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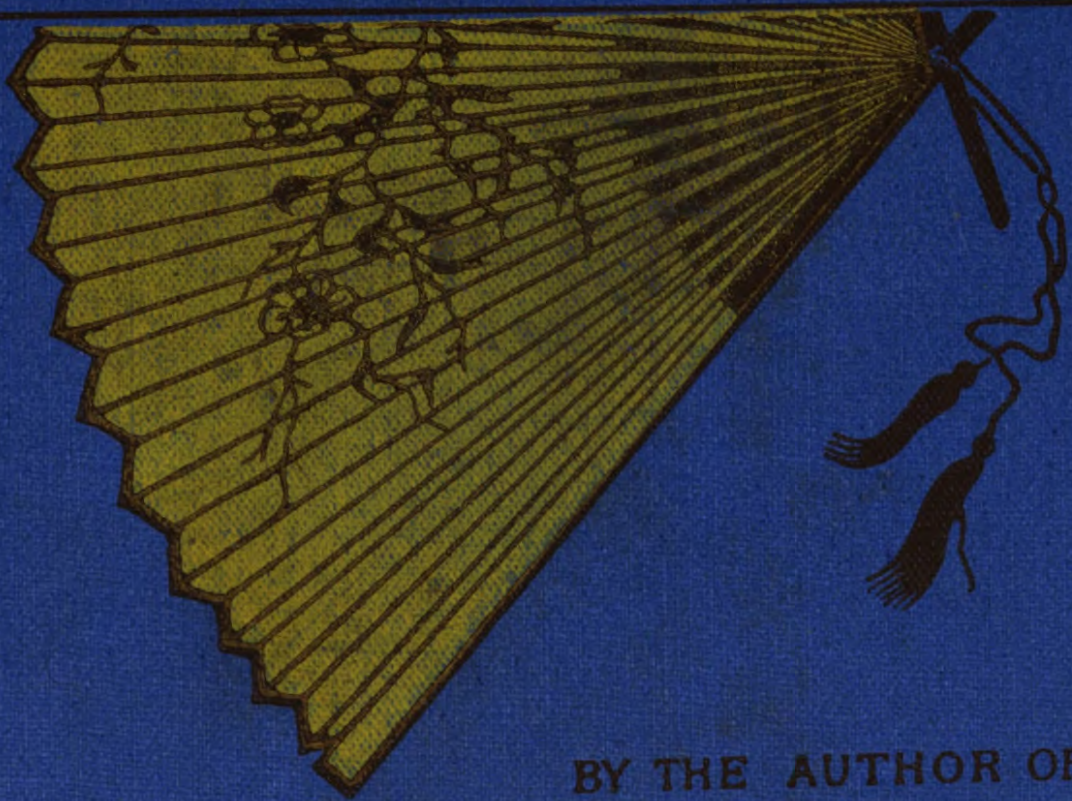
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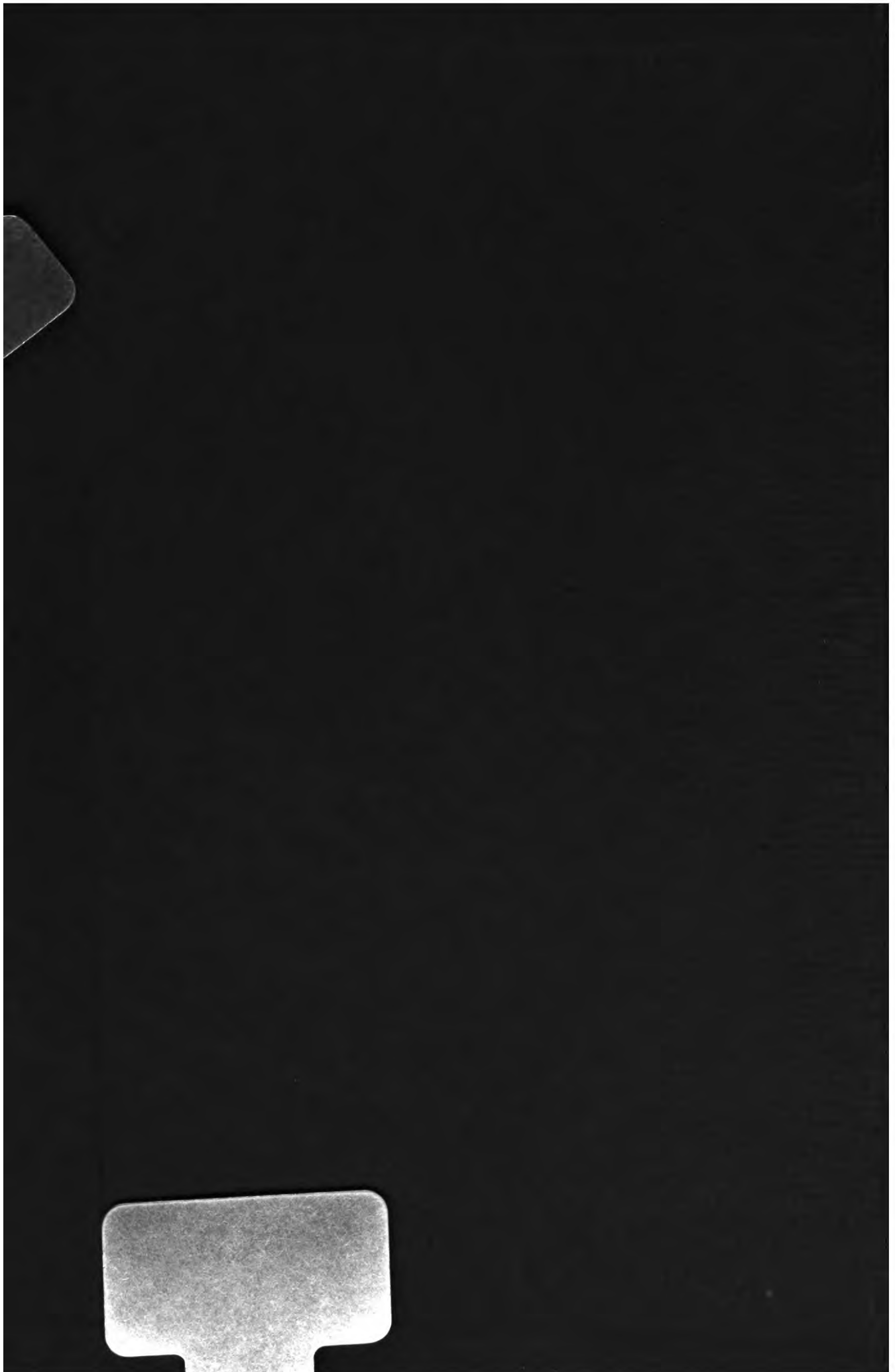


CAPTAIN JEWELL'S WIFE



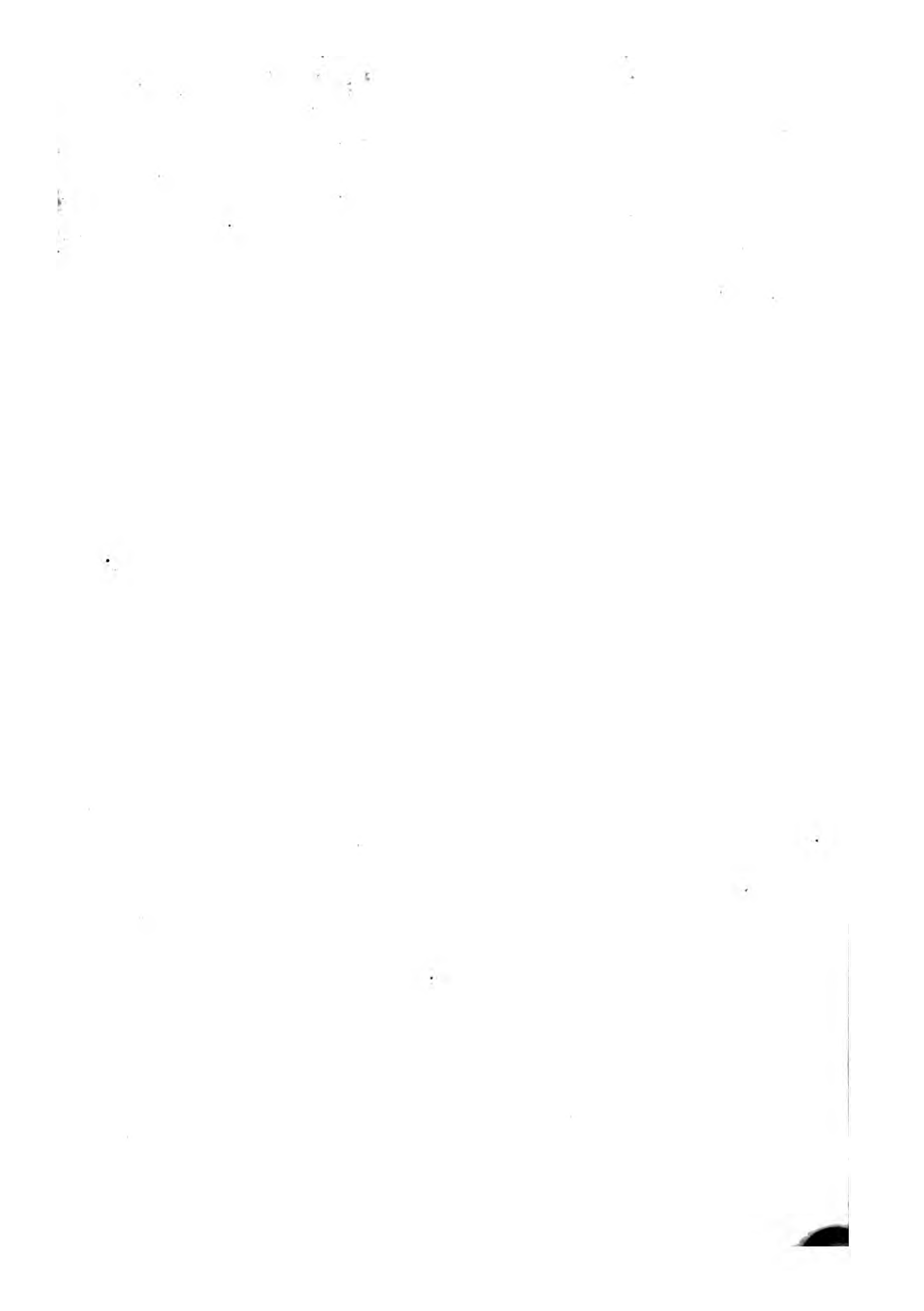
BY THE AUTHOR OF
'MISS JULY' ETC.













