prickles. She put the ungloved hand within the radius of the light, and tried to see and remove the spines.

'Never mind,' she said, forcing a laugh. 'The ring, not the prickles, is of importance now. If I do not find it to-night, I shall send out all the men to-morrow, and promise a reward to quicken their interest and sharpen their eyes.'

She put her fingers where most wounded to her lips. Then, thinking that she had said too much, shown too great a willingness to help Jasper, she exclaimed, 'Our holy religion requires us to do our utmost for the penitent. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that is contrite.'

'I have found your glove,' exclaimed Jasper joyously. He rose and held up a dog-skin riding-glove with gauntlet.

'Feel inside if the ring be there,' said Barbara. 'I cannot do so myself, one hand is engaged with my whip and skirt.'

‘I can feel it—the hoop—through the leather.’

‘I am so glad, so much obliged to you, Mr. Jasper.’ She held out her white hand with the ring-finger extended. ‘Please put it in place, and I will close my fist till I reach home.’

She made the request without thought, considering only that she had her whip and gathered habit in her right, gloved hand.

Jasper opened the lantern and raised it. The diamonds sparkled. ‘Yes, that is my ring,’ said Barbara.

He set the lantern on a stone, a slab of white felspar that lay on the grass. Then he lightly held her hand with his left, and with the right placed the ring on her finger.

But the moment it was in place and his fingers held it there, a shock of terror and shame went to Barbara’s heart. What inconsiderateness had she been guilty of! The reflection of the light from the white felspar was in their faces. In a moment, unable to control herself, Barbara burst into tears. Jasper stooped and kissed the fingers he held.

She started back, snatched her hand from him, clenched her fist, and struck her breast with it. ‘How dare you! You—you—the

escaped convict! Go on; I will follow. You have insulted me.'

He obeyed. But as he walked back to Morwell ahead of her, he was not cast down. Eve, in the garret, had that day opened a coffer and made a discovery. He, too, on the down, had wrenched open for one moment a fast-closed heart, had looked in, and made a discovery.

When Barbara reached her home she rushed to her room, where she threw herself on her bed, and beat and beat again, with her fists, her head and breast, and said, 'I hate—I hate and despise myself! I hate—oh, how I hate myself!'

## CHAPTER XX.

## PERPLEXITY.

BARBARA was roused early next morning by Eve; Eve had overslept herself when she ought to be up; she woke and rose early when another hour of rest would have been a boon to poor Barbara. The sisters occupied adjoining rooms that communicated, and the door was always open between them. When Eve was awake she would not suffer her sister to sleep on. She stooped over her and kissed her closed eyes till she woke. Eve had thrown open the window, and the sweet fresh air blew in. The young girl was not more than half dressed. She stood by Barbara's bed with her lovely hair dishevelled about her head, forming a halo of red-gold glory to her face. That face was lovely with its delicate roses of health and happiness, and the blue eyes twinkling in it full of life and fun. Her neck was exposed. She folded her slender arms round Barbara's

head and shook it, and kissed again, till the tired, sleep-stupefied girl awoke.

‘I cannot sleep this lovely morning,’ said Eve; then, with true feminine *non-sequitur*, ‘so you must get up, Barbie.’

‘Oh, Eve, is it time?’ Barbara sat up in bed instantly wide awake. Her sister seated herself on the side of the bed and laid her hand in her lap.

‘Eve!’ exclaimed Barbara suddenly, ‘what have you there—on your finger? Who gave you that?’

‘It is a ring, Bab. Is it not beautiful, a forget-me-not of turquoise set in a circlet of gold?’

‘Who gave it you, Eve?’

‘A pixy gift!’ laughed the girl, carelessly.

‘This will not do. You must answer me. Where did you get it?’

‘I found it, Barbie.’

‘Found it—where?’

‘Where are forget-me-nots usually found?’ Then hastily, before her sister could speak, ‘But what a lovely ring you have got on your pincushion, Bab! Mine cannot compare with it. Is that the ring I heard the maids say you lost?’

‘Yes, dear.’



‘How did you recover it? Who found it for you?’

‘Jasper.’

Eve turned her ring on her finger.

‘My darling,’ said Barbara, ‘you have not been candid with me about that ring. Did Dr. Coyshe give it to you?’

‘Dr. Coyshe! Oh, Barbara, that ever you should think of me as aspiring to be Mrs. Squash!’

‘When did you get the ring?’

‘Yesterday.’

‘Who gave it to you? You must tell me.’

‘I have already told you—I found it by the wood, as truly as you found yours on the down.’

Suddenly Barbara started, and her heart beat fast.

‘Eve!—where is the ribbon and your mother’s ring? You used to have that ring always in your bosom. Where is it? Have you parted with that?’

Eve’s colour rose, flushing face and throat and bosom.

‘Oh, darling!’ exclaimed Barbara, ‘answer me truly. To whom have you given that ring?’

‘I have not given it; I have lost it. You must not be angry with me, Bab. You lost

yours.' Eve's eyes sank as she spoke, and her voice faltered.

The elder sister did not speak for a moment ; she looked hard at Eve, who stood up and remained before her in a pretty penitential attitude, but unable to meet her eye.

Barbara considered. Whom could her sister have met? There was no one, absolutely no one she could think of, if Mr. Coyshe were set aside, but Jasper. Now Barbara had disapproved of the way in which Eve ran after Jasper before she departed for Ashburton. She had remonstrated, but she knew that her remonstrances carried small weight. Eve was a natural coquette. She loved to be praised, admired, made much of. The life at Morwell was dull, and Eve sought society of any sort where she could chatter and attract admiration and provoke a compliment. Eve had not made any secret of her liking for Jasper, but Barbara had not thought there was anything serious in the liking. It was a child's fancy. But then, she considered, would any man's heart be able to withstand the pretty wiles of Eve? Was it possible for Jasper to be daily associated with this fairy creature and not love her?

'Eve,' said Barbara, gravely, 'it is of no use trying concealment with me. I know who

gave you the ring. I know more than you suppose.'

'Jasper has been telling tales,' exclaimed Eve.

Barbara winced but did not speak.

Eve supposed that Jasper had informed her sister about the meeting with Watt on the Raven Rock.

'Are you going to sleep again?' asked Eve, as Barbara had cast herself back on her pillow with the face in it. The elder sister shook her head and made a sign with her hand to be left alone.

When Barbara was nearly dressed, Eve stole on tiptoe out of her own room into that of her sister. She was uneasy at Barbara's silence; she thought her sister was hurt and offended with her. So she stepped behind her, put her arms round her waist, as Barbara stood before the mirror, and her head over her sister's shoulder, partly that she might kiss her cheek, partly also that she might see her own face in the glass, and contrast it with that of Barbara. 'You are not cross with me?' she said, coaxingly.

'No, Eve, no one can be cross with you.' She turned and kissed her passionately. 'Darling! you must give back the little ring and recover that of your mother.'

‘It is impossible,’ answered Eve.

‘Then I must do what I can for you,’ said Barbara. Barbara was resolved what to do. She would speak to her father, if necessary; but before that she must have a word on the matter with Jasper. It was impossible to tolerate an attachment and secret engagement between him and her sister.

She sought an opportunity of speaking privately to the young man, and easily found one. But when they were together alone, she discovered that it was not easy to approach the topic that was uppermost in her mind.

‘I was very tired last night, Mr. Jasper,’ she said, ‘over-tired, and I am hardly myself this morning. The loss of my aunt, the funeral, the dividing of her poor little treasures, and then the lengthy ride, upset me. It was very ridiculous of me last night to cry, but a girl takes refuge in tears when overspent, it relieves and even refreshes her.’

Then she hesitated and looked down. But Barbara had a strong will, and when she had made up her mind to do what she believed to be right, allowed no weakness to interfere with the execution.

‘And now I want to speak about something else. I must beg you will not encourage Eve. She is a child, thoughtless and foolish.’

‘Yes; she should be kept more strictly guarded. I do not encourage her. I regret her giddiness, and give her good advice, which she casts to the winds. Excuse my saying it, but you and Mr. Jordan are spoiling the child.’

‘My father and I spoil Eve! That is not possible.’

‘You think so; I do not. The event will prove which is right, Miss Jordan.’

Barbara was annoyed. What right had Jasper to dictate how Eve was to be treated?

‘That ring,’ began Barbara, and halted.

‘It is not lost again, surely!’ said Jasper.

Barbara frowned. ‘I am not alluding to my ring which you found along with my glove, but to that which you gave to Eve.’

‘I gave her no ring; I do not understand you.’

‘It is a pretty little thing, and a toy. Of course you only gave it her as such, but it was unwise.’

‘I repeat, I gave her no ring, Miss Jordan.’

‘She says that she found it, but it is most improbable.’

Jasper laughed, not cheerfully; there was always a sadness in his laughter. ‘You have made a great mistake, Miss Jordan. It is true that your sister found the ring. That is, I con-

clude she did, as yesterday she found a chest in the garret full of old masquerading rubbish, and a tambourine, and I know not what besides.'

A load was taken off Barbara's mind. So Eve had not deceived her.

'She showed me a number of her treasures,' said Jasper. 'No doubt whatever that she found the ring along with the other trumpery.'

Barbara's face cleared. She drew a long breath. 'Why did not Eve tell me all?' she said.

'Because,' answered the young man, 'she was afraid you would be angry with her for getting the old tawdry stuff out of the box, and she asked me not to tell you of it. Now I have betrayed her confidence, I must leave to you, Miss Jordan, to make my peace with Miss Eve.'

'She has also lost something that hung round her throat.'

'Very likely. She was, for once, hard at work in the garret, moving boxes and hampers. It is lying somewhere on the floor. If you wish it I will search for her ornament, and hope my success will be equal to that of last night.' He looked down at her hand. The ring was not on it. She observed his glance and said coldly, 'My ring does not fit me, and I shall reserve it till I am old, or till I find some young lady

friend to whom I must make a wedding present.' Then she turned away. She walked across the Abbot's Meadow, through which the path led to the rocks, because she knew that Eve had gone in that direction. Before long she encountered her sister returning with a large bunch of foxgloves in her hand.

'Do look, Bab!' exclaimed Eve, 'is not this a splendid sceptre? A wild white foxglove with thirty-seven bells on it.'

'Eve!' said Barbara, her honest face alight with pleasure; 'my dearest, I was wrong to doubt you. I know now where you found the ring, and I am not in the least cross about it. There, kiss and make peace.'

'I wish the country folk had a prettier name for the foxglove than *flop-a-dock*,' said Eve.

'My dear,' said Barbara, 'you shall show me the pretty things you have found in the attic.'

'What—Bab?'

'I know all about it. Jasper has proved a traitor.'

'What has he told you?'