Frontispiece.

"I WISH I WERE NOT GOING AWAY, DICK."

Page 31.

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CAPTAIN JEWELL'S WIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"MISS JULY," "OUR VALLEY," "THE FORTUNES OF
HASSAN," ETC., ETC.

"Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost."

MACBETH.

ILLUSTRATED BY OVEREND.

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CAPTAIN JEWELL'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

“Woo'd and married, and a'!”

Old Song.

“



T'S an ugly knot, whichever way you look at it, that's certain; and, for aught I see, it's as likely as not to give us all a sight of trouble. It makes me feel that the time's coming for me to hoist sail and be off out of this world.”

“Nay, nay, Martin; I'd not have you speak like that of Dick's wedding, when you think how often you and I have sat here and wished and wondered about his marrying, and prayed too—remember that, Martin—ay, prayed the Lord He would send Dick a wife to be a daughter to us poor old folk.”

Margaret Jewell smiled as she ended her sentence, but all the same there was a tremulous note in her voice, which apparently exercised a softening effect on the old sailor's ruffled temper, for he made no immediate rejoinder, but said presently in a gentler tone—

“ It's not Dick's marrying that I've anything against, Meg—you know it's not that—but it's the manner of it. That beats me! To think how we've thought of him and watched over him all these thirty years and more, and said to ourselves—yes, and to others too—how there was never another to hold a candle to our Dick; and then to have him marry a lass we'd never heard on, and never so much as clapped eyes on—no, not to know if she were black or white, even; and that all in a moment of time, afore ever you've time to say 'Jack Robinson;'—that's what I can't stand, Margaret!”

The old man brought down his fist with a heavy blow on the table as he uttered his last words. His feelings were too much for him, and needed expression of some kind, if he tried to restrain them in another form out of consideration for his wife. However deeply she might feel the wrong, he knew her well enough to be quite sure she would never say a word against her boy.

Since Sally Goodman from the post-office had knocked at the door and handed in the letter which had proved so disturbing an element in the house, Mrs. Jewell had been

racking her brain to find reasons and excuses for Dick's precipitate action.

When argument failed her, as it did at this moment, she took up her son's letter from the place where it lay on the shelf with the big Bible and an old volume of sea-songs that had belonged to Dick, and read it over again aloud to her husband.

"Listen, father—listen to what the boy says," she began afresh, rubbing her glasses and unfolding the sheet of paper for the twentieth time that day.

"DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER" (so the blunt epistle ran),

"With good luck I hope to be in the old place come Thursday week. I am bringing my wife with me. Leastways, if all's well we're to be married on Sunday, and sail before the week's out. I hope father's rheumatis' doesn't plague him. We've had fair wind and fine weather, and a good run from Plymouth last night. No more now. I am—

"Your dutiful son,

"DICK."

There was a postscript over the page, in Dick's large sprawling round-hand. "Her name's Jenifer Pengellas, and when you see her you'll think I'm in luck, I'll be bound."

That was all. No date, no address, not a word as to the bride's home or family, not one of all the details as to her son's choice dear to a

mother's heart, and doubly dear when that son is an only child.

"He might have told us something more about the girl," growled out old Martin from his comfortable chimney corner. "He doesn't even say if she's good-tempered. I'm sure I hope she is, or she's like enough to lead me a pretty life. If she'd been a beggar-girl he couldn't have said less."

"I wish he had," said Mrs. Jewell, looking at the letter regretfully, and holding it up to the candle to be quite sure that nothing had escaped her. "But at least, what he does say sounds nice. I am sure he will be a good husband, our Dick."

She was resolved to glean all the comfort possible from this very brief epistle, and would not allow her own disappointment to appear, however great it might be. For it was some seven months since Dick had been absent, and during that time he had been to Naples and Lisbon, and seen all manner of foreign parts. And for several weeks he had not been heard of at all, and now, when his parents were beginning to wonder what had become of him, these few scanty lines were the means he adopted to communicate the most startling and unexpected piece of news. It was undoubtedly irritating, and Mrs. Jewell was too tender a mother not to feel hurt and grieved. But she had her own feelings, and merely observed in the same quiet tone to her husband—

“The envelope is marked Penzance, so we know she must live in these parts. Close on the Land’s End did you say it lay, father?”

“Yes; down in the south. And a treacherous coast it is, as I’ve good cause to know. Many’s the boat that’s been wrecked on those rocks; many’s the tale I’ve heard fellows tell of sudden squalls a-driving them on the reefs and smashing them to splinters all in a moment like. And it’s roughish weather I’ve seen a time or two off the Lights myself, though I’m not the sailor our Dick is;” and the old seafarer laid down his pipe, and forgot his present vexation in recalling the events of days long past, indeed, but as vivid and lifelike in his recollection as if they had happened but yesterday.

His wife listened patiently, satisfied that her little plot had been successful, and that Martin would not worry himself into a sleepless night with angry questionings about his son’s unexpected announcement. She was a woman of strong emotions, but of still stronger powers of self-control; a woman on whom the experiences and sorrows of many years had not been wasted. For a middle-aged person she was young-looking. Her still abundant hair was only streaked here and there with grey, her tall figure was as upright as it had ever been, and the colour in her cheeks was almost as fresh. But there were deep lines about her brow which told of long and patient endurance;

of weary days when, under a calm exterior, Margaret Jewell had carried an aching heart; when no earthly friends could bring her soul comfort in its utter desolation, and no human ears knew the bitter cry that went up to God from the bereaved mother.

Dick had not always been an only child. There had been two other brave, handsome boys, a year or two younger than her eldest born; brave as all the sailors and fishermen of Port Ruan are, and handsome as the sons of Margaret Jewell—she who had in her time been known as the beauty of the little town—ought to be. But one summer day they were out in a rowing-boat in the bay with another lad of their own age, and whatever it was that happened—whether the boat upset, or one fell overboard and the others were drowned in the vain attempt to save him—no one ever knew. The sea was calm as a mill-pond that day, and no one dreamt of danger as the lads went out; but all the same not one of the three returned to tell the tale, which remained buried, like so many others, in the blue deeps of Ruan bay.

No wonder those terrible days of waiting for steps that never came, and anxious listening for voices that can never answer, had left their mark on Margaret's brow; and no wonder, too, that she loved her last remaining son with a strength and a devotion even beyond the love of mothers. He had been a good son to her, too, and one of whom any parents might well

be proud. For, besides being a tall and good-looking man, he had already a vessel of his own, and had been on many distant voyages to foreign lands, and his fame as a master mariner was widely known all along the coast of Devon and Cornwall. And to see Dick with a wife and children of his own had long been the fondest wish of his mother's heart—a wish round which her most ardent hopes and her most fervent prayers had centred. But he himself had always seemed averse to the thought of marriage. Again and again he had been heard to say that women were too uncertain, too hard for him to understand; that a free, unfettered life was the best for him. He would add laughingly that the only troth he should ever plight was already given to his vessel, and that the *Mermaid* was the only bride he should ever seek to win. And so this sudden, unexpected announcement had fallen upon his parents like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, and Dick's marriage, or rather, as old Martin says, "the manner of doing it," bade fair to become a source of grave anxiety.

"Jenifer—Jenifer Pengellas," Mrs. Jewell kept repeating to herself long after her husband was asleep in bed that night; and she sat up with her candle and open Bible at the window-ledge, musing over the one absorbing piece of news which had taken possession of her thoughts.

It was an unusual name, and in Ruan itself,

which was on the borders of Devon, there had never been one, although she had heard of it in her younger days in a neighbouring village. And now, if Dick's letter had spoken true, she was no longer Jenifer Pengellas but Jenifer Jewell; for he had said Sunday was to be the day, and now this was Monday. All Margaret's mother's heart within her warmed with eager, generous love for the unknown maiden who had become her boy's wife yesterday, and she longed with all her soul to clasp her in her arms and fold her to her bosom in a mother's welcome. And then she began to recall the events of yesterday—the little trifling incidents of the hour, which had seemed so insignificant in the doing of them, but which now won a new importance in her eyes, since they belonged to Dick's wedding-day.

Strange to think that a day so solemn, so wonderful to her should have come and gone with nothing to mark it from other days—no sign or token to her that her son and his affianced wife were joining hands at the altar in that solemn rite. At least it had been a beautiful day from beginning to end, and if the brightest of suns, the bluest of seas, and the most golden of moons, when Port Ruan looked at its best, could make the happiness of a wedded pair, Dick and his wife would have none but sunny days in store for them. She was glad to think of that, glad to remember the parson had said to her, "What a glorious day, Mrs. Jewell!" as he met

her at the churchyard stile. She had been to the parish church on the top of the hill, and Martin had, as he often did, preferred to worship in the little grey chapel of the Bible Christians close at hand, which was easier of access for his rheumatic limbs. She must ask him if he had heard any word that had struck him there, aught that he could interpret as a sign for the future. And then she remembered the sermon she herself heard at the church, not from their own parson, but from a stranger who was passing by, and had spent a Sunday in the remote little fishing-town. He was a godly man, she thought, and had the reputation of being a great scholar, and if she could not understand all that he said, the text of his discourse had made a great impression upon her. It was one which she had never heard in church before, and she had pondered much on its meaning on the way home, and now, before she went to bed, she thought she would look it out once more, and read it again for Dick's sake and because of his wedding-day.

Her candle-end had almost burnt itself out, and it was by the light of the last feeble, flickering flame that she found the preacher's text in the pages of her well-thumbed book. Yes, that was it: the eighth chapter of the Song of Solomon, and the sixth verse.

"Love is strong as death." He had said it over and over again, till the words seemed to ring in her ears like a voice from heaven.

“‘Strong as death’—was it really so?” she had said to herself, mindful of certain dark hours in her life when she would have died many times over for one sight of her boys, one glimpse of their dear brown heads and blue eyes. “Strong as death!” Yes, the parson was right. She had not lost them, these passionately loved children. Even if the sea had robbed her of them in their laughing boyhood, they were still present to her, still as real and as living as Dick himself in the pride of his manhood. “Strong as death!” Ay, here was a sign for her, a token that spoke well for his future, and the union of those hands which God had joined together and no man could ever put asunder. She was glad she had been to church that Sunday, and had heard the strange parson; and as she closed the book she said to herself that now she should never forget Dick’s wedding-day.

But the other half of the text—she had forgotten that; and she opened the Bible once more to read it. Her candle had gone out, and she had some trouble to decipher the words in the dim light of the moon. “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” Was that it? It seemed a strange text to be in the Bible at all; but as it was there, of course it must be true. Margaret Jewell began to wonder what it meant. “Did it mean that such a thing as jealous love could ever come between her and the wife of Dick’s bosom,” she asked herself, “and make her hard

and cruel?" The thought made her shudder, and she was sorry she had opened the book again, and tried to forget the last half of the text.

And yet, after all, love must be the strongest; her own heart told her that was true, and Solomon in all his wisdom could not shake her faith in its divine power.





CHAPTER II.

“ Ah, my sailor, make haste,
For the time runs to waste,
And my love lieth deep.”

JEAN INGELOW.



HE beach of St. Ives presented an unusually lively scene. It was not only that the season of the pilchard fishery, which is the great harvest of this remote western port, was near at hand, and that everywhere fishermen were busy making their preparations, hanging out the great brown nets on beach and rocks to dry in the sun ; but on this particular afternoon a couple of fishing-smacks had just come in with an unexpected haul of herrings, and the fortunate fishermen were displaying their nets, gleaming with silvery scales, in the eyes of the crowd which gathered round them. These

were early days yet for a haul of this size, and promised well for the season which was just beginning. Many were the pleased exclamations which the sight of the spoil drew from the gazers' lips, many the shouts of the small boys who came swinging themselves down from the stone wall of the quay, and toddling children running barefoot along the smooth sands to have a look at the prize. And with the yellow sands stretching between the blue sea and the bright sky, with the warm sunlight streaming over red-sailed boats and sturdy sailors, on the auburn hair of the children, and the scarlet caps of the fisher-lads, the broad straw hats and coarse blue gowns of the women, it was altogether as pretty and animated a scene as you often see.

Behind them the low houses of the fishing-town rose in picturesque tiers one above another in irregular confusion; here a row of gables, there a projecting roof crowned with a stack of tall chimneys; here a flight of steps leading up to a pilchard-cellar or cave stored with fishing-tackle, there a narrow doorway with children and fish-baskets huddled up together on the threshold, and clean clothes hanging out to dry on the wooden rail of the balcony above.

And in the heart of the town, so close to the beach that on stormy nights the sea-waves washed its very walls, stood the great church with its noble tower, standing there as a beacon to the

fishermen and a silent witness to the faith which the holy maid Ia had taught their fathers of old. In the steep lane close under the church, at the top of the flight of steps leading down to the beach, a young girl stood alone, looking along the shore with grave, anxious eyes. Like many Cornish girls, she had a good deal that was foreign in her appearance. Her slight figure, small features, her dainty hands and feet, all spoke of Celtic blood, and were more like those of a Brittany maiden; and the almond shape of her eyes, and their long fringe of black lashes, gave a peculiar expression to her face.

Her dress was also slightly uncommon, and to-day at least showed signs of considerable attention to her appearance. A broad white collar edged with embroidery, fastened with a silver anchor on a rose-coloured bow, relieved the sombre hue of her dark stuff gown. She wore silver earrings to match; and her straw hat trimmed with rose-red ribbon, and further decorated with a bunch of blue-and-white columbine and maiden-hair fern fresh from the mossy caves of Carrack-Gladden.

She was evidently well known to the St. Ives fishermen, and more than one of the fishwives and children who passed her had a smile and a word of greeting for her. But although she nodded pleasantly in return to each, her attention was fixed less on the figures that moved to and fro along the beach than on the vessels in

the harbour. These she scanned with the closest attention, and apparently not with satisfaction, for before long her face clouded over, and she called impatiently to an old seaman who was sunning himself in a warm corner underneath the wall.

“Is there a Port Ruan boat in the harbour, Bill? They told me this morning that Cap'en Jewell's vessel, the *Mermaid*, was in; but I've been all along the beach, and there's nothing but a coaster from Portreath. It seems,” she added, in a tone of vexation, “there's no more truth in it than in most things one hears in St. Ives nowadays.”

The old sailor shook his head.

“No, she's not in, Missus Pengellas,” he said slowly. “I reckon her's set her sails northwards before now.”

The girl bit her lip angrily, and without another word turned on her heel and walked briskly up the steep lane which led into the town.

“Hoity-toity! what's up with you to-day, my beauty?” cried a coarse-looking fishwoman, with a basket of cabbages in one hand and a bundle of clothing in the other, who jostled against the girl as she passed her in the narrow alley. “Ha! it's Pengellas's girl, is it, from Rosewall? Has your lover played you false this time, Jenifer, and left you in the lurch? Don't take on, my pretty; there's as good fish in the sea as ever came out on't yet.”

A laugh from the other women in the street greeted this sally; but Jenifer Pengellas walked on, without condescending to notice the jokes that were being made at her expense. She was vexed and sore at heart, hot and tired after the long walk from her home at Rosewall on the hill, and out of temper with herself and the world in general. The church door stood open as she passed, and in her anxiety to escape from the sound of Betsy Gryll's rasping voice, she went in, and sat down to rest on an oak bench in the south aisle.

There was no one to disturb her solitude, and the sense of coolness and dim space about her was soothing to her ruffled spirits. Above the massive pillars of granite praying angels hovered with clasped hands and folded wings. Vine-leaves and grapes wreathed their flowing patterns along the base of the waggon roof. Exactly opposite her, on a carved bench-end, was the head of Ralph Clies, the master-smith, who had enriched the church with its oak screen, and had caused his own and his wife's portraits to be sculptured there.

But although Jenifer's eyes were fixed on that ancient worthy's cocked hat, and the hammer and anvil, pincers and tongs, which bore witness to his craft, it was not of Master Ralph nor yet of his dame that she was thinking that sunny afternoon as she sat alone in the empty church. Her own disappointment was so keen, she had no thoughts to spare for any-

thing else, and sat there with tears in her eyes brooding over her wrongs, and firmly persuaded that she was the most ill-used and miserable girl in the whole of Cornwall.

Poor Jenifer! she was but nineteen that day, and at that age few of us have courage to look beyond the passing cloud which happens to darken our skies. And she had for weeks, nay, months past, been looking forward to this day, and that very morning when she rose she had determined in her own mind this should be a surpassingly happy day.

a For not only was it her birthday, but on this twenty-first of September she had expected to see the friend she held dearest in the whole world. Captain Jewell could hardly be called her affianced lover, since she had never pledged her troth to him, and had only known him during one short week more than six months ago. But none the less Jenifer had given her heart to her sailor-lover for good and all, and she had no doubt as to the strength of her devotion.

The very first time she saw Dick Jewell, the night of the great gale last February, when he, although a stranger in Penzance, had volunteered to help man the lifeboat to rescue a drowning crew, Jenifer Pengellas had fallen desperately in love with the brave sailor whose praise was on every lip. More than one young man of her acquaintance had courted her before, for she was a general favourite, and the richest

farmer in the neighbourhood, Frank Trembarth, was supposed to have laid his hand and heart at her feet; but while making friends with all alike, she had never singled out one before until this stranger appeared on the scene, and had, as it were, taken her heart by storm.

And Dick himself, who recked little of womanhood before, and was fond of saying he had never seen one who could hold a candle to his mother, had been captivated less by Jenifer's pretty face than by her undisguised admiration for his courage, and the way in which she singled him out from his comrades.

There are some men who are proof to all blandishments excepting those of a girl who falls in love with them, and Captain Jewell belonged to this class. First in her cousin's house at Newlyn, later on in her uncle's farm at Rosewall, Dick had come to know Jenifer, and during the few days his vessel was refitting for a voyage to the Mediterranean, after the gales of the past week, friendship had quickly ripened into love.

But then, all too soon, the moment of departure had arrived, and the *Mermaid* had started on its distant cruise, leaving Jenifer to weep in silence. The last words Dick had said to her when she watched him go from the beach at Marazion were—

“I'll be back by the twenty-first of September, if all the winds and tides are against us.”

And Dick was not a man lightly to break his

word. True, he might have been detained by contrary breezes and bad weather in the bay; but only last week she had received a few hastily written lines from Plymouth, saying he had arrived, and as soon as his business there was done, the *Mermaid* should put into St. Ives, where he had agreed to take up a cargo. So now that he was in England it was the more tantalizing to feel that he was so near and yet be without him. For days Jenifer had been anxiously watching every sail that she could spy from the top of the hill overlooking Mount's Bay, in hopes of recognizing the *Mermaid*.

To add to her excitement this morning, a rumour had reached her that a Port Ruan coaster had put in at St. Ives, and she had hastened down to the port that afternoon in all her gayest attire, confident of meeting her sailor-lover.

No wonder, then, her heart sank within her as she sat alone in the big church, and tears of mortification gathered in her eyes. In her grief and vexation she began to reproach her absent lover, and to say to herself that it was all his fault, and he might have kept his promise if he had chosen. Since he chose to treat her so neglectfully, she should take care to show him in her turn that she had other admirers, not to say lovers, and could afford to hold him cheap.