'He has told me where you found the turquoise ring, together with a number of fancy ball dresses.'

Eve was silent. A struggle went on in her innocent heart. She hated falsehood. It pained

her to deceive her sister, who had such perfect faith in her. She felt inclined to tell her all, yet she dared not do so. In her heart she longed to hear more of Martin. She remembered his handsome face, his flattering and tender words, the romance of that night. No! she could not tell Barbara.

‘We will go together into the garret,’ said Barbara, ‘and search for your mother’s ring. It will easily be found by the blue ribbon to which it is attached.’

Then Eve laughed, held her sister at arms’ length, thrusting the great bunch of purple and white foxgloves against her shoulder, so that their tall heads nodded by her cheek and ear. ‘No, Bab, sweet, I did not find the ring in the chest with the gay dresses. I did not lose the ring of my mother’s in the loft. I tell you the truth, but I tell you no more.’

‘Oh, Eve!’ Barbara’s colour faded. ‘Who was it? I implore you, if you love me, tell me.’

‘I love you dearly, but no.’ She curtsied. ‘Find out if you can.’ Then she tripped away, waving her foxgloves.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE SCYTHE OF TIME.

‘My papa ! my darling papa!’ Eve burst into her father’s room. ‘I want you much to do something for me. Mr. Jasper is so kind. He has promised to have a game of bowls with me this evening on the lawn, and the grass is not mown.’

‘Well, dear, get it mown,’ said Mr. Jordan, dreamily.

‘But there is no man about, and old Davy is in bed. What am I to do?’

‘Wait till to-morrow.’

‘I cannot ; I shall die of impatience. I have set my heart on a game of bowls. Do you not see, papa, that the weather may change in the night and spoil play for to-morrow?’

‘Then what do you wish?’

‘Oh ! my dear papa,’ Eve nestled into his arms, ‘I don’t want much, only that you would cut the grass for me. It really will not take you ten minutes. I will promise to sweep up what is cut.’

‘I am engaged, Eve, on a very delicate test.’

‘So am I, papa.’

Mr. Ignatius Jordan looked up at her with dull surprise in his eyes

‘I mean, papa, that if you really love me you will jump up and mow the grass. If you don’t love me you will go on muddling with those minerals and chemicals.’

The gaunt old man stood up. Eve knew her power over him. She could make him obey her slightest caprice. She ran before him to the gardener’s tool-house and brought him the scythe.

In the quadrangle was a grass plat, and on this Eve had decided to play her game.

‘All the balls are here except the Jack,’ said she. ‘I shall have to rummage everywhere for the black-a-moor; I can’t think where he can be.’ Then she ran into the house in quest of the missing ball.

The grass had been left to grow all spring and had not been cut at all, so that it was rank. Mr. Jordan did not well know how to wield a scythe. He tried and met with so little success that he suspected the blade was blunt. Accordingly he went to the tool-house for the hone, and, standing the scythe up with the handle on the swath, tried to sharpen the blade.

The grass was of the worst possible quality. The quadrangle was much in shadow. The plots were so exhausted that little grew except daisy and buttercup. Jasper had already told Barbara to have the wood-ashes thrown on the plots, and had promised to see that they were limed in winter. Whilst Mr. Jordan was honing the scythe slowly and clumsily Barbara came to him. She was surprised to see him thus engaged. Lean, haggard, with deep-sunken eyes, and hollow cheeks, he lacked but the hour-glass to make him stand as the personification of Time. He was in an ill-humour at having been disturbed and set to an uncongenial task, though his ill-humour was not directed towards Eve. Barbara was always puzzled by her father. That he suffered, she saw, but she could not make out of what and where he suffered, and he resented inquiry. There were times when his usually dazed look was exchanged for one of keenness, when his eyes glittered with a feverish anxiety, and he seemed to be watching and expecting with eye and ear something or some person that never came. At table he was without conversation; he sat morose, lost in his own thoughts till roused by an observation addressed to him. His temper was uncertain. Often, as he observed nothing, he took offence at nothing; but occasionally small matters roused

and unreasonably irritated him. An uneasy apprehension in Barbara's mind would not be set at rest. She feared that her father's brain was disturbed, and that at any time, without warning, he might break out into some wild, unreasonable, possibly dreadful, act, proclaiming to everyone that what she dreaded in secret had come to pass—total derangement. Of late his humour had been especially changeful, but his eldest daughter sought to convince herself that this could be accounted for by distress at the loss of Eve's dowry.

Barbara asked her father why he was mowing the grass plot, and when he told her that Eve had asked him to do so that she might play bowls that evening on it, she remonstrated, 'Whom is she to play with?'

'Jasper Babb has promised her a game. I suppose you and I will be dragged out to make up a party.'

'O papa, there is no necessity for your mowing! You do not understand a scythe. Now you are honing the wrong way, blunting, not sharpening, the blade.'

'Of course I am wrong. I never do right in your eyes.'

'My dear father,' said Barbara, hurt at the injustice of the remark, 'that is not true.'

'Then why are you always watching me?'

I cannot walk in the garden, I cannot go out of the door, I cannot eat a meal, but your eyes are on me. Is there anything very frightful about me? Anything very extraordinary? No—it is not that. I can read the thoughts in your head. You are finding fault with me. I am not doing useful work, I am wasting valuable hours over empty pursuits. I am eating what disagrees with me, too much, or too little. Understand this, once for all. I hate to be watched. Here is a case in point, a proof if one were needed. I came out here to cut this grass, and at once you are after me. You have spied my proceedings. I must not do this. If I sharpen the scythe I am all in the wrong, blunting the blade.'

The tears filled Barbara's eyes.

'I am told nothing,' continued Mr. Jordan. 'Everything I ought to know is kept concealed from me, and you whisper about me behind my back to Jasper and Mr. Coyshe.'

'Indeed, indeed, dear papa——'

'It is true. I have seen you talking to Jasper, and I know it was about me. What were you trying to worm out of him about me? And so with the doctor. You rode with him all the way from Tavistock to the Down the other day; my left ear was burning that afternoon. What did it burn for? Because I was

being discussed. I object to being made the topic of discussion. Then, when you parted with the doctor, Jasper Babb ran out to meet you, that you might learn from him how I had behaved, what I had done, whilst you were away. I have no rest in my own house because of your prying eyes. Will you go now, and leave me.'

'I will go now, certainly,' said Barbara, with a gulp in her throat, and swimming eyes.

'Stay!' he said, as she turned. He stood leaning his elbow on the head of the scythe, balancing it awkwardly. 'I was told nothing of your visit to Buckfastleigh. You told Eve, and you told Jasper—but I who am most concerned only heard about it by a side-wind. You brought Jasper his fiddle, and when I asked how he had got it, Eve told me. You visited his father. Well! am I nobody that I am to be kept in the dark?'

'I have nothing of importance to tell,' said Barbara. 'It is true I saw Mr. Babb, but he would not let me inside his house.'

'Tell me, what did that man say about the money?'

'I do not think there is any chance of his paying unless he be compelled. He has satisfied his conscience. He put the money away

for you, and as it did not reach you the loss is yours, and you must bear it.'

'But, good heavens! that is no excuse at all. The base hypocrite! He is a worse thief than the man who stole the money. He should sell the fields he bought with my loan.'

'They were fields useful to him for the stretching of the cloth he wove in his factory.'

'Are you trying to justify him for withholding payment?' asked Mr. Jordan. 'He is a hypocrite. What was he to cry out against the strange blood, and to curse it?—he, Ezekiel Babb, in whose veins ran fraud and guile?'

Barbara looked wonderingly at him through the veil of tears that obscured her sight. What did he mean?

'He is an old man, papa, but hard as iron. He has white hair, but none of the reverence which clings to age attaches to him.'

'White hair!' Mr. Jordan turned the scythe, and with the point aimed at, missed, aimed at again, and cut down a white-seeded dandelion in the grass. 'That is white, but the neck is soft, even if the head be hard,' said Mr. Jordan, pointing to the dandelion. 'I wish that were his head, and I had cut through his neck. But then——' he seemed to fall into

a bewildered state—‘the blood should run red—run, run, dribble, over the edge, red. This is milky, but acrid.’ He recovered himself. ‘I have only cut down a head of dandelion.’ He reversed the scythe again, and stood leaning his arm on the back of the blade, and staying the handle against his knee.

‘My dear father, had you not better put the scythe away?’

‘Why should I do that? I have done no harm with it. No one can set on me for what I have cut with it—only a white old head of dandelion with a soft neck. Think—if it had been Ezekiel Babb’s head sticking out of the grass, with the white hair about it, and the sloe-black wicked eyes, and with one cut of the scythe—swish, it had tumbled over, with the stalk upwards, bleeding, bleeding, and the eyes were in the grass, and winking because the daisies teased them and made them water.’

Barbara was distressed. She must change the current of his thoughts. To do this she caught at the first thing that came into her head.

‘Papa! I will tell you what Mr. Coyshe was talking to me about. It is quite right, as you say, that you should know all; it is proper that nothing should be kept from you.’

‘It is hardly big enough,’ said Mr. Jordan.



‘What, papa?’

‘The dandelion. I can’t feel towards it as if it were Mr. Babb’s head.’

‘Papa,’ said Barbara, speaking rapidly, and eager to divert his mind into another channel, ‘papa dear, do you know that the doctor is much attached to our pet?’

‘It could not be otherwise. Everyone loves Eve; if they do not, they deserve to die.’

‘Papa! He told me as much as that. He admires her greatly, and would dearly like to propose for her, but, though I do not suppose he is bashful, he is not quite sure that she cares for him.’

‘Eve shall have whom she will. If she does not like Coyshe, she shall have anyone else.’

‘Then he hinted that, though he had no doubt he would make himself a great name in his profession, and in time be very wealthy, that yet he could not afford as he is now circumstanced to marry a wife without means.’

‘There! there!’ exclaimed Mr. Jordan, becoming again excited. ‘See how the wrong done by Ezekiel Babb is beginning to work. There is a future, a fine future offering for my child, but she cannot accept it. The gate is open, but she may not pass though,

because she has not the toll-money in her hand.'

'Are you sure, papa, that Mr. Coyshe would make Eve happy?'

'I am sure of it. What is this place for her? She should be in the world, be seen and received, and shine. Here she is like one hidden in a nook. She must be brought out, she must be admired by all.'

'I do not think Eve cares for him.'

But her father did not hear her; he went on, and as he spoke his eyes flashed, and spots of dark red colour flared on his cheek-bones. 'There is no chance for poor Eve! The money is gone past recovery. Her future is for ever blighted. I call on heaven to redress the wrong. I went the other day to Plymouth to hear Mass, and I had but one prayer on my lips, Avenge me on my enemy! When the choir sang "*Gloria in excelsis, Deo*," I heard my heart sing a bass, "On earth a curse on the man of ill-will." When they sang the Hosanna! I muttered, Cursed is he that cometh to defraud the motherless! I could not hear the Benedictus. My heart roared out "*Imprecatus! Imprecatus sit!*" I can pray nothing else. All my prayers turn sour in my throat, and I taste them like gall on my tongue.'