Hitherto Jenifer's life had been singularly sheltered from trouble, for although she and

three young brothers had been early left orphans, they had found a happy home with their uncle and aunt, who lived in comfortable circumstances at the Rosewall farm. And the fact that she had all her life been indulged and much made of, made her resent disappointment and delay as if it were an actual injustice.

The sound of voices in the church porch roused her from her melancholy thoughts, and, rising from her seat, she dried her eyes and walked slowly towards the door. It was time for her to retrace her steps, for she had a long walk before her, and unless she made haste she would be too late to help her aunt when the reapers returned from the fields. She remembered that it was market-day in St. Ives, and reflected that if she walked by the street she might very possibly fall in with her friend Mr. Trembarth, who would give her a ride home in his gig. But as she emerged from the church doors her eyes met a tall figure ascending the stone steps from the beach, and a cry of surprise broke from her lips.

Could it be? was it possible? And almost before she could frame the wondering question that rose unbidden to her lips, the kindly face was turned to hers, and the frank blue eyes of the Ruan sailor met hers with a pleased smile of recognition.

"My dear," was all he said, in his blunt sailor-fashion, "so I've lighted on you at last, where I least expected to find you."

Jenifer gave one joyous exclamation, and, forgetful of the doors and windows that opened on the street, or the crowds on the beach below, rushed into her lover's arms.





CHAPTER III.

“ ‘ Too deep for swift telling ; and yet, my one lover,
I’ve conned thee an answer ; it waits thee to-night.’
By the sycamore passed he, and through the white clover,
Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight ;
But I’ll love him more, more
Than e’er wife loved before,
Be the days dark or bright.”

JEAN INGELOW.



HE walk from St. Ives to Rosewall was uphill all the way, but Jenifer found it neither long nor steep that evening. Never in all her life had it seemed so short and easy. For they had so much to tell each other, these happy lovers, who had no thought or eyes to spare for anything but themselves.

Jenifer, on her part, could not be satisfied till she had poured out a full confession of her doubts and impatience, of the bitter thoughts and angry feelings which had been making a

tumult in her breast as she sat in the church, little knowing how near Dick was to her, and how soon he would clasp her in his arms.

And Dick, too, had much to tell of the delays and accidents which had hindered him, until the only chance of reaching Rosewall at all that day had been for him to leave his boat at Falmouth and come by road all the way. Great had been his disappointment when on reaching the farm he had found the inmates all absent, and it was only by chance that he learnt from a lad whom he found in the stables that Miss Jenifer had walked across the down towards St. Ives.

"To think of your walking all that way for my sake!" said Jenifer, lifting up her dark eyes remorsefully to her lover's eyes.

"I had promised, little one; and I knew you would be looking out for me," Dick replied, looking down fondly at the slight girl who clung to his protecting arm.

"I am sorry, Dick," said Jenifer, still guiltily conscious of her own sins; "but I will never doubt you again. I see now how silly I was, but I could not help it. It was all because I cared so much."

And so they talked on, with many happy pauses between their words, always repeating the same thing in some new forms, always telling each other in a thousand different ways how well they loved each other. Sometimes they paused for a few minutes at the gateway

of some cornfield, where the harvest was going on and horses and waggons stood, and the golden sheaves were built up in mows over the cleared ground, and lingered watching the reapers at work, and looking at the shining blue of the summer sea that was rolling into the bay, and the curving line of shore from the beach of St. Ives, where Jenifer had stood forlorn but an hour ago, to the dim point of Trevoze Head in the far distance. Or else they sat down on the stone steps of some Cornish stile, and holding each other's hands fast, talked of the blissful days in store for them, building castles in the air of all they would do together, and planning their lives after their own fashion, quite certain that no one had ever been so happy as they would be when they were wed. And Dick talked of his mother, about whom Jenifer always liked to hear, and told her how she would rejoice to have her for a daughter; and then he owned that he had never yet written to tell his parents of their courting, for which Jenifer scolded him a little, and then they laughed again.

It was not till they had reached Rosewall, and were sitting together in the large walled garden, where the laden apple-boughs trailed on the grass among sunflowers and poppies, and sweet-scented myrtle and white pinks and red carnations mingled with the clusters of ripe fruit, that Dick told her the real reason of his anxious haste, and the true purport of his

coming. The fact was, he wanted to be married at once.

“You see, dear, it isn't always long I can stay on shore, and if we wait till the spring I'll be off again, it might be for a longish bit; and just now it comes handy, for if we're wed I can take you home next week, and then we need not part again. But if we don't take our chance now while we can, another may not lie so ready to hand; and it's hard on a fellow to go away to sea and not know whether he'll ever be back to call the girl he loves his own.”

This announcement was a startling one, and Jenifer naturally hesitated at first, more especially when she found that Dick's plan was to be married the very next Sunday, and sail the very next week for Port Ruan, taking her with him on his vessel.

But his logic was unanswerable, and when Jenifer herself began to consider the other alternative, her heart sank within her at the prospect of a long separation.

“Anything would be better than to see you go right away and not know when you were coming back, Dick,” she whispered, as she leant her head against his arm.

“That's how I feel about it,” returned the sailor. “Now I've seen you again, sweetheart, it's not just easy to go away and leave you behind. So if you'll say yes, Jenifer, and if *they've* nothing against it,” he added, waving his hand towards the harvest-field where her

uncle and brothers were all at work, "I'll go into Penzance to-morrow and get a licence, and then we'll be married on Sunday."

"Oh, Dick," said Jenifer, "it does seem soon. It takes my breath away even to think of it. What will Uncle and Aunt Lispeth say?"

"Oh, we'll square them," said Dick, gaily. "You always say it's your own way you get with the old folk, and if only you'll be agreed I'm not afraid of the rest. I was thinking what mother won't say when we get home and she first sees you as my wife, Jenifer." And he gave a happy laugh, while Jenifer turned away her face to hide her blushes.

In her heart of hearts she loved Dick the better for his impatience, and his rough, ready ways and impetuous love-making increased the fascination with which he had inspired her. Neither was she insensible to the grandeur of being married by licence, and reflected with secret satisfaction how the other girls she knew would envy her when they saw her the wife of Captain Jewell, who had a boat of his own and passed for a rich man in these parts, besides having won such fame on the memorable night of the gale last spring, and been talked about in the papers.

Her consent once given, the rest, as Dick foretold, was easily managed. Farmer Pengellas, indeed, was considerably taken aback when, on returning from the harvest-field, he was greeted by Jenifer's "Cap'en"—the name

by which Dick was known at Rosewall—and asked to give his consent to the young folks' wedding taking place in five days' time.

"I thought it looked a likely thing, and might be in a year or two," he said to his wife; "but I never knew it would take one all of a heap like this. But sailors, they be hurrisome folk, you see; they learns it o' the waves and winds, I suppose. And I don't know, when one comes to think on't, that there's anything against it. To be sure, I'm sorry to lose the child, she as was poor Bessie's eldest born, and as like her as two peas; but he's not a bad chap, and I was in Port Ruan once long ago myself, and it's not so far distant as Bristol, where our Sue's settled. And, when all's said and done, young things will have their way."

Aunt Lispeth was at first more disposed to raise objections. She was a weak, ailing woman, inclined to grumble and think herself hard done by if things did not go as she wished; and if Jenifer was a bit restive at times, and a trifle fond of gadding about, she was a good one to work, and as strong to lift buckets and fold linen as any lass in the country. Of course she would be a great loss to her; but then folks never considered her. And if Jenifer was bent on marrying, she'd better be married and done with, and not stand there sighing her heart out, and wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron, because of her absent lover. As for the wedding, it would be impossible to get

anything ready by Sunday; but of course, if Jenifer liked to be wed in a faded last year's cotton gown, with nothing but an old platter on her head, that was her own affair.

Dick Jewell, as may be imagined, made short work with these and similar objections, and as Jenifer's brothers were several years younger than herself, their opinion was not asked. If they had, I scarcely think they would have had a word to say against the "Cap'en," who in their eyes was a hero without fear and without reproach, if ever one had lived on earth. And the prospect of their sister's wedding was a pleasing excitement in itself, and left no room for sadder thoughts in their young minds.

The inhabitants of Rosewall Farm, accordingly, were in a flutter of eager preparation during the remainder of that week. Whatever Aunt Lispeth might say, she, like most other women who have daughters of their own, was too much alive to the importance of a wedding not to be anxious Jenifer should make a proper and decent appearance as a bride; and if she had failed in her duty in this respect, her daughter Rose Anna, an able and energetic young woman, who was settled in a neighbouring farm, would have seen that nothing was neglected. On all important occasions Rose Anna came to her mother's rescue, and no sooner had she heard what was doing at Rosewall than she appeared ready for action, as she expressed it. In one short half-hour she had inspected Jenifer's

wardrobe, and had discovered a grey merino gown which had been only put on twice, and would be the very thing, she pronounced, for the wedding. Her next step was to send to Penzance for a new bonnet, and sundry laces, ribbons, and gloves, with which to complete the bridal attire. The wedding dinner next demanded her attention, and she set one of the boys to write to her sister at Newlyn and to some cousins who lived near, and proceeded to visit the larder and give directions for fowls to be killed and cakes to be baked.

So, when Captain Jewell returned to Rosewall with the marriage licence in his pocket, he found things were already going forward rapidly; and beginning to realize how near he was to the fulfilment of his wishes, he sat down to write that memorable note to his mother.

Jenifer herself was as busy as any one, lending a helping hand to her aunt and cousin, and being as active in all preparations as if it were some one else's wedding which was at hand. She was just as light-hearted as ever, singing about the house and taking her uncle and brother's jokes more good-humouredly than usual.

Not a single fear for the future, and scarcely a regret at leaving the home of her childhood, troubled her, so absolute was her trust in her lover, so entire her devotion for him. The world seemed to be before her in unclouded brightness, without a shadow to dim the sunshine of her

path. Even Frank Trembarth's disconsolate appearance, and the reproachful looks which he turned upon her when he found out that the news was true, and that pretty little Jenifer Pengellas was really going to marry this stranger sailor, did not in the least affect her spirits. Far from showing any compassion to her disappointed suitor, she laughed in his face, and was so provokingly charming and mischievous that the young man went away more dejected than ever, cursing his fate for having let the nicest girl in Cornwall slip through his fingers.