'O papa! this is horrible!'

Now he rested both his elbows on the back of the blade and raised his hands, trembling with passion, as if in prayer. His long thin hair, instead of hanging lank about his head, seemed to bristle with electric excitement, his cheeks and lips quivered. Barbara had never seen him so greatly moved as now, and she did not know what to do to pacify him. She feared lest any intervention might exasperate him further.

‘I pray,’ he began, in a low, vibrating monotone, ‘I pray to the God of justice, who protecteth the orphan and the oppressed, that He may cause the man that sinned to suffer; that He will whet His gleaming sword, and smite and not spare—smite and not spare the guilty.’ His voice rose in tone and increased in volume. Barbara looked round, in hopes of seeing Eve, trusting that the sight of her might soothe her father, and yet afraid of her sister seeing him in this condition.

‘There was a time, seventeen years ago,’ continued Mr. Jordan, not noticing Barbara, looking before him as if he saw something far beyond the boundary walls of the house. ‘there was a time when he lifted up his hand and voice to curse my child. I saw the black cross, and the shadow of Eve against it, and he with his cruel black hands held her there,

nailed her with his black fingers to the black cross. And now I lift my soul and my hands to God against him. I cry to Heaven to avenge the innocent. Raise Thy arm and Thy glittering blade, O Lord, and smite !'

Suddenly the scythe slipped from under his elbows. He uttered a sharp cry, staggered back and fell.

As he lay on the turf, Barbara saw a dark red stain ooze from his right side, and spread as ink on blotting-paper. The point of the scythe had entered his side. He put his hand to the wound, and then looked at his palm. His face turned livid. At that moment, just as Barbara sprang to her father, having recovered from the momentary paralysis of terror, Eve bounded from the hall-door holding a ball over her head in both her hands, and shouting joyously, 'I have the Jack! I have the Jack!'

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE RED STREAK.

BARBARA was not a girl to allow precious moments to be lost; instead of giving way to emotion and exclamations, she knelt and tore off her father's waistcoat, ripped his shirt, and found a gash under the rib; tearing off her kerchief she ran, sopped it in cold water, and held it tightly to the wound.

'Run, Eve, run, summon help!' she cried. But Eve was powerless to be of assistance; she had turned white to the lips, had staggered back to the door, and sent the Jack rolling over the turf to her father's feet.

'I am faint,' gasped poor Eve. 'I cannot see blood.'

'You must,' exclaimed Barbara, 'command yourself. Ring the alarm bell; Jasper—some one—will hear.'

'The power is gone from my arms,' sobbed Eve, shivering.

‘Call one of the maids. Bid her ring,’ ordered the elder.

Eve, holding the sides of the door to prevent herself from falling, deadly white, with knees that yielded under her, staggered into the house.

Presently the old bell hung in a pent house over the roof of the chapel began to give tongue.

Barbara, kneeling behind her father, raised his head on her bosom, and held her kerchief to his side. The first token of returning consciousness was given by his hands, which clutched at some grass he had cut. Then he opened his eyes.

‘Why is the bell tolling?’

‘Dear papa! it is calling for help. You must be moved. You are badly hurt.’

‘I feel it. In my side. How was it? I do not remember. Ah! the scythe. Has the blade cut deep?’

‘I cannot tell, papa, till the doctor comes. Are you easier now?’

‘You did it. Interfering with me when I was mowing. Teasing me. You will not leave me alone. You are always watching me. You wanted to take the scythe from me. If you had left me alone this would not have happened.’

‘Never mind, darling papa, how it happened. Now we must do our best to cure you.’

‘Am I badly hurt? What are these women coming crowding round me for? I do not want the maids here. Drive them back, Barbara.’

Barbara made a sign to the cook and house and kitchen maids to stand back.

‘You must be moved to your room, papa.’

‘Am I dying, Barbara?’

‘I hope and trust not, dear.’

‘I cannot die without speaking; but I will not speak till I am on the point of death.’

‘Do not speak, father, at all now.’

He obeyed and remained quiet, with his eyes looking up at the sky. Thus he lay till Jasper arrived breathless. He had heard the bell, and had run, suspecting some disaster.

‘Let me carry him, with one of the maids,’ said Jasper.

‘No,’ answered Barbara. ‘You shall take his shoulders, I his feet. We will carry him on a mattress. Cook and Jane have brought one. Help me to raise him on to it.’

Jasper was the man she wanted. He did not lose his head. He did not ask questions, how the accident had happened; he did not waste words in useless lamentation. He sent a maid at once to the stable to saddle the

horse. A girl, in the country, can saddle and bridle as well as a boy.

‘I am off for the doctor,’ he said shortly, as soon as he had seen Mr. Jordan removed to the same downstairs room in which he had so recently lain himself.

‘Send for the lawyer,’ said Mr. Jordan, who had lain with his eyes shut.

‘The lawyer, papa!’

‘I must make my will. I might die, and then what would become of Eve?’

‘Ride on to Tavistock after you have summoned Mr. Coyshe,’ said Barbara.

When Jasper was gone, Eve, who had been fluttering about the door, came in, and threw herself sobbing on her knees by her father’s bed. He put out his hand, stroked her brow, and called her tender names.

She was in great distress, reproaching herself for having asked him to mow the grass for her; she charged herself with having wounded him.

‘No—no, Eve!’ said her father. ‘It was not your fault. Barbara would not let me alone. She interfered, and I lost my balance.’

‘I am so glad it was not I,’ sobbed Eve.

‘Let me look at you. Stand up,’ he said.

She rose, but averted her face somewhat, so as not to see the blood on the sheet. He



had been caressing her. Now, as he looked at her, he saw a red streak across her forehead.

‘My child! what is that? You are hurt! Barbara, help! She is bleeding.’

Barbara looked.

‘It is nothing,’ she said; ‘your hand, papa, has left some of its stains on her brow. Come with me, Eve, and I will wash it clean.’

The colour died completely out of Eve’s face, and she seemed again about to faint. Barbara hastily bathed a napkin in fresh water, and removed all traces of blood from her forehead, and then kissed it.

‘Is it gone?’ whispered Eve.

‘Entirely.’

‘I feel it still. I cannot remain here.’ Then the young girl crept out of the room, hardly able to sustain herself on her feet.

When Barbara was alone with her father, she said to him, in her quiet, composed tones, ‘Papa, though I do not in the least think this wound will prove fatal, I am glad you have sent for Lawyer Knighton, because you ought to make your will, and provide for Eve. I made up my mind to speak to you when I was on my way home from Ashburton.’

‘Well, what have you to say?’

‘Papa! I’ve been thinking that as the money laid by for Eve is gone for ever, and as

my aunt has left me a little more than sixteen hundred pounds, you ought to give Morwell to Eve—that is, for the rest of your term of it, some sixty-three years, I think. If you like to make a little charge on it for me, do so, but do not let it be much. I shall not require much to make me happy. I shall never marry. If I had a good deal of money it is possible some man would be base enough to want to marry me for it; but if I have only a little, no one will think of asking me. There is no one whom I care for whom I would dream of taking—under no circumstances—nothing would move me to it—nothing. And as an old maid, what could I do with this property? Eve must marry. Indeed, she can have almost anyone she likes. I do not think she cares for the doctor, but there must be some young squire about here who would suit her.'

'Yes, Barbara, you are right.'

'I am glad you think so,' she said, smiled, and coloured, pleased with his commendation, so rarely won. 'No one can see Eve without loving her. I have my little scheme. Captain Cloberry is coming home from the army this ensuing autumn, and if he is as nice as his sisters say—then something may come of it. But I do not know whether Eve cares or does not care for Mr. Coyshe. He has not spoken

to her yet. I think, papa, it would be well to let him and everyone know that Morwell is not to come to me, but is to go to Eve. Then everyone will know what to expect.'

'It shall be so. If Mr. Knighton comes, I will get the doctor to be in the room when I make my will, and Jasper Babb also.' He considered for a while, and then said, 'In spite of all—there is good in you, Barbara. I forgive you my wound. There—you may kiss me.'

As Barbara wished, and Mr. Jordan intended, so was the will executed. Mr. Knighton, the solicitor, arrived at the same time as the surgeon; he waited till Mr. Coyshe had bandaged up the wound, and then he entered the sick man's room, summoned by Barbara.

'My second daughter,' said Mr. Jordan, 'is, in the eye of the law, illegitimate. My elder daughter has urged me to do what I likewise feel to be right—to leave my title to Morwell estate to Eve.'

'What is her surname—I mean her mother's name?'

'That you need not know. I leave Morwell to my daughter Eve, commonly called Eve Jordan. That is Barbara's wish.'

'I urged it on my father,' said Barbara.

Jasper, who had been called in, looked into

her face with an expression of admiration. She resented it, frowned, and averted her head.

When the will had been properly executed, the doctor left the room with Jasper. He had already given his instructions to Barbara how Mr. Jordan was to be treated. Outside the door he found Eve fluttering, nervous, alarmed, entreating to be reassured as to her father's condition.

'Dear Barbie disturbed him whilst he was mowing,' she said, 'and he let the scythe slip, and so got hurt.' She was readily consoled when assured that the old gentleman lay in no immediate danger. He must, however, be kept quiet, and not allowed to leave his bed for some time. Then Eve bounded away, light as a roe. The reaction set in at once. She was like a cork in water, that can only be kept depressed by force; remove the pressure and the cork leaps to the surface again.

Such was her nature. She could not help it.

'Mr. Jasper,' said the surgeon, 'I have never gone over this property. If you have a spare hour and would do me a favour, I should like to look about me. The quality of the land is good?'

'Excellent.'

'Is there anywhere a map of the property that I could run my eye over?'

‘In the study.’

‘What about the shooting, now?’

‘It is not preserved. If it were it would be good, the cover is so fine.’

‘And there seems to be a good deal of timber.’

After about an hour Mr. Coyshe rode away. ‘Some men are Cyclopes, as far as their own interests are concerned,’ said he to himself; ‘they carry but a single eye. I invariably use two.’

In the evening, when Barbara came to her sister’s room to tell her that she intended to sit up during the night with her father, she said: ‘Mr. Jasper is very kind. He insists on taking half the watch, he will relieve me at two o’clock. What is the matter with you, Eve?’

‘I can see nothing, Barbie, but it is there still.’

‘What is?’

‘That red mark. I have been rubbing, and washing, and it burns like fire.’

‘I can see, my dear Eve, that where you have rubbed your pretty white delicate skin, you have made it red.’

‘I have rubbed it in. I feel it. I cannot get the feel away. It stains me. It hurts me. It burns me.’

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A BUNCH OF ROSES.

MR. JORDAN'S wound was not dangerous, but the strictest rest was enjoined. He must keep his bed for some days. As when Jasper was ill, so now that her father was an invalid, the principal care devolved on Barbara. No reliance could be placed on Eve, who was willing enough, but too thoughtless and forgetful to be trusted. When Barbara returned from Ashburton she found her store closet in utter confusion: bags of groceries opened and not tied up again, bottles of sauces upset and broken, coffee berries and rice spilled over the floor, lemons with the sugar, become mouldy, and dissolving the sugar. The linen cupboard was in a similar disorder: sheets pulled out and thrust back unfolded in a crumpled heap, pillow-cases torn up for dusters, blankets turned out and left in a damp place, where the moth had got to them. Now, rather than

give the keys to Eve, Barbara retained them, and was kept all day engaged without a moment's cessation. She was not able to sit much with her father, but Eve could do that, and her presence soothed the sick man. Eve, however, would not remain long in the room with her father. She was restless, her spirits flagged, and Mr. Jordan himself insisted on her going out. Then she would run to Jasper Babb, if he were near. She had taken a great fancy to him. He was kind to her; he treated her as a child, and accommodated himself to her humours. Barbara could not now be with her. Besides, Barbara had not that craving for colour and light, and melody and poetry, that formed the very core of Eve's soul. The elder sister was severely practical. She liked what was beautiful, as a well-educated young lady is required by society to have such a liking, but it was not instinctive in her, it was in no way a passion. Jasper, on the other hand, responded to the æsthetic longings of Eve. He could sympathise with her raptures; Barbara laughed at them. It is said that everyone sees his own rainbow, but there are many who are colour-blind and see no rainbows, only raindrops. Wherever Eve looked she saw rainbows. Jasper had a strong fibre of poetry in him, and he was able to read

the girl's character and understand the uncertain aspirations of her heart. He thought that Barbara was mistaken in laughing down and showing no interest in her enthusiasms, and he sought to give her vague aspirations some direction, and her cravings some satisfaction.

Eve appreciated his efforts. She saw that he understood her, which Barbara did not; she and Jasper had a world of ideas in common from which her sister was shut out. Eve took great delight in talking to Jasper, but her chief delight was in listening to him when he played the violin, or in accompanying him on the piano. Old violin music was routed out of the cupboards, fresh was ordered. Jasper introduced her to a great deal of very beautiful classical music of which she was ignorant. Hitherto she had been restrained to a few meagre collections: the 'Musical Treasury,' the 'Sacred Harmonist,' and the like. Now, with her father's consent, she ordered the operas of Mozart, Beethoven's sonatas, Rossini, Boiledieu, and was guided, a ready pupil, by Jasper into this new and enchanted world. By this means Jasper gave Eve an interest, which hitherto she had lacked—a pursuit which she followed with eagerness.

Barbara was dissatisfied. She thought Jasper was encouraging Eve in her frivolity,



was diverting her from the practical aims of life. She was angry with Jasper, and misinterpreted his motives. The friendship subsisting between her sister and the young steward was too warm. How far would it go? How was it to be arrested? Eve was inexperienced and wilful. Before she knew where she was, Jasper would have gained her young heart. She was so headstrong that Barbara doubted whether a word of caution would avail anything. Nevertheless, convinced that it was her duty to interfere, she did speak, and, of course, gained nothing by so doing. Barbara lacked tact. She spoke to Eve plainly, but guardedly.

‘Why, Bab! what are you thinking of? Why should I not be with Mr. Jasper?’ answered Eve to her sister’s expostulation. ‘I like him vastly; he talks delightfully, he knows so much about music, he plays and sings the tears into my eyes, and sets my feet tingling to dance. Papa does not object. When we are practising I leave the parlour door open for papa to hear. He says he enjoys listening. Oh, Barbie! I wish you loved music as I do. But as you don’t, let me go my way with the music, and you go your way with the groceries.’

‘My dearest sister,’ said Barbara, ‘I do not

think it looks well to see you running after Mr. Jasper.'

'Looks well!' repeated Eve. 'Who is to see me? Morwell is quite out of the world. Besides,' she screwed up her pretty mouth to a pout, 'I don't run after him, he runs after me, of course.'

'My dear, dear Eve,' said Barbara, earnestly, 'you must not suffer him to do so.'

'Why not?' asked Eve, frankly. 'You like Ponto and puss to run after you, and the little black calf, and the pony in the paddock. What is the difference? You care for one sort of animals, and I for another. I detest dogs and cats and bullocks.'

'Eve, sweetheart'—poor Barbara felt her powerlessness to carry her point, even to make an impression, but in her conscientiousness believed herself bound to go on—'your conduct is indiscreet. We must never part with our self-respect. That is the guardian angel given to girls by God.'

'Oh, Bab!' Eve burst out laughing. 'What a dear, grave old Mother Hubbard you are! I am always doing, and always will do, exactly opposite to what you intend and expect. I know why you are lecturing me now. I will tell Mr. Jasper how jealous you have become.'

‘For heaven’s sake!’ exclaimed Barbara, springing to her feet—she had been sitting beside Eve—‘do nothing of the sort. Do not mention my name to him. I am not jealous. It is an insult to me to make such a suggestion. Do I ever seek his company? Do I not shun it? No, Eve, I am moved only by uneasiness for you. You are thoughtless, and are playing a dangerous game with that man. When he sees how you seek his society, it flatters him, and his vanity will lead him to think of you with more warmth than is well. Understand this, Eve—there is a bar between him and you which should make the man keep his distance, and he shows a wicked want of consideration when he draws near you, relying on your ignorance.’

‘What are you hinting at?’

‘I cannot speak out as I wish, but I assure you of this, Eve, unless you are more careful of your conduct, I shall be forced to take steps to get Jasper Babb dismissed.’

Eve laughed, clapped her hands on her sister’s cheeks, kissed her lips, and said, ‘You dear old Mother Hubbard, you can’t do it. Papa would not listen to you if I told him that I wanted Jasper to stay.’

Barbara was hurt. This was true, but it was unkind of Eve to say it. The young girl

was herself aware that she had spoken unfeelingly, was sorry, and tried to make amends by coaxing her sister.

‘I want you to tell me,’ said Barbara, very gravely, ‘for you have not told me yet, who gave you the ring?’

‘I did not tell you because you said you knew. No one carries water to the sea or coals to Newcastle.’

‘Be candid with me, Eve.’

‘Am not I open as the day? Why should you complain?’

‘Eve, be serious. Was it Mr. Jasper who gave you the turquoise ring?’

‘Jasper!’ Eve held out her skirts daintily, and danced and made curtesies round her sister, in the prettiest, most coquettish, laughing way. ‘You dearest, you best, you most jealous of sisters; we will not quarrel over poor good Jasper. I don’t mind how much you pet the black calf. How absurd you are! You make me laugh sometimes at your density. There, do not cry. I would tell you all if I dared.’ Then warbling a strain, and still holding her skirts out, she danced as in a minuet, slowly out of the room, looking back over her shoulder at her distressed sister.

That was all Barbara had got by speaking—nothing, absolutely nothing. She knew that

Eve would not be one whit more guarded in her conduct for what had been said to her. Barbara revolved in her mind the threat she had rashly made of driving Jasper away. That would necessitate the betrayal of his secret. Could she bring herself to this? Hardly. No, the utmost she could do was to threaten him that, unless he voluntarily departed, she would reveal the secret to her father.

A day or two after this scene, Barbara was again put to great distress by Eve's conduct.

She knew well enough that she and her sister were invited to the Cloberrys to an afternoon party and dance. Eve had written and accepted before the accident to Mr. Jordan. Barbara had let her write, because she was herself that day much engaged and could not spare time. The groom had ridden over from Bradstone manor, and was waiting for an answer, just whilst Barbara was weighing out sago and tapioca. When Mr. Jordan was hurt, Barbara had wished to send a boy to Bradstone with a letter declining the party, but Mr. Coyshe had said that her father was not in danger, had insisted on Eve promising him a couple of dances, and had so strictly combated her desire to withdraw that she had given way.

In the afternoon, when the girls were ready

to go, they came downstairs to kiss their father, and let him see them in their pretty dresses. The little carriage was at the door.

In the hall they met Jasper Babb, also dressed for the party. He held in his hands two lovely bouquets, one of yellow tea-scented roses, which he handed to Barbara, the other of Malmaison, delicate white, with a soft inner blush, which he offered to Eve. Whence had he procured them? No doubt he had been for them to a nursery at Tavistock.

Eve was in raptures over her Malmaison; it was a new rose, quite recently introduced, and she had never seen it before. She looked at it, uttered exclamations of delight, smelt at the flowers, then ran off to her father that she might show him her treasures.

Barbara thanked Jasper somewhat stiffly; she was puzzled. Why was he dressed?

‘Are you going to ride, or to drive us?’ asked Eve, skipping into the hall again. She had put her bunch in her girdle. She was charmingly dressed, with rose satin ribands in her hair, about her throat, round her waist. Her face was, in colour, itself like a souvenir de la Malmaison rose.

‘Whom are you addressing?’ asked Barbara seriously.

‘I am speaking to Jasper,’ answered Eve.

‘*Mr. Jasper,*’ said Barbara, ‘was not invited to Bradstone.’

‘Oh, that does not matter!’ said the ready Eve. ‘I accepted for him. You know, dear Bab—I mean Barbie—that I had to write, as you were up to your neck in tapioca. Well, at these parties there are so many girls and so few gentlemen, that I thought I would give the Cloberry girls and *Mr. Jasper* a pleasure at once, so I wrote to say that you and I accepted and would bring with us a young gentleman, a friend of papa; who was staying in the house. *Mr. Jasper* ought to know the neighbours, and get some pleasure.’

Barbara was aghast.

‘I think, Miss Eve, you have been playing tricks with me,’ said Jasper. ‘Surely I understood you that I had been specially invited, and that you had accordingly accepted for me.’

‘Did I?’ asked Eve carelessly; ‘it is all the same. The Cloberry girls will be delighted to see you. Last time I was there they said they hoped to have an afternoon dance, but were troubled how to find gentlemen as partners for all the pretty Misses.’

‘That being so,’ said Barbara sternly, turning as she spoke to Jasper, ‘of course you do not go?’

‘Not go!’ exclaimed Eve; ‘to be sure he

goes. We are engaged to each other for a score of dances.' Then, seeing the gloom gathering on her sister's brow, she explained, 'It is a plan between us so as to get free from Doctor Squash. When Squash asks my hand, I can say I am engaged. I have been booked by him for two dances, and he shall have no more.'