Only the last evening before the wedding, when she began to think of the parting which must follow, Jenifer's courage seemed to fail her suddenly, and she grew silent and tearful as she stood in the sunny little garden talking to Dick over a few last arrangements for the morrow. The whole world seemed aglow with rich colour. The old place looked strangely beautiful that evening; the hills opposite were steeped in radiant light; golden gorse and purple patches of heather mingled with the yellow cornfields and green down. Far down below, at the foot of the cliffs, little St. Ives lay sparkling like a gem on the shore of the brilliant sea, and on the other side, across the narrow neck of land, the towers of St. Michael's Mount rose out of the blue waters of its fair bay. Jenifer knew that strangers often climbed the hill and wondered at the beauty of the view

—on clear days you could see the long low line of the Lizard coast stretching away into the southern sea, and at nights the lights in the castle on the mount shone like stars—but she herself had never thought much about it. Now, for the first time this evening she thought how beautiful it was, and wondered that this had never struck her before. A new sense seemed to have come to her to-night, a new consciousness of all she was leaving, and her eyes were full of tears as she said to her lover—

“I wish I were not going away, Dick. I should not dare to leave it all if it were not for you ; and even with you it is not easy.”

Dick murmured some caressing words ; and presently Jenifer stopped again, and pointed to the large bushes of feathery pampas grass, and the masses of red-blossomed glossy-leaved eschalonias, masses of which grew like weeds in that fertile soil.

“Do the flowers grow at Port Ruan like they do here, Dick ?”

“Oh yes ; fuchsias and all that sort of thing,” replied Dick. “There is plenty of that, too,” he continued, touching a thick bush of blue hydrangea. “It grows in our garden at home and always reminds me of mother when I see it.”

“You are very fond of your mother, Dick,” said Jenifer, gravely. “I wonder how she will like hearing you are to be married. What do you think ?”

Dick protested that nothing could give his mother greater pleasure, and was quite sure that she would love Jenifer as well as if she had been her own child.

But Jenifer shook her head and bent her brows with a very thoughtful expression of countenance.

“If I had a son I loved with all my heart, as you say your mother loves you, I don't feel as if I should very much care to see him bring home a wife to take the first place in his heart. No, I am sure I shouldn't. I believe I should hate her; and perhaps that is how your mother feels now. I am sure I hope she won't hate me.”

“Hate you, Jenny?” said Dick incredulously. “Ah, you don't know mother, or you'd never once dream such a thing were possible. I'll be bound she loves you now for my sake, and when she's seen you, why, then—— But we won't talk about it. You'll soon see for yourself.”

So Dick laughed the idea to scorn, and made Jenifer laugh too, at what seemed to him so ridiculous and impossible a thing.

And the next day—on the very Sunday when Margaret Jewell heard the strange parson preach on the Wise Man's text, “Love is strong as death”—they were married down at St. Ives.

The great church was thronged to overflowing; and out in the harbour the *Mermaid* was decorated with flags, and a garland of roses

and myrtle hung from the masthead—all in honour of the captain's wedding; and as the glasses went round, and the merry bells clashed in the air, sailors and landsfolk alike vowed the sun had never shone on a fairer bride or a braver bridegroom than Cap'en Jewell and his wife.





CHAPTER IV.

“The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.”

COLERIDGE.



HE skies were blue, and the sea was calm and glassy as a lake, as the *Mermaid* sailed along the Cornish coast in those sunny autumn days. There was just wind enough to fill the sails; and the mild south-westerly airs blew pleasantly in Jenifer's face, as she sat on deck watching her husband give his orders and direct the vessel's course.

The other seamen were in high good-humour. Most of them were natives of Port Ruan, and anxious to be back once more with their wives and children; and they said the Cap'en's wife had brought them good luck, and they would soon be in harbour now.

As for Jenifer, she was in an ecstasy of

delight and happiness all the way. She had cried a little at parting, as was natural, and had fairly sobbed when the boys kissed her for good-bye; but, once fairly started, she was as happy as the day was long.

It was all so fresh and delightful to her—a change indeed from the rather monotonous round of life at Rosewall, where day after day she milked the cows, scoured the leads, and mended the boys' clothes; with no other variety but a walk to St. Ives on Sundays or market days, and perhaps an expedition by train to Penzance once a year.

Jenifer was not a bad one to work, but she greatly preferred taking her ease, and sitting with her hands before her. She was young enough to take quite a keen delight in wearing her wedding-ring, and glanced at her hand a hundred times in the day to see if it were safe; while the rough blue guernsey and red cap, which Dick had bought for her in a shop at Penzance, and the gold earrings which he had brought from France with him, afforded her scarcely less pleasure.

Above all, she was joined to the husband of her choice—to the one man she worshipped; and the mere sense of Dick's presence was a perpetual feast. Only to sit and gaze at his manly form and handsome face, his fair hair and smooth beard, was enough for her. She noticed with pride that he was taller by the head and shoulders than any of the crew, and

thought he looked like one of those sea-kings of whom she had read in her school-days.

“ I had no idea any one could be so happy ; I am sure no other girl ever was ! ” she cried that afternoon, as he sat by her side on deck, smoking an after-dinner pipe. “ I wish our journey could never end. I should like to go on always, and never stop till we had been all round England. ”

Dick smiled, glad to think she was happy, and let her chatter on about the delights of being a sailor's wife, but wisely made no answer when she proceeded to ask him if he would promise to take her always on all his voyages.

“ I should like to be out in a storm, too—a small one—just to see how it would feel ; of course, not quite such a dreadful one as that night I was at Newlyn. Oh, Dick, shall I ever forget that night ? And to think that you were out on the rough sea, and you might have been drowned, and that I might never have seen you again, and never have been your wife ! I shall never let you go out on the lifeboat again, Dick ; now you are married you must leave that to younger men. ” And she drew herself up with a pretended assumption of matronly dignity, which in Dick's eyes sat charmingly upon her.

And then they began to talk of Port Ruan, and of the cottage where his parents lived ; and Jenifer wondered if his mother would be looking out for them when they arrived, or if they

should take her by surprise. She prepared, in her own mind, half a dozen pretty little speeches which she would make to her husband's father and mother, just to show them what a pattern daughter-in-law she was going to be.

"Only I do hope," she said to herself, "that Dick's mother won't dislike me for stealing his heart, and will not try to stop his loving me; because that would be a wrong I could never forgive."

But, to do the Cornish maiden justice, she put away these suspicious thoughts which now and then crossed her mind as quickly as possible, and satisfied herself with the reflection that, after all, Dick's mother belonged to Dick, and that she would be as good and generous and perfect as he was.

And so the good ship *Mermaid* went on its way right merrily; past rocky headlands and tall white lighthouses; past green downs and bleak uplands; past smiling apple-orchards and golden harvest-fields; past slate cliffs and castellated rocks, covered with a mossy ivy-growth; and deep coombes, crowned with cairns and cromlechs, where the oak scrub was reddening with the first autumn tints, and valerian and blackberry brambles and mountain-ash berries grew tangled together on the banks of the noisy rivulet, which made music in the hollow, as it flowed over beds of smooth-leaved hart's-tongue and shining pebbles. Then they came on a more desolate tract of country, where

nothing was to be seen but mining-shafts and tall chimneys; and then again on a wild shore, where black reefs, sharp and jagged as the teeth of a saw, ran out into the sea, and frowning rocks rose grimly overhead—rocks which made Jenifer shudder as she thought of the dangers to which the mariner's life must be exposed.

Little it was that she knew, as the *Mermaid* went gliding over the summer seas, of the suffering and endurance which enters so largely into the lives of sailor-folk; little of the storms and the rocks that lay ahead of her in the married life which had begun so happily for her.

But Dick, who knew every inch of the coast from the Severn Sea to the Land's End, pointed out the dangers that boats encountered in these regions, and told thrilling tales of hair-breadth escapes and disastrous shipwrecks which had happened on this coast within his own memory. He told her the famous legend of Tregagle, the dishonest steward who sold his soul to the devil, and is doomed to spend his days emptying Dosmarè Pool with a broken limpet-shell; and showed her, high upon the hill, the tower of Forrabury Church, which, alone among its fellows, is for ever silent since the night when its bells were drowned, because the captain would not thank God who had brought them safe over the seas. Then all of a sudden the wind rose and lashed the waves into fury, and ship and cargo went down in sight of port,

and none of all the crew remained to tell the tale, save the pilot who had thanked God. And still, they say, on stormy nights the mariner hears the jangled music of that peal of bells, which never reached the shore. Jenifer looked with awe on the silent tower, and almost expected to hear the bells chiming down in the blue-green waters which sleep under the cliffs of the ancient Bottreaux. And, as they sailed past under the mighty rocks of Tintagel, Dick told her that other story, dear to all Cornish hearts, of the great king who held his court on the island rock, and went out from its sea-bound walls to his last battle.

From the deck of the *Mermaid* Jenifer saw the long grey village, with its straggling houses, stretching along the top of the hill, and the sheep grazing the short grass among the ruins of Arthur's Castle, where still, men say, the hero's spirit still hovers, under the form of a chough, about the spot where he dwelt of old.

And then they came in sight of Lundy Island, whose square flat top follows you all along the coast—the last bit of the world, as the fishermen say, who see it rising all by itself in the far horizon, dim and mysterious, like some enchanted isle of the Atlantic. And Dick promised he would take her there some day to see the people of that strange spot, and the sea-fowl which cluster on the rocks in the autumn.

The only fault Jenifer could find with her

wedding journey was that it was all too short, and in spite of her impatience to see her new home she was sorry when she learnt that they were already drawing near to Port Ruan.

One more headland, with its tall white lighthouse, was rounded, and then they made for the shore, and soon entered the narrow land-locked harbour of the little town.