'You have been inconsiderate,' said Barbara. 'Unfortunately Mr. Babb cannot leave Morwell, as my father is in his bed—it is not possible.'

'I have no desire to go,' said Jasper.

'I do not suppose you have,' said Barbara haughtily, turning to him. 'You are judge of what is right and fitting—in every way.'

Then Eve's temper broke out. Her cheeks flushed, her lips quivered, and the tears started into her eyes. 'I will not allow Mr. Jasper to be thus treated,' she exclaimed. 'I cannot understand you, Barbie; how can you, who are usually so considerate, grudge Mr. Jasper a little pleasure? He has been working hard for papa, and he has been kind to me, and he has made your garden pretty, and now you are mean and ungrateful, and send him back to his room when he is dressed for the party. I'll go and ask papa to interfere.'

Then she ran off to her father's room.



The moment Eve was out of hearing, Barbara's anger blazed forth. 'You are not acting right. You forget your position; you forget who you are. How dare you allow my sister——? If you had a spark of honour, a grain of good feeling in your heart, you would keep her at arm's length. She is a child, inconsiderate and confiding; you are a man with such a foul stain on your name, that you must not come near those who are clean, lest you smirch them. Keep to yourself, sir! Away!'

'Miss Jordan,' he answered, with a troubled expression on his face and a quiver in his voice, 'you are hard on me. I had no desire whatever to go to this dance, but Miss Eve told me it was arranged that I was to go, and I am obedient in this house. Of course, now I withdraw.'

'Of course you do. Good heavens! In a few days some chance might bring all to light, and then it would be the scandal of the neighbourhood that we had introduced—that Eve had danced with—an escaped jail-bird—a vulgar thief.'

She walked out through the door, and threw the bunch of yellow roses upon the plot of grass in the quadrangle.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## WHERE THEY WITHERED.

BARBARA did not enjoy the party at the Cloberrys. She was dull and abstracted. It was otherwise with Eve. During the drive she had sulked; she was in a pet with Barbara, who was a stupid, tiresome marplot. But when she arrived at Bradstone and was surrounded by admirers, when she had difficulty, not in getting partners, but in selecting among those who pressed themselves on her, Eve's spirits were elated. She forgot about Jasper, Barbara, her father, about everything but present delight. With sparkling eyes, heightened colour, and dimples that came and went in her smiling face, she sailed past Barbara without observing her, engrossed in the pleasure of the dance, and in playing with her partner.

Barbara was content to be unnoticed. She sat by herself in a corner, scarce noticing what went on, so wrapped up was she in her

thoughts. Her mood was observed by her hostess, and attributed to anxiety for her father. Mrs. Cloberry went to her, seated herself at her side, and talked to her kindly about Mr. Jordan and his accident.

‘You have a friend staying with you. We rather expected him,’ said Mrs. Cloberry.

‘Oh!’ Barbara answered, ‘that was dear Eve’s nonsense. She is a child, and does not think. My father has engaged a steward; of course he could not come.’

‘How lovely Eve is!’ said Mrs. Cloberry. ‘I think I never saw so exquisite a creature.’

‘And she is as good and sweet as she is lovely,’ answered Barbara, always eager to sing her sister’s praises.

Eve’s roses were greatly admired. She had her posy out of her waistband showing the roses, and many a compliment was occasioned by them. ‘Barbara had a beautiful bouquet also,’ she said, and looked round. ‘Oh, Bab! where are your yellow roses?’

‘I have dropped them,’ answered Barbara.

Besides dancing there was singing. Eve required little pressing.

‘My dear Miss Jordan,’ said Mrs. Cloberry, ‘how your sister has improved in style. Who has been giving her lessons?’

The party was a pleasant one; it broke up

early. It began at four o'clock and was over when the sun set. As the sisters drove home, Eve prattled as a brook over stones. She had perfectly enjoyed herself. She had outshone every girl present, had been much courted and greatly flattered. Eve was not a vain girl; she knew she was pretty, and accepted homage as her right. Her father and sister had ever been her slaves; and she expected to find everyone wear chains before her. But there was no vulgar conceit about her. A queen born to wear the crown grows up to expect reverence and devotion. It is her due. So with Eve; she had been a queen in Morwell since infancy.

Barbara listened to her talk and answered her in monosyllables, but her mind was not with the subject of Eve's conversation. She was thinking then, and she had been thinking at Bradstone, whilst the floor throbbed with dancing feet, whilst singers were performing, of that bouquet of yellow roses which she had flung away. Was it still lying on the grass in the quadrangle? Had Jane, the housemaid, seen it, picked it up, and taken it to adorn the kitchen table?

She knew that Jasper must have taken a long walk to procure those two bunches of roses. She knew that he could ill afford the expense. When he was ill, she had put aside

his little purse containing his private money, and had counted it, to make sure that none was lost or taken. She knew that he was poor. Out of the small sum he owned he must have paid a good deal for these roses.

She had thrown her bunch away in angry scorn, under his eyes. She had been greatly provoked ; but—had she behaved in a ladylike and Christian spirit ? She might have left her roses in a tumbler in the parlour or the hall. That would have been a courteous rebuff—but to fling them away !

There are as many conflicting currents in the human soul as in the ocean ; some run from east to west, and some from north to south, some are sweet and some bitter, some hot and others cold. Only in the Sargasso Sea are there no currents—and that is a sea of weeds. What we believe to-day we reject to-morrow ; we are resentful at one moment over a wrong inflicted and are repentant the next for having been ourselves the wrong-doer. Barbara had been in fiery indignation at three o'clock against Jasper ; by five she was cooler, and by six reproached herself.

As the sisters drove into the little quadrangle, Barbara turned her head aside, and whilst she made as though she were unwinding the knitted shawl that was wrapped about her

head, she looked across the turf, and saw lying, where she had cast it, the bunch of roses.

The stable-boy came with his lantern to take the horse and carriage, and the sisters dismounted. Jane appeared at the hall door to divest them of their wraps.

‘How is papa?’ asked Eve; then, without waiting for an answer, she ran into her father’s room to kiss him and tell him of the party, and show herself again in her pretty dress, and again receive his words of praise and love.

But Barbara remained at the door, leisurely folding her cloak. Then she put both her own and her sister’s parasols together in the stand. Then she stood brushing her soles on the mat—quite unnecessarily, as they were not dirty.

‘You may go away, Jane,’ said Barbara to the maid, who lingered at the door.

‘Please, Miss, I’m waiting for you to come in, that I may lock up.’

Then Barbara was obliged to enter.

‘Has Mr. Babb been with my father?’ she asked.

‘No, Miss. I haven’t seen him since you left.’

‘You may go to bed, Jane. It is washing day to-morrow, and you will have to be up four. Has not Mr. Babb had his supper?’

‘No, Miss. He has not been here at all.’

‘That will do.’ She signed the maid to leave.

She stood in the hall, hesitating. Should she unbar the door and go out and recover the roses? Eve would leave her father’s room in a moment, and ask questions which it would be inconvenient to answer. Let them lie. She went upstairs with her sister, after having wished her father good-night.

‘Barbie, dear!’ said Eve, ‘did you observe Mr. Squash?’

‘Do not Eve. That is not his name.’

‘I think he looked a little disconcerted. I repudiated.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I refused to be bound by the engagements we had made for a quadrille and a waltz. I did not want to dance with him, and I did not.’

‘Run back into your room, darling, and go to bed.’

When Barbara was alone she went to her window and opened it. The window looked into the court. If she leaned her head out far, she could see where the bunch of roses ought to be. But she could not see them, though she looked, for the grass lay dusk in the shadows. The moon was rising, and shone on the long roof like steel, and the light was creeping down the wall. That long roof was

over the washhouse, and next morning at early dawn the maids would cross the quadrangle with the linen and carry fuel, and would either trample on or pick up and appropriate the bunch of yellow roses.

Barbara remembered every word that she had said to Jasper. She could not forget—and now could not forgive herself. Her words had been cruel, how they must have wounded him! He had not been seen since. Perhaps he was gone and would not return again. They and she would see him no more. That would be well in one way, it would relieve her of anxiety about Eve; but, on the other hand, Jasper had proved himself most useful, and, above all—he was repentant. Her treatment of him might make him desperate, and cause him to abandon his resolutions to amend. Barbara knelt at the window, and prayed.

The white owls were flying about the old house. They had their nests in the great barn. The bats were squeaking as they whisked across the quadrangle, hunting gnats.

When Barbara rose from her knees her eyes were moist. She stood on tiptoe and looked forth from the casement again. The moonlight had reached the sward, drawing a sharp line of light across it, broken by one brighter speck—the bunch of roses.



Then Barbara, without her shoes, stole downstairs. There was sufficient light in the hall for her to find her way across it to the main door. She very softly unbarred it, and still in her stockings, unshod, went out on the doorstep, over the gravel, the dewy grass, and picked up the cold wet bunch.

Then she slipped in again, refastened the door, and with beating heart regained her room.

Now that she had the roses, what should she do with them? She stood in the middle of her room near the candle, looking at them. They were not much faded. The sun had not reached them, and the cool grass had kept them fresh. They were very delicately formed, lovely roses, and freshly sweet. What should she do with them? If they were put in a tumbler they would flourish for a few days, and then the leaves would fall off, and leave a dead cluster of seedless rose-hearts.

Barbara had a desk that had belonged to her mother, and this desk had in it a secret drawer. In this drawer Barbara preserved a few special treasures; a miniature of her mother, a silver cold-cream capsule with the head of Queen Anne on it, that had belonged to her grandmother, the ring of brilliants and sapphire that had come to her from her aunt, and

a lock of Eve's hair when she was a baby. Barbara folded the roses in a sheet of white paper, wrote in pencil on it the date, and placed them in the secret drawer, there to wither along with the greatest treasures she possessed.

Barbara's heart was no Sargasso Sea. In it ran currents strong and contrary. What she cast away with scorn in the afternoon, she sought and hid as a treasure in the night.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## LEAH AND RACHEL.

SUNDAY was a quiet day at Morwell. As the Jordans were Catholics they did not attend their parish church, which was Tavistock, some four miles distant. The servants went, or pretended to go. Morwell was quiet on all days, it was most quiet of all on a bright Sunday, for then there were fewest people about the old house.

Jasper Babb had not run away, offended at Barbara's rudeness. He went about his work as usual, was as little seen of the sisters as might be, and silent when in their company.

On Sunday evening Barbara and Eve strolled out together; it was their wont to do so on that day, when the weather permitted. Jane, the housemaid, was at home with their father.