It was early morning still, and the mist clung to the green hillside, and to the russet foliage of the trees that grew in the deep ravine where Ruan lies, and left the grass and leaves all wet and glittering with dew. Woods and shore alike seemed sleeping in the sweet pale sunshine; while the sea below lay calm and unruffled, like a web of azure satin, with a white sail or two studding the blue waters in the far horizon.

Jenifer, in her red cap and blue guernsey, stood up and leant against her husband's side, as they drew up alongside of the stone quay which runs along the harbour, and saw the faces and heard the voices of the little group assembled to receive them.

"There she is—I told you so, Jenifer!" cried Dick, joyfully. "I knew, whatever time of night or day it might be, she'd be here. Look to now, lads—all hands ahoy! Steady, lads—steady!"

And before Jenifer had realized that the tall, fine-looking woman with the white handkerchief over her head was Mrs. Jewell, Dick

had pressed on shore through the thronging people, and was giving his mother a hearty embrace.

In his pleasure at seeing her again, it seemed to Jenifer that he had altogether forgotten his wife; but if so, it was only for a very brief space, and the next moment he was back at her side, helping her to go on shore, and leading her up to his mother.

Tears were in Mrs. Jewell's eyes as she kissed Jenifer and bade her welcome to Ruan, and took a long look into the girl's face, as if her heart yearned to know Dick's wife.

"I've been on the watch for you since day-break," she said, "but it was only ten minutes ago that I heard them calling that the *Mermaid* was in sight. Father could not get down in time, you see," she continued apologetically, "or he would have been here to bid you welcome; but the hill's a pull for him, and he's not what he used to be. But he's just every bit as glad to see you, my dear, you'll believe me."

Jenifer tried to answer, but the words died on her lips. The sense of some half-dozen curious pairs of eyes from the people on the quay being all turned upon her at once abashed her, and she was not sorry when Mrs. Jewell proposed to take her straight home, leaving Dick to see to his vessel, and make the necessary arrangements about unlading her cargo, which was to go on to Bristol by another coaster.

The two women walked up the steep hillside together, each conscious of a certain timidity and constraint. Margaret showed it least of the two. Already she felt strangely drawn towards the shy young girl, who looked scarcely more than a child, and in her longing to make her at home she talked freely, asking how she had liked her two days at sea, and if they had stopped on the way, and anything else that suggested itself to her mind.

Jenifer made another effort to shake off her shyness, but the fine speeches which she had prepared beforehand would not come, and she only replied to her mother-in-law's questions, in monosyllables that did not help on conversation, and looked round as if she wished Dick had accompanied them.

They had reached the point where the two ravines in which Port Ruan lies divide, and on either side were groups of white houses rising in terraces against the hillside, each with their bright little garden of fuchsias and hydrangeas. Above the houses the hills rose sharply on either side, granite boulders and pink quartz rising in layers one over another between grassy down and slate cliffs covered with purple mica and orange lichen. It was a wild, romantic spot, more completely secluded and shut out from the world than even those remote regions from which Jenifer came. Looking back, she saw the whole expanse of the beautiful bay with its girdle of rocks, headland after headland

running out into the blue sea, and, lost in wonder at the vast sweep of coast spread out before her, she exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!"

Mrs. Jewell smiled, well pleased that this should be Jenifer's first impression of her new home.

"I am glad you say so," she observed. "We Port Ruan people think there's no place in the world like it. But it's well you see it first on a sunny day. Yonder is our cottage; there on the right, a little above the brook; there, where you see the row of pink hollyhocks and the nasturtiums growing over the low grey wall."

"That with the yellow jasmine growing up the wall?" said Jenifer, brightening up at the recollection. "Dick told me about it; only it's much prettier than he said."

"I dare say he feared to say too much, and it was best to leave something for you to find out," said Mrs. Jewell, greeting the new-comer with a sickly smile. "And now come and see the house, and let father bid you welcome," leading the way up the gravel path, where the old figure-head of a ship stood among the hydrangeas. "I'm a deal out of my reckoning if he's not dying for us to be back."

There he was, true enough, standing at the door, leaning on his stout orange-stick which Dick had got him at Lisbon on one of his voyages, and a hearty greeting in store for Jenifer.

At first the old sailor had been disposed to

resent his son's hasty marriage, but Margaret's soothing influence had overcome his opposition; and now it was actually an accomplished fact, he was quite prepared to make the best of it, and at all events accept the wife of Dick's choice with a good grace.

Each home-coming of Dick's had been held in the jasmine-grown cottage as a little festival, and this time Margaret was determined that things must be arranged in their very best to do honour to his bride. So from the moment she knew that he was bringing her home, she had toiled late and early to prepare for their arrival, and the fruits of her labour were everywhere apparent.

The inhabitants of Port Ruan are renowned for their cleanliness, and Mrs. Jewell's house yielded to none in this respect; but this time everything in the room literally shone with an additional polish, from the oak cupboard with its panelled doors and carved locks and handles, to the glittering brass face of the tall clock in the corner. A handful of bright nasturtiums and fronds of hart's-tongue stood in the large bowl of blue china on the table, and the cocks and hens on the mantelpiece, and the china bottles on the shelves, which had been in Margaret Jewell's family for a hundred years back, were all distinguished by an unusual brilliancy.

Upstairs the newly whitewashed ceiling of the spare bedroom—the only room which com-

manded a sea-view—bore witness to the same industry, while the old bed had donned new hangings of rose-sprigged chintz for the occasion, and the window ledge was sweet with pots of mignonette and musk.

It would have been hard indeed to find fault with anything, and Jenifer was enchanted with the air of comfort and prettiness about her husband's home, and could not sufficiently express her delight in his pleased ears.

In her fear of overwhelming her daughter-in-law with too many strange faces, Mrs. Jewell had refused to ask in the neighbours that first evening; but Martin's sister, Mrs. Harris, who lived at the top of the street, and her daughter Millicent, dropped in to wish Dick joy on his return and make acquaintance with his wife, and stayed to drink a dish of tea and taste Margaret's fresh whortleberry jam.

Mrs. Harris was considerably younger than her brother, and still an active, bustling little woman, with a remarkable talent for meddling in other people's concerns, apparently to the neglect of her own, to judge from the results. Since the death of her husband, who had owned the little inn of the Golden Lion, she had managed to muddle away the whole of the small fortune he had left behind, and now lived chiefly on the earnings of her daughter Millicent, a plain-faced young woman with earnest eyes and demure manners, who worked hard with her needle in the week-time, and on Sundays was

among the most regular attendants at the chapel of the Bible Christians, to which persuasion she belonged.

Jenifer gave one glance at her pale features and brown gown and smooth-brushed light hair as she entered, and decided at once that she should not like her, so she was a little put out when Dick seized hold of his cousin's hand, and drawing Jenifer to her, exclaimed—

“You two must be friends, eh, Millicent, for old sake's sake, mustn't you? Why, it's not so long ago but we used to play together at marrying down on the beach, and Millicent and I were always husband and wife. Time for you to be thinking o' getting yourself a partner, Millicent, seeing it's such a good example I've set you.”

He laughed boisterously at his own joke, and Millicent put out her hand to Jenifer, and said in a low, gentle voice, which was perhaps the most attractive thing about her—

“Never mind his banter, Cousin Jenifer. I am sure we shall not need any *musts* to make us friends. And with your leave, cousin, I will kiss your cheek.”

Jenifer yielded to the embrace without much show of cordiality, and thought that of the two she preferred the mother, who had a cheery way with her, and told rather ill-natured stories of other people, with a spice of fun which made her good, if not altogether edifying, company.

The evening passed away pleasantly enough. Jenifer found her tongue, and became talkative in her turn, and from the chimney corner, where Dick sat smoking his pipe and spinning yarns with his father, he watched with pride the part she took in the conversation.

Mrs. Jewell was the most silent of the party, and preferred looking at the rest with a happy smile on her countenance, while the others talked and laughed. But she found time to whisper in her son's ears some warm words about his young wife. "It is a sweetly pretty face, Dick," she said. "I feel to love her already, and it will not be long before she is at home with us all. Poor child! it must be a bit hard for her, too, coming like this among strangers, and she so young."

"She'll be right enough, mother, never have a fear," said Dick, cheerily; and his weather-beaten cheeks glowed with pride as he looked round the room and saw his father nodding approvingly at some remark Jenifer had made.

Yes, decidedly, his wife was making a very favourable impression. He would have thought so if he had overheard the last words which passed between his father and mother that night.

"Well, father, what do you say? Is she not a dear, pretty child, our Dick's Jenifer? I think she'll make him a real good wife."

"That's not for me to say, Meg. The proof of the pudding's in the eating, and it's too early

days yet. But considering how he's come by her, and where he's picked her up, I'll not say as how it might not be worse. And she's a knowing one, there's no mistake on that. If only her temper's as good as her wits, she'll do. But we shall see, wife; we shall see how it all turns out."





CHAPTER V.

“ No lot below,
For one whole day eludeth care ;
To marriage all the stories flow,
And finish there ;
As if with marriage came the end,
The entrance into settled rest,
The calm to which love’s tossings tend,
The quiet breast.”

JEAN INGELOW.



HE first week after Jenifer's arrival in her new home was, in her eyes, one of unqualified happiness. She wrote to tell her uncle and aunt that she had the best of husbands and the kindest of parents-in-law, and that she thought herself the most fortunate girl in the world. The novelty of the situation and the sense of freedom which she enjoyed were both equally pleasant. She was, in fact, mistress of her own time ; and although she proffered her help to her mother-in-law, her share of household work seldom resulted in more than making a pie or a set of batch-

cakes for supper, and this rather because the job amused her, and she liked Dick to praise her handiwork, than because it was required.

Most of her days during this fine autumn weather were spent down on the quay, watching the unloading of the *Mermaid* and other vessels that came in, and at which Dick often lent a helping hand.

The beach was generally a lively spot, and Jenifer soon made friends with the fishermen and sailors, who all knew her husband, and were pleased with her bright face and pleasant chatter. There was always some coming and going down there, and if there were no boats going out or being hauled up, she could look, through the coast-guardsman's glass, at the big ships crossing the bay on their way to the far West, and amuse herself with making out the figures on deck; and when there was nothing better, she would play on the sands with the children, who were charmed to have a new playfellow, and showed Jenifer their favourite caves along the shore, and made her wade with them at low tide to find anemones and shells in the peds among the rocks.

Dick, too, was taking it easy for a bit after his long absence, and would often ramble over the downs with his young wife, and take walks along the sands with her of an evening. Sometimes he would persuade his mother to accompany them, but Jenifer was generally so silent and moody on these occasions, that after one or two

experiments Margaret thought it wiser to stay at home, dearly as she loved to be with her son, and anxious as she was to break the ice with her daughter-in-law.

This was not an easy task; for, although Jenifer was always perfectly amiable and civil, she resisted all advances which her mother-in-law made, and had apparently no wish to be on intimate relations with her.

At the end of the week Margaret felt with some disappointment that her son's wife was quite as much a stranger to her as she had been the day of her arrival. But she consoled herself with the reflection that under the most favourable circumstances the position of a daughter-in-law, who lives in her father-in-law's house, must be a trying one, and hoped for, in her steadfast determination to make the best of things, a closer intercourse in the future.

All went well, however, as long as Dick was on shore. Jenifer was particularly attentive to her father-in-law, and would help him down daily to his favourite seat at the foot of the village street, where he could overlook the harbour and watch the boats go out. Once installed there, old Martin seldom stirred till dinner-time, and on fine days would return of an afternoon to smoke his pipe in the sun. It was little that he required. Of material comforts he had his fill, and was well content to sit still and rest awhile now his working days were over; but he was pleased with the

little attentions his daughter-in-law paid him, and was quite content to let her go her own way so long as every one looked happy, and he was not put out of his usual habits, but could sit out in the sun all day, and enjoy his tobacco at his fireside at nights.

The herring-fishery had now begun in good earnest, and a pretty sight it was to see the herring-fleet put out to sea on fine mornings, and to watch the red-brown sails dotted all over the blue-green water.

Dick went out in a trawler, too, a treat he had not enjoyed for years, and astonished Jenifer by the big hauls he brought back. But now he was so little on shore, she began to find time hang heavy on her hands. All available hands in Port Ruan were employed, so that the beach and street were entirely deserted save for a few old sailors and babies in arms, and it was no wonder that Jenifer, with so little to occupy her, found it dull, and sighed for her husband's return. She turned to needlework—very sensibly, as Margaret thought—and began to make up a gown for herself and to knit a new blue guernsey for Dick, to be ready for his sea-going days, besides occupying herself with bits of finery in the shape of bows and hats for her own use.

This amused her for a time, but soon she found it dull sitting in the house or out by old Martin's side now the town was so empty, and was glad to accept Mrs. Harris's often proffered

invitation to her to step across and sit with her and Millicent. She found it pleasanter than she had expected.

Mrs. Harris, for some reason best known to herself, had taken Jenifer under her wing and professed the warmest affection for her new niece. She gratified the girl's vanity by admiring her clothes, the colour of her hair, the neatness of her hands and feet, asked with interest about her home and friends at Rosewall, and lost no opportunity of winning her confidence.

The mother and daughter were certainly strangely unlike. Jenifer thought she had never seen a greater contrast. While Mrs. Harris did very little sewing and talked incessantly, Millicent plied her needle with the most untiring industry and a speed which surprised Jenifer, never lifting her eyes from her work, and rarely speaking, excepting to correct some glaringly false statement of her mother's, or to say something kind of the persons who were so luckless as to form the subjects of Mrs. Harris's discourse.

The afternoon slipped away quickly, and Jenifer went home, promising to return the next day.

Insensibly she adopted the habit of spending most of her afternoons at Mrs. Harris's, especially when, as often proved to be the case, Millicent had gone out to do a day's sewing at the vicarage. What more natural than that

Mrs. Harris, in her solitude, should send for her niece and insist on keeping her to drink tea and have a chat, since it was so lonesome to be all by herself? But it did not seem to strike either her or Jenifer that Dick's mother often spent hours by herself, and that his wife owed her a daughter's duty.

Margaret sighed a little when she noticed the friendship which had sprung up between Jenifer and her aunt, but made no comment to any one. She was sorry, as she did not think Mrs. Harris's influence would be of any benefit to the girl, and a little grieved to see her deliberately turn away from herself and seek sympathy elsewhere. But, after her wont, she repressed such selfish thoughts, and said to herself it was a good thing Jenifer was so contented and cheerful in her husband's absence.

One day that Jenifer happened to be spending the afternoon with her aunt, old Martin remarked in his shrewd way, "'Tis an odd thing how Dick's wife has taken up with Sister Harris and Millicent. Now, I'd be the last to say a word against Millicent, for I believe she's as good a girl as ever breathed; but I must say, judging from outward appearances, I should have thought she was not one of Jenifer's sort. But I suppose young folks like young folks better than old ones all the world over; and it's natural enough, to be sure, when you come to think of it."

Margaret did not tell her husband that she

felt almost certain Millicent was not the attraction in Jenifer's eyes, and that she was in all probability engaged in making chair-covers up at the vicarage.

She was right all the same. Millicent was out, and Mrs. Harris's tongue, therefore, was even busier than usual, and took advantage of her daughter's absence to make uncommonly free with her neighbours' names and reputations.

Two days before, when her daughter was there, she had been pitying Jenifer for being left so much alone by her husband, and had concluded her remark by observing with a little smile that Dick's mother, although undoubtedly an admirable person, was scarcely a lively companion for a girl of Jenifer's age. Upon which Millicent had looked up from her work, and said in her rather stiff manner, but in a clear, firm voice—

“I have always found Aunt Margaret the kindest and best friend, mother; and when I was my cousin Jenifer's age there was no one with whom I spent an hour more pleasantly.”

Jenifer looked up with a surprised expression on her face, and Mrs. Harris seemed a little bit put out, and glanced uncomfortably at her niece, to see if she were going to take any notice of Millicent's remark. But Jenifer was silent, and presently Mrs. Harris said, with another malicious smile—

“Ah, but then, Millicent, you forget that you

were only poor dear Martin's niece, not her daughter-in-law."

Millicent fixed her grey eyes wonderingly on her mother, and did not seem to understand what she could possibly mean by this last assertion.

But the shaft was not lost on Jenifer, and she gave a bitter little laugh as she returned, "I see what you mean. Mothers-in-law are sure to be jealous of their sons' wives."

"Well, I don't know that it always follows," returned Mrs. Harris, fearful lest she should have said too much for her own credit. "But when a mother has an only son who is all the world to her, and she to him, as it was in Dick's case, I suppose it's but natural she should feel it when she sees her son's heart's set on another and she no longer comes first."

"Some mothers might feel so," said Millicent, taking up the cudgels with an earnestness which surprised Jenifer; "but I am sure Aunt Margaret never would. She is too noble a woman for that."

"Well, you needn't drop on to me so fine, Millicent," returned her mother, in an injured tone. "After all, what did I say? Only that she would feel what was but natural to a mother who loves her son."

Here Millicent changed the subject, and as Dick was likely to be back early, Jenifer soon went home; but Mrs. Harris's remarks rankled in her mind all that evening and all the next day.

So it was well known in Port Ruan that Dick's mother had hated his marrying, and evidently looked with no good will upon her daughter-in-law.

"But then," said a little voice which refused to be stifled in Jenifer's breast, "if this were really the case, would she have welcomed her so warmly, and always appeared so anxious to make her happy?"

And then another voice, the demon which Mrs. Harris's words had raised within her, seemed to answer, "Ah, but that's just her way—to appear outwardly pleasant, in order the more surely to entice her son's affections away from his wife, and make him cease to love her in the end."

These and kindred thoughts kept struggling in Jenifer's mind until she felt so miserable she was on the point of telling Dick the whole conversation, if only to relieve her mind. But she was restrained from this, which, under the circumstances, would have been far the best and happiest course, partly by a mistaken sense of loyalty to Mrs. Harris, whom she felt certain would not have desired her remarks should have been reported to Dick, and partly because she feared he might repeat the story to his mother, and so fill her with shame and confusion; and, besides that, he would most likely only shrug his shoulders and laugh at her if she did tell him.

So she said nothing, but she felt conscious

that a shadow had fallen across the first brightness of her married life ; and Jenifer had fondly imagined that no shadow would ever come to cloud her sunny life now she was married, and had expected to find in marriage the goal of all her wishes and the end of all troubles.

Dick, she thought, would be ready to give his wife her own way in everything ; and, having made up her mind that her path was to be all of roses, she felt angry and resentful now at the ghosts which Mrs. Harris's words had called up. Some sense of anger, too, with that good lady for venturing to make such remarks to her of her husband and mother-in-law mingled with her own vexation, and she almost thought she would not take her work to the house any more.

During one afternoon she persevered in her resolution, and, to Mrs. Jewell's surprise, sat indoors the whole day mending Dick's clothes, and making herself so pleasant, that Margaret began to reproach herself for having suspected Jenifer of preferring her aunt's company to that of her mother-in-law, and rejoiced to think she was now at length going to make some way towards gaining her daughter's affections.

But when, on the following afternoon, Mrs. Harris sent a message to Jenifer, begging to take pity upon her solitude, since she was ailing and could not leave her cottage, the girl could not refuse to comply with her request.

She found the good lady much taken up with a misfortune which had befallen her next-door neighbour's little boy, who had fallen head foremost into a well and narrowly escaped drowning.

This accident had at least the merit of occupying Mrs. Harris's tongue, and supplied her with a fertile topic for descanting on Hannah White's mismanagement of her children, and all she had done or left undone, as the case might be.