They directed their steps as usual to the Raven Rock, which commanded so splendid a view to the west, was so airy, and so sunny

a spot that they liked to sit there and talk. It was not often that Barbara had the leisure for such a ramble ; on Sundays she made a point of it. As the two girls emerged from the wood, and came out on the platform of rock, they were surprised to see Jasper seated there with a book on his knee. He rose at once on hearing their voices and seeing them. If he had wished to escape, escape was impossible, for the rock descends on all sides sheer to great depths, except where the path leads to it.

‘Do not let us disturb you,’ said Barbara ; ‘we will withdraw if we interrupt your studies.’

‘What is the book?’ asked Eve. ‘If it be poetry, read us something from it.’

He hesitated a moment, then with a smile said, ‘It contains the noblest poetry—it is my Bible.’

‘The Bible!’ exclaimed Barbara. She was pleased. He certainly was sincere in his repentance. He would not have gone away to a private spot to read the sacred volume unless he were in earnest.

‘Let us sit down, Barbie!’ said Eve. ‘Don’t run away, Mr. Jasper.’

‘As Mr. Jasper was reading, and you asked him to give you something from the book, I will join in the request.’

‘I thought it was perhaps — Byron,’ said Eve.

‘As it is not Byron, but something better, we shall be all the better satisfied to have it read to us,’ said Barbara.

‘Well, then, some of the story part, please,’ asked Eve, screwing up her mouth, ‘and not much of it.’

‘I should prefer a Psalm,’ said Barbara; ‘or a chapter from one of the Epistles.’

‘I do not know what to read,’ Jasper said, smiling, ‘as each of you asks for something different.’

‘I have an idea,’ exclaimed Eve. ‘He shall hold the book shut. I will close my eyes and open the volume at hap-hazard, and point with my finger. He shall read that, and we can conjure from it, or guess our characters, or read our fate. Then you shall do the same. Will that please you?’

‘I do not know about guessing characters and reading our fate; our characters we know by introspection, and the future is hidden from our eyes by the same Hand that sent the book. But if you wish Mr. Jasper to be guided by this method what to read, I do not object.’

‘Very well,’ said Eve, in glee; ‘that will be fun! You will promise, Barbie, to shut your eyes when you open and put your finger

on a page? And, Mr. Jasper, you promise to read exactly what my sister and I select?’

‘Yes,’ answered both to whom she appealed.

‘But mind this,’ pursued the lively girl; ‘you must stop as soon as I am tired.’

Then first, eager in all she did that promised entertainment or diversion, she took the Bible from Mr. Babb’s hands, and closed her eyes; a pretty smile played about her flexible lips as she sat groping with her finger among the pages. Then she opened the book and her blue orbs together.

‘There!’ she exclaimed, ‘I have made my choice; yet—wait! I will mark my place, and then pass the book to Bab—I mean, Barbie.’ She had a wild summer rose in her bosom. She pulled off a petal, touched it with her tongue, and put the leaf at the spot she had selected.

Then she shut the Bible with a snap, laughed, and handed it to her sister.

‘I need not shut my eyes,’ said Barbara; ‘I will look you full in the face, Eve.’ Then she took the book and felt for the end pages that she might light on an Epistle; just as she saw that Eve had groped for an early part of the book that she might have a story from the times of the patriarchs. She did not know that Eve in handing her the book had not

turned it; consequently she held the Bible reversed. Barbara held a buttercup in her hand. She was so accustomed to use her fingers, that it was strange to her to have nothing to employ them. As they came through the meadows she had picked a few flowers, broken the stalks and thrown them away. There remained in her hand but one buttercup.

Barbara placed the Bible on her lap; she, like Eve, had seated herself on the rocky ledge. Then she opened near what she believed to be the end of the book, and laid the golden cup on a page.

Eve leaned towards her and looked, and uttered an exclamation.

‘What is it?’ asked Barbara, and looked also.

Behold! the golden flower of Barbara was shining on the pink petal of Eve’s rose.

‘We have chosen the same place. Now, Barbie, what do you say to this? Is it a chance, or are we going to learn our fate, which is bound up together, from the passage Mr. Jasper is about to read?’

‘There is no mystery in the matter,’ said Barbara, quietly; ‘you did not turn the book when you gave it to me, and it naturally opened where your flower lay.’

‘Go on, Mr. Jasper,’ exhorted Eve. But the young man seemed ill-disposed to obey.

‘Yes,’ said Barbara; ‘begin. We are ready.’

Then Jasper began to read:—

‘Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in a field, and, lo, there were flocks of sheep lying by it.’

‘I am glad we are going to have this story,’ said Eve; ‘I like it. It is a pretty one. Jacob came to that house of Laban just as you, Mr. Babb, have come to Morwell.’

Jasper read on:—

‘And Laban had two daughters: now the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured.’

Barbara was listening, but as she listened she looked away into the blue distance over the vast gulf of the Tamar valley towards the Cornish moors, the colour of cobalt, with a salmon sky above them. Something must at that moment have struck the mind of Jasper, for he paused in his reading, and his eyes sought hers.

She said in a hard tone, ‘Go on.’

Then he continued in a low voice, ‘And



Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.'

The reader again paused; and again with a hard voice Barbara bade him proceed.

'And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to Jacob.'

'That will do,' said Eve, 'I am tired.'

'It seems to me,' said Barbara, in a subdued tone, 'that Leah was a despicable woman, a woman without self-respect. She took the man, though she knew his heart was set on Rachel, and that he did not care a rush for her. No!—I do not like the story. It is odious.' She stood up and, beckoning to Eve, left the platform of rock.

Jasper remained where he had been, without closing the book, without reading further, lost in thought. Then a small head appeared above the side of the rock where it jutted out of the bank of underwood, also a pair of hands

that clutched at the projecting points of stone ; and in another moment a boy had pulled himself on to the platform, and lay on it with his feet dangling over the edge, his head and breast raised on his hands. He was laughing.

‘ What ! dreaming, Master Jasper Jacob ? Of which ? Of the weak-eyed Leah or the blue-orbed Rachel ? ’

The young-man started as if he had been stung.

‘ What has brought you here, Watt ? No good, I fear. ’

‘ O my dear Jasper, there you are out. Goodness personified has brought me here—even your own pious self, sitting Bible-reading to two pretty girls. How happy could I be with either ! Eh, Jasper ? ’

‘ What do you want with me ? ’ asked Jasper, reddening ; ‘ I detest your fun. ’

‘ Which is it ? ’ taunted the mischievous boy. ‘ Which—the elder, plain and dark ; or the younger, beautiful as dawn ? or—like the patriarch Jacob—both ? ’

‘ Enough of this, Watt. What has brought you here ? ’

‘ To see you, of course. I know you think me void of all Christianity, but I have that in me yet, I like to know the whereabouts of my brother, and how he is getting on. I am still

with Martin—ever on the move, like the sun, like the winds, like the streams, like everything that does not stagnate.’

‘It is a hard thing for me to say,’ said Jasper, ‘but it is true. Poor Martin would be better without you. He would be another man, and his life not blighted, had it not been for your profane and mocking tongue. He was a generous-hearted fellow, thoughtless, but not wicked; you, however, have gained complete power over him, and have used it for evil. Your advice is for the bad, your sneers for what is good.’

‘I do not know good from bad,’ said the boy, with a contemptuous grin.

‘Watt, you have scoffed at every good impulse in Martin’s heart, you have drowned the voice of his conscience by your gibes. It is you who have driven him with your waspish tongue along the road of ruin.’

‘Not at all, Jasper; there you wrong me. It was you who had the undoing of Martin. You have loved him and screened him since he was a child. You have taken the punishment and blame on you which he deserved by his misconduct. Of course he is a giddy-pate. It is you who have let him grow up without dread of the consequences of wrong-doing, because

the punishment always fell on you. You, Jasper, have spoiled Martin, not I.'

'Well, Watt, this may be so. Father was unduly harsh. I had no one else to love at home but my brother Martin. You were such a babe as to be no companion. And Martin I did—I do love. Such a noble, handsome, frank-hearted brother! All sunshine and laughter! My childhood had been charged with grief and shadow, and I did my best to screen him. One must love something in this world, or the heart dies. I loved my brother.'

'Love, love!' laughed Watt. 'Now you have that heart so full that it is overflowing towards two nice girls. I suppose that, enthralled between blue eyes and brown, you have no thought left for Martin, none for father—who, by the way, is dying.'

'Dying!' exclaimed Jasper, springing to his feet.

'There, now!' said the boy; 'don't in your astonishment topple over the edge of the precipice into kingdom come.'

'How do you know this, Watt?' asked Jasper in great agitation.

'Because I have been to Buckfastleigh and seen the beastly old hole, and the factory, and the grey rat in his hole, curled up, gnawing his nails and squealing with pain.'

‘For shame of you, Watt! You have no reverence even for your father.’

‘Reverence, Jasper! none in the world for anybody or anything. Everything like reverence was killed out of me by my training.’

‘What is the matter with father?’

‘How should I tell? I saw him making contortions and yowling. I did not approach too near lest he should bite.’

‘I shall go at once,’ said Jasper earnestly.

‘Of course you will. You are the heir. Eh! Jasper! When you come in for the house and cloth mill, you will extend to us the helping hand. O you saint! Why don’t you dance as I do? Am I taken in by your long face? Ain’t I sure that your heart is beating because now at last you will come in for the daddy’s collected money? Poor Martin! He can’t come and share. You won’t be mean, but divide, Jasper? I’ll be the go-between.’

‘Be silent, you wicked boy!’ said Jasper angrily; ‘I cannot endure your talk. It is repugnant to me.’

‘Because I talk of sharing. You, the saint! He sniffs filthy mammon and away he flies like a crow to carrion. Good-bye, Jasper! Away you go like an arrow from the bow. Don’t let that old housekeeper rummage the

stockings stuffed with guineas out of the chimney before you get to Buckfastleigh!’

Jasper left the rock and strode hastily towards Morwell, troubled at heart at the news given him. Had he looked behind him as he entered the wood, he would have seen the boy making grimaces, capering, clapping his hands and knees, whistling, screaming snatches of operatic tunes, laughing, and shouting ‘Which is it to be, Rachel or Leah?’

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## AN IMP OF DARKNESS.

JASPER went immediately to Mr. Jordan. He found Eve with her father. Jane, the housemaid, had exhibited signs of restlessness and impatience to be off. Joseph Woodman, the policeman from Tavistock, a young and sleepy man who was paying her his addresses, had appeared at the kitchen window and coughed. He was off duty, and Jane thought it hard that she should be on when he was off. So Eve had let her depart with her lover.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Jordan, who was still in bed, ‘what is it? Do you want me?’

‘I have come to ask your permission to leave for a few days. I must go to my father, who is dying. I will return as soon as I can.’