"But there's no telling how to get the upper hand of some children. They're that troublesome there's no keeping up with them, and as for speaking, why, it's just waste of breath! And then, again, there are others who never give you a moment's anxiety—no, nor a day's heart-ache; but it's not many such that I've seen. To be sure, Millicent hasn't been a bad girl, take her all in all; and Dick, I take it, has been as good a son to his mother as ever lived."

"He is very fond of her," said Jenifer, feeling as if it was her duty to bear this testimony to her husband and mother-in-law. "I know that, for it's often and often he talked of her to me before we were married."

"Did he, now?" exclaimed Mrs. Harris. "Well, I think Sister Jewell may think herself a lucky woman to have a son like him, and him with a wife like you; for it's not every one would

have suited Margaret so well, I can tell you that, my dear. Millicent and me we've often pitied the girl who'd be Dick's wife, or have to live under one roof with his mother. But you see, Jenifer, you're a girl of spirit, and you'll not be trampled underfoot or set aside for any one. And my advice to you is to stick up for yourself, and show you've no notion of playing second fiddle; and you'll be all the happier in the long run, even if you find it best to live apart from your mother-in-law. But as I said, I'm not afraid, for I see in your eyes you're a girl of spirit, Jenifer."

"I certainly know how to hold my own with most people," returned Jenifer, drawing herself up with dignity, as if to show Mrs. Harris was not mistaken in the good opinion which she entertained of her.

A good deal more of the same kind passed between the widow and the young married woman that afternoon; and in the course of conversation, Mrs. Harris had succeeded in filling Jenifer's mind with all manner of suspicious and resentful thoughts against her mother-in-law, and, what was worse, with a good deal of distrust of her husband.

What she did not know, as she drank in each word that fell from Mrs. Harris's lips, was that the grudge which Dick's aunt bore his mother was one of old standing, and dated back to one memorable occasion, many years ago, when, in

the warmth of her generous soul and anxiety to save her sister-in-law from misfortune, Margaret had ventured to warn her against a man with whom she had trusted her little all.

The man had turned out to be a scamp, and had proved the wisdom of Margaret's warning ; but Mrs. Harris had never forgiven the boldness of her speech on that day, and secretly harboured a jealous resentment towards her brother's wife from that moment—a feeling strengthened and fostered by that dislike which small-minded persons often entertain for stronger and loftier natures, with whom circumstances often bring them into contact.

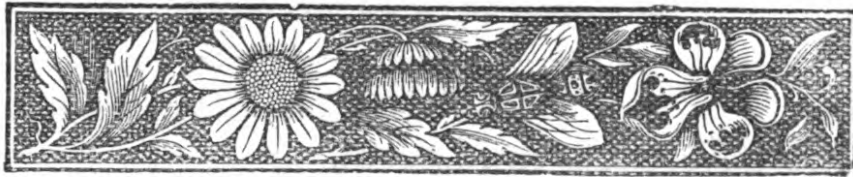
But Mrs. Harris was not without a certain cleverness, and managed to veil her sentiments so cautiously, and to clothe her spiteful insinuations in such affectionate language, that silly little Jenifer was completely beguiled, and when she rose to take leave, thanked her for the kindness and confidence with which she treated her.

One thing she was resolved upon, she said to herself as she went home ; she would show Mrs. Jewell she too had a will of her own, and rather than give in to her or anybody, she would insist on Dick leaving his parents' house and making a home of his own. And in this amiable frame of mind she walked down to the coast-guard station to look out for the boats.

The sky was clear, the air serene, the blue ridge of Lundy rose dimly in the misty horizon.

A white sail or two hovered in the distance, like some winged sea-bird among the deep blues and purples of the sunny waters. Only Jenifer's breast was full of tumultuous throbbings and anxious questionings.

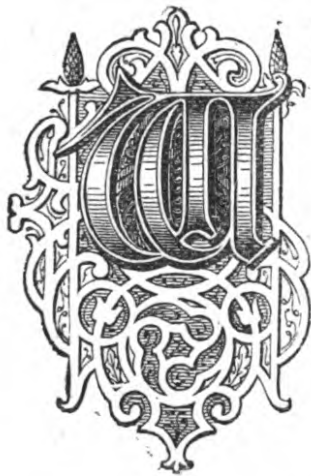




CHAPTER VI.

“It is the little rift within the lute
Which by-and-by will make the music mute,
And, ever widening, slowly silence all.”

TENNYSON.



WHEN the mine is laid and the explosives are prepared, the smallest spark is often sufficient to set them alight. So it was now with the hard and jealous thoughts which Mrs. Harris had planted in Jennifer's bosom. The poison had done its work, and was not slow in producing evil results.

For some days she said nothing, and Dick was too full of his own occupations, and too tired when he came home at night, to notice the change in her manners to his mother. As long as she met him with a kiss and a smile on his return, he was content, and concluded she

was as happy as ever. But one day he found out the difference, to his cost.

A spell of rainy weather had succeeded the brilliant October they had enjoyed. For days the wind blew fiercely from the north-west, and the rain fell in torrents. There was no going out to sea in this kind of weather, and Dick's temper was sorely tried.

One afternoon, when he was tired of pacing up and down the quay in oilskin cape and sou'wester, he suddenly remembered that there was a bale upstairs which had never been opened; it had been stowed away by some mischance among the empty casks during the unloading of the *Mermaid*, and only brought up from the quay a week afterwards by one of the lads. As far as he remembered, the package only contained old suits of clothes, and rubbish of the same kind; but there might be other articles stowed away among them, and at all events this would be a good opportunity to decide the question.

So he summoned Jenifer to his help; and they had a good laugh together over the various odds and ends which unknown hands had thrust into the tarpauling and half-worn jackets. There was an Algerian tray such as Jenifer had never seen before, and which, Dick said, would look like new when it had had a good rubbing; and there was an old tea-kettle, and a ship's lantern, and two or three pairs of boots, which he supposed must have

belonged to the mate, who left the vessel at Plymouth ; and a knife of his own, which he had missed, and did not think he had seen since he had been at Naples.

Then he remembered that he had employed a Neapolitan sailor, who had taken passage on board the *Mermaid* as far as Genoa, to do some odd jobs, and it struck him that he was probably responsible for the motley collection of articles collected in this mysterious bale.

Suddenly Jenifer gave a little cry of surprise ; for out of a small, carefully packed cardboard box, which had got broken on the voyage, something bright had slipped into her hand, and she held it up to show her husband.

It was a large silver-headed pin, beautifully chased, and set with a row of small turquoises, and with a chain of small silver links attached to it.

“ Oh, Dick ! what a pretty pin ! Fancy finding it here, in the foot of an old shoe ! ” cried Jenifer. “ Where in the world did you get that ? ”

“ Dear me ! ” said Dick, who, seated at the foot of the bed, with his hands in his pockets, was lazily admiring the discoveries which his wife made at every moment. “ To think I had forgotten that pin which I thought so precious, and was the only one I could find in Naples likely to be at all to mother’s taste ! She’s not one for trinkets, you know, but she likes a big pin to fasten her shawl, like that Indian one she

wears on Sundays ; and directly I set eyes on this one I vowed she should have it. It was a goodish bit of tin, too, but it's better than a trumpery thing I could never bear to see her wear. I say, Jenifer, that's her on the stairs now." And without further hesitation he opened the door, and called to his mother to come in and see the spoil from foreign lands which they were unpacking.

Margaret smiled with amusement at the sight of the strange collection of goods which lay piled on the floor where Jenifer sat.

"There's enough to stock a curiosity shop, 'pon my honour, mother," said Dick, holding up the tin kettle in one hand and a torn stocking in the other. "But just see, mother, what Jenifer's brought to light in the midst of it all, stowed away in the foot of an old shoe!" And he held up the silver pin to view before his mother's admiring eyes. "Look, mother! it's a real beauty, isn't it just? I got it in Naples for you, and then forgot it altogether; but, you know, it's to pin your shawl with Sundays. It's a pretty thing, isn't it?"

"It's too fine for me, my boy—too fine by half," said his mother, smiling through the mist of tears which dimmed her eyes, as Dick stuck the pin in front of her brown bodice. "To think you should have thought of me all that long way off, too! But I still think it's more fit for Jenifer than for me."

“Nonsense, mother!” said Dick; “it’s for you, and I shall take it very unkind of you if I don’t see you wearing it.”

“Well, my boy, I’ll wear it for your sake, if you will; and there’s no doubt but it’s a rare and beautiful thing,” said Margaret, still scarcely able to speak, in her happy wonderment to think her boy should have thought of his poor old mother in those foreign lands.

During this little scene between the mother and son Jenifer had not stirred from her seat on the floor, and had not opened her lips. She was wishing, as she sat there with tightly closed lips and down-dropped eyelids, that the silver pin had been lost in the depths of the sea. Not that she wished for it in the least; but she could not forget the look on the mother’s face when Dick had first spoken, and told her the pin was for her. It recalled all that Mrs. Harris had said of the mother and son being all in all to each other.

Both Margaret and her son had indeed been too full of each other to think of her that moment; but his mother kissed and thanked her now, as if the pin had been her present, and then hastened to show Martin the gift which gave her so much pleasure.

“There’s the clouds breaking, yonder,” said Dick, leaning out of the narrow jasmine-grown casement and looking towards the north. “We shall have it fine in an hour or so. Come, Jenifer girl, you needn’t sit there all your

days among this old truck; get your hat on, and we'll go down to the beach and see what's up."

Jenifer's only answer was a resolute and rather sullen refusal. But there was no accounting for women's fancies, and he was not one to trouble about them. If his wife chose to stay at home, he would be the last man to find fault with her. It was so new for Jenifer to decline to accompany him, he could hardly believe it. Dick looked at her in surprise. Then he shrugged his shoulders and began to whistle, as he walked off to find his oilskin cap and rough-weather garments; and presently Jenifer watched him sallying forth down the street in his happy, easy-going fashion.

For the moment she felt a pang of remorse that she had not followed him, and was on the point of calling out to him to wait for her; but her pride held her back, and she turned to fold away the clothes and other articles which lay strewn about the floor, and restore her room to some degree of order.

When she went downstairs old Martin was asleep