Eve’s great blue eyes opened with amazement. ‘You said nothing about this ten minutes ago.’

‘I did not know it then.’

‘What!’ exclaimed Mr. Jordan, trying to rise on his elbow, and his eyes brightening, ‘Ezekiel Babb dying! Is justice overtaking him at last?’

‘I hear that he is dying,’ said Jasper; ‘it is my duty to go to him.’

‘If he dies,’ said Mr. Jordan, ‘to whom will his property go?’

‘Probably to me; but it is premature to inquire.’

‘Not at all. My Eve has been robbed——’

‘Sir!’ said Jasper, gravely, ‘I undertook to repay that sum as soon as it should be in my power to do so, principal and interest. I have your permission, sir?’ He bowed and withdrew.

At supper Barbara looked round, and noticed the absence of Jasper Babb, but she said nothing.

‘You need not look at that empty chair,’ said Eve; ‘Mr. Jasper will not be here. He is gone.’

‘Gone where?’

‘Called away suddenly. His father is dying.’

Barbara raised her eyebrows. She was greatly puzzled. She sat playing with her fork, and presently said, ‘This is very odd—who brought the news?’



‘ I saw no one. He came in almost directly after we left him on the Raven Rock.’

‘ But no one came up to the house.’

‘ Oh, yes—Joseph Woodman, Jane’s sweetheart, the policeman.’

‘ He cannot have brought the news.’

‘ I do not think Mr. Jasper saw him, but I cannot say.’

‘ I cannot understand it, Eve,’ mused Barbara. ‘ What is more, I do not believe it.’

Barbara was more puzzled and disturbed than she chose to show. How could Jasper have received news of his father? If the old man had sent a messenger, that messenger would have come to the house and rested there, and been refreshed with a glass of cider and cake and cold beef. No one had been to the house but the policeman, and a policeman was not likely to be made the vehicle of communication between old Babb and his son, living in concealment. More probably Jasper had noticed that a policeman was hovering about Morwell, had taken alarm, and absented himself.

Then that story of Jacob serving for Rachel and being given Leah came back on her. Was it not being in part enacted before her eyes? Was not Jasper there acting as steward to her

father, likely to remain there for some years, and all the time with the love of Eve consuming his heart? 'And the seven years seemed unto him but a few days for the love that he had to her.' What of Eve? Would she come to care for him, and in her wilfulness insist on having him? It could not be. It must not be. Please God, now that Jasper was gone, he would not return. Then, again, her mind swung back to the perplexing question of the reason of Jasper's departure. He *could* not go home. It was out of the question his showing his face again at Buckfastleigh. He would be recognised and taken immediately. Why did he invent and pass off on her father such a falsehood as an excuse for his disappearance? If he were made uneasy by the arrival of the Tavistock policeman at the house, he might have found some other excuse, but to deliberately say that his father was dying and that he must attend his death-bed, this was monstrous.

Eve remained till late, sitting in the parlour without a light. The servant maids were all out. Their eagerness to attend places of worship on Sunday—especially Sunday evenings—showed a strong spirit of devotion; and the lateness of the hour to which those acts of worship detained them proved also that their piety was of stubborn and enduring quality. Generally, one of the

maids remained at home, but on this occasion Barbara and Eve had allowed Jane to go out when she had laid the table for supper, because her policeman had come, and there was to be a love-feast at the little dissenting chapel which Jane attended. The lover having turned up, the love-feast must follow.

As the servants had not returned, Barbara remained below, waiting till she heard their voices. Her father was dozing. She looked in at him and then returned to her place by the latticed window. The room was dark, but there was silvery light in the summer sky, becoming very white towards the north. Outside the window was a jessamine; the scent it exhaled at night was too strong. Barbara shut the window to exclude the fragrance. It made her head ache. A light air played with the jessamine, and brushed some of the white flowers against the glass. Barbara was usually sharp with the servants when they returned from their revivals, and love-feasts, and missionary meetings, late; but this evening she felt no impatience. She had plenty to occupy her mind, and the time passed quickly with her. All at once she heard a loud prolonged hoot of an owl, so near and so loud that she felt sure the bird must be in the house. Next moment she heard her father's voice calling repeatedly and excitedly. She

ran to him and found him alarmed and agitated. His window had been left open as the evening was warm.

‘I heard an owl!’ he said. ‘It was at my ear; it called, and roused me from my sleep. It was not an owl—I do not know what it was. I saw something, I am not sure what.’

‘Papa dear, I heard the bird. You know there are several about. They have their nests in the barn and old empty pigeon-house. One came by the window hooting. I heard it also.’

‘I saw something,’ he said.

She took his hand. It was cold and trembling.

‘You were dreaming, papa. The owl roused you, and dreams mixed with your waking impressions, so that you cannot distinguish one from another.’

‘I do not know,’ he said, vacantly, and put his hand to his head. ‘I do see and hear strange things. Do not leave me alone, Barbara. Kindle a light, and read me one of Challoner’s Meditations. It may compose me.’

Eve was upstairs, amusing herself with unfolding and trying on the yellow and crimson dress she had found in the garret. She knew that Barbara would not come upstairs yet. She would have been afraid to masquerade before her. She put her looking-glass on a chair, so that she might see herself better

in it. Then she took the timbrel, and poised herself on one foot, and held the instrument over her head, and lightly tingled the little bells. She had put on the blue turquoise ring. She looked at it, kissed it, waved that hand, and rattled the tambourine, but not so loud that Barbara might hear. Eve was quite happy thus amusing herself. Her only disappointment was that she had not more such dresses to try on.

All at once she started, stood still, turned and uttered a cry of terror. She had been posturing hitherto with her back to the window. A noise at it made her look round. She saw, seated in it, with his short legs inside, and his hands grasping the stone mullions—a small dark figure.

‘Well done, Eve! Well done, Zerlina!’

*Là ci darem la mano,  
Là mi dirai di sì!’*

Then the boy laughed maliciously; he enjoyed her confusion and alarm.

‘The weak-eyed Leah is away, quieting Laban,’ he said; ‘Leah shall have her Jacob, but Rachel shall get Esau, the gay, the handsome, whose hand is against every man, or rather one against whom every man’s hand is raised. I am going to jump into your room.’

‘Keep away!’ cried Eve in the greatest alarm.

‘If you cry out, if you rouse Leah and bring her here, I will make such a hooting and howling as will kill the old man downstairs with fear.’

‘In pity go. What do you want?’ asked Eve, backing from the window to the farthest wall.

‘Take care! Do not run out of the room. If you attempt it, I will jump in, and make my fiddle squeal, and caper about, till even the sober Barbara—Leah I mean—will believe that devils have taken possession, and as for the old man, he will give up his ghost to them without a protest.’

‘I entreat you—I implore you—go!’ pleaded Eve, with tears of alarm in her eyes, cowering back against the wall, too frightened even to think of the costume she wore.

‘Ah!’ jeered the impish boy. ‘Run along down into the room where your sister is reading and praying with the old man, and what will they suppose but that a crazy opera-dancer has broken loose from her caravan and is rambling over the country.’

He chuckled, he enjoyed her terror.

‘Do you know how I have managed to get this little talk with you uninterrupted? I

hooted in at the window of your father, and when he woke made faces at him. Then he screamed for help, and Barbara went to him. Now here am I; I scrambled up the old pear-tree trained against the wall. What is it, a Chaumontel or a Jargonelle? It can't be a Bon Chrétien, or it would not have borne me.'

Eve's face was white, her eyes were wide with terror, her hands behind her scrabbled at the wall, and tore the paper. 'Oh, what do you want? Pray, pray go!'

'I will come in at the window, I will caper and whistle, and scream and fiddle. I will jump on the bed and kick all the clothes this way, that way. I will throw your Sunday frock out of the window; I will smash the basin and water-bottle, and glass and jug. I will throw the mirror against the wall; I will tear down the blinds and curtains, and drive the curtain-pole through the windows; I will throw your candle into the heap of clothes and linen and curtain, and make a blaze which will burn the room and set the house flaming, unless you make me a solemn promise. I have a message for you from poor Martin. Poor Martin! his heart is breaking. He can think only of lovely Eve. As soon as the sun sets be on the Raven Rock to-morrow.'

'I cannot. Do leave the window.'

‘Very well,’ said the boy, ‘in ten minutes the house will be on fire. I am coming in; you run away. I shall lock you out, and before you have got help together the room will be in a blaze.’

‘What do you want? I will promise anything to be rid of you.’

‘Promise to be on the Raven Rock tomorrow evening.’

‘Why must I be there?’

‘Because I have a message to give you there.’

‘Give it me now.’

‘I cannot; it is too long. That sister of yours will come tumbling in on us with a Roley-poley, gammon and spinach, Heigh-ho! says Anthony Roley, oh!’

‘Yes, yes! I will promise.’

Instantly he slipped his leg out, she saw only the hands on the bottom of the window. Then up came the boy’s queer face again, that he might make grimaces at her and shake his fist, and point to candle, and bed, and garments, and curtains; and then, in a moment, he was gone.

Some minutes elapsed before Eve recovered courage to leave her place, shut her window, and take off the tawdry dress in which she had disguised herself.



She heard the voices of the servant maids returning along the lane. Soon after Barbara came upstairs. She found her sister sitting on the bed.

‘What is it, Eve? You look white and frightened.’

Eve did not answer.

‘What is the matter, dear? Have you been alarmed at anything?’

‘Yes, Bab,’ in a faint voice.

‘Did you see anything from your window?’

‘I think so.’

‘I cannot understand,’ said Barbara. ‘I also fancied I saw a dark figure dart across the garden and leap the wall whilst I was reading to papa. I can’t say, because there was a candle in our room.’

‘Don’t you think,’ said Eve, in a faltering voice, ‘it may have been Joseph Woodman parting with Jane?’ Eve’s cheeks coloured as she said this; she was false with her sister.

Barbara shook her head, and went into her own room. ‘He has gone,’ she thought, ‘because the house is watched, his whereabouts has been discovered. I am glad he is gone. It is best for himself, for Eve’—after a pause—‘and for me.’

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## POOR MARTIN.

EVE was uneasy all next day—at intervals—she could do nothing continuously—because of her promise. The recollection that she had bound herself to meet Watt on the Raven Rock at sundown came on her repeatedly during the day, spoiling her happiness. She would not have scrupled to fail to keep her promise, but that the horrible boy would be sure to force himself upon her, and in revenge do some dreadful mischief. She was so much afraid of him, that she felt that to keep her appointment was the lesser evil.

As the sun declined her heart failed her, and just before the orb set in bronze and gold, she asked Jane, the housemaid, to accompany her through the fields to the Raven Rock.

Timid Eve dare not trust herself alone on the dangerous platform with that imp. He was

capable of any devilry. He might scare her out of her wits.

Jane was a good-natured girl, and she readily obliged her young mistress. Jane Welsh's mother, who was a widow, lived not far from Morwell, in a cottage on the banks of the Tamar, higher up, where a slip of level meadow ran out from the cliffs, and the river made a loop round it.

As Eve walked through the fields towards the wood, and neared the trees and rocks, she began to think that she had made a mistake. It would not do for Jane to see Watt. She would talk about him, and Barbara would hear, and question her. If Barbara asked her why she had gone out at dusk to meet the boy, what answer could she make?

When Eve came to the gate into the wood, she stood still, and holding the gate half open, told Jane she might stay there, for she would go on by herself.

Jane was surprised.

'Please, Miss, I've nothing to take me back to the house.' Eve hastily protested that she did not want her to return: she was to remain at the gate—'And if I call—come on to me, Jane, not otherwise. I have a headache, and I want to be alone.'

'Very well, Miss.'

But Jane was puzzled, and said to herself, 'There's a lover, sure as eggs in April.'

Then Eve closed the gate between herself and Jane, and went on. Before disappearing into the shade of the trees, she looked back, and saw the maid where she had left her, plating grass.

A lover! A lover is the philosopher's stone that turns the sordid alloy of life into gold. The idea of a lover was the most natural solution of the caprice in Miss Eve's conduct. As every road leads to Rome, so in the servant-maid mind does every line of life lead to a sweetheart.

Jane, having settled that her young mistress had gone on to meet a lover, next questioned who that lover could be, and here she was utterly puzzled. Sure enough Miss Eve had been to a dance at the Cloberrys', but whom she had met there, and to whom lost her heart, that Jane did not know, and that also Jane was resolved to ascertain.

She noiselessly unhasped the gate, and stole along the path. The burnished brazen sky of evening shone between the tree trunks, but the foliage had lost its verdure in the gathering dusk. The honeysuckles poured forth their scent in waves. The air near the hedge and deep into the wood was honeyed with

it. White and yellow speckled currant moths were flitting about the hedge. Jane stole along, stealthily, from tree to tree, fearful lest Eve should turn and catch her spying. A large Scotch pine cast a shadow under it like ink. On reaching that, Jane knew she could see the top of the Raven Rock.

As she thus advanced on tip-toe she heard a rustling, as of a bird in the tree overhead. Her heart stood still. Then, before she had time to recover herself, with a shrill laugh, a little black figure came tumbling down before her out of the tree, capered, leaped at her, threw his arms round her neck, and screamed into her face, 'Carry me! Carry me! Carry me!'

Then his arms relaxed, he dropped off, shrieking with laughter, and Jane fled, as fast as her limbs could bear her, back to the gate, through the gate, and away over the meadows to Morwell House.

Eve had gone on to the platform of rock; she stood there irresolute, hoping that the detested boy would not appear, when she heard his laugh and shout, and the scream of Jane. She would have fainted with terror, had not at that moment a tall man stepped up to her and laid his hand on her arm. 'Do not be afraid, sweet fairy Eve! It is I—your poor slave

Martin,—perfectly bewitched, drawn back by those loadstone eyes. Do not be frightened, Watt is merely giving a scare to the inquisitive servant.'

Eve was trembling violently. This was worse than meeting the ape of a boy. She had committed a gross indiscretion. What would Barbara say?—her father, if he heard of it, how vexed he would be!

'I must go back,' she said, with a feeble effort at dignity. 'This is too bad; I have been deceived.' Then she gave way to weakness, and burst into tears.

'No,' he said carelessly, 'you shall not go. I will not suffer you to escape now that I have a chance of seeing you and speaking with you. To begin at the beginning—I love you. There! you are all of a tremble. Sit down and listen to what I have to say. You will not? Well, consider. I run terrible risks by being here; I may say that I place my life in your delicate hands.'

She looked up at him, still too frightened to speak, even to comprehend his words.

'I do not know you!' she whispered, when she was able to gather together the poor remnants of her strength.

'You remember me. I have your ring, and you have mine. We are, in a manner,

bound to each other. Be patient, dear love ; listen to me. I will tell you all my story.'

He saw that she was in no condition to be pressed. If he spoke of love she would make a desperate effort to escape. Weak and giddy though she was, she would not endure that from a man of whom she knew nothing. He saw that. He knew he must give her time to recover from her alarm, so he said, 'I wish, most beautiful fairy, you would rest a few minutes on this piece of rock. I am a poor, hunted, suffering, misinterpreted wretch, and I come to tell you my story, only to entreat your sympathy and your prayers. I will not say a rude word, I will not lay a finger on you. All I ask is : listen to me. That cannot hurt you. I am a beggar, a beggar whining at your feet, not asking for more alms than a tear of pity. Give me that, that only, and I go away relieved.'

She seemed somewhat reassured, and drew a long breath.

'I had a sister of your name.'

She raised her head, and looked at him with surprise.

'It is an uncommon name. My poor sister is gone. I suppose it is your name that has attracted me to you, that induces me to open my heart to you. I mean to confide to you my troubles. You say that you do not

know me. I will tell you all my story, and then, sweet Eve, you will indeed know me, and, knowing me, will shower tears of precious pity, that will infinitely console me.'

She was still trembling, but flattered, and relieved that he asked for nothing save sympathy. That of course she was at liberty to bestow on a deserving object. She was wholly inexperienced, easily deceived by flattery.

'Have I frightened you?' asked Martin. 'Am I so dreadful, so unsightly an object as to inspire you with aversion and terror?' He drew himself up and paused. Eve hastily looked at him. He was a strikingly handsome man, with dark hair, wonderful dark eyes, and finely chiselled features.

'I said that I put my life in your hands. I spoke the truth. You have but to betray me, and the police and the parish constables will come in a *posse* after me. I will stand here with folded arms to receive them; but mark my words, as soon as they set foot on this rock, I will fling myself over the edge and perish. If *you* sacrifice me, my life is not worth saving.'

'I will not betray you,' faltered Eve.

'I know it. You are too noble, too true, too heroic to be a traitress. I knew it when I came here and placed myself at your mercy.'



‘But,’ said Eve timidly, ‘what have you done? You have taken my ring. Give it back to me, and I will not send the constables after you.’

‘You have mine.’

‘I will return it.’

‘About that hereafter,’ said Martin grandly, and he waved his hand. ‘Now I answer your question, What have I done? I will tell you everything. It is a long story and a sad one. Certain persons come out badly in it whom I would spare. But it may not be otherwise. Self-defence is the first law of nature. You have, no doubt, heard a good deal about me, and not to my advantage. I have been prejudiced in your eyes by Jasper. He is narrow, does not make allowances, has never recovered the strait-lacing father gave him as a child. His conscience has not expanded since infancy.’

Eve looked at Martin with astonishment.

‘Mr. Jasper Babb has not said anything—’

‘Oh, there!’ interrupted Martin, ‘you may spare your sweet lips the fib. I know better than that. He grumbles and mumbles about me to everyone who will open an ear to his tales. If he were not my brother——’

Now Eve interrupted him. ‘Mr. Jasper your brother!’

‘Of course he is. Did he not tell you so?’

He saw that she had not known by the expression of her face, so, with a laugh, he said, 'Oh dear, no! Of course Jasper was too grand and sanctimonious a man to confess to the blot in the family. I am that blot—look at me!'

He showed his handsome figure and face by a theatrical gesture and position. 'Poor Martin is the blot, to which Jasper will not confess, and yet—Martin survives this neglect and disrespect.'

The overweening vanity, the mock humility, the assurance of the man passed unnoticed by Eve. She breathed freely when she heard that he was the brother of Jasper. There could have been no harm in an interview with Jasper, and consequently very little in one with his brother. So she argued, and so she reconciled herself to the situation. Now she traced a resemblance between the brothers which had escaped her before; they had the same large dark expressive eyes, but Jasper's face was not so regular, his features not so purely chiselled as those of Martin. He was broader built; Martin had the perfect modelling of a Greek statue. There was also a more manly, self-confident bearing in Martin than in the elder brother, who always appeared bowed as with some burden that oppressed his spirits, and took from him self-assertion and buoyancy, that even maimed his vigour of manhood.

‘I dare say you have had a garbled version of my story,’ continued Martin, seating himself; and Eve, without considering, seated herself also. Martin let himself down gracefully, and assumed a position where the evening light, still lingering in the sky, could irradiate his handsome face. ‘That is why I have sought this interview. I desired to put myself right with you. No doubt you have heard that I got into trouble.’

She shook her head.

‘Well, I did. I was unlucky. In fact, I could stay with my father no longer. I had already left him for a twelvemonth, but I came back, and, in Scriptural terms, such as he could understand, asked him to give me the portion of goods that fell to me. He refused, so I took it.’

‘Took—took what?’

‘My portion of goods, not in stock but in money. For my part,’ said Martin, folding his arms, ‘it has ever struck me that the Prodigal Son was far the nobler of the brothers. The eldest was a mean fellow. The second had his faults—I admit it—but he was a man of independence of action; he would not stand being bully-ragged by his father, so he went away. I got into difficulties over that matter. My father would not overlook it, made a fuss, and

so on. My doctrine is: Let bygones be bygones, and accept what comes and don't kick. That my father could not see, and so I got locked up.'

'Locked up—where?'

'In a pill-box. I managed, however, to escape; I am at large, and at your feet—entreating you to pity me.'

He suited the action to the word. In a moment he was gracefully kneeling before her on one knee, with his hand on his heart.

'Oh, Miss Eve,' he said, 'since I saw your face in the moonlight I have never forgotten it. Wherever I went it haunted me. I saw these great beautiful eyes looking timidly into mine; by day they eclipsed the sun. Whatever I did I thought only of you. And now—what is it that I ask of you? Nothing but forgiveness. The money—the portion of goods that fell to me—was yours. My father owed it to you. It was intended for you. But now, hear me, you noble, generous-spirited girl; I have borrowed the money, it shall be returned—or its equivalent. If you desire it, I will swear.' He stood up and assumed an attitude.

'Oh, no!' said Eve; 'you had my money?'

'As surely as I had your ring.'

'Much in the same way,' she said, with a little sharpness.

‘But I shall return one with the other. Trust me. Stand up; look me in the face. Do I bear the appearance of a cheat, a thief, a robber? Am I base, villanous? No, I am nothing but a poor, foolish, prodigal lad, who has got into a scrape, but will get out of it again. You forgive me. Hark! I hear someone calling.’

‘It is Barbara. She is looking for me.’

‘Then I disappear.’ He put his hand to his lips, wafted her a kiss, whispered ‘When you look at the ring, remember poor—poor Martin,’ and he slipped away among the bushes.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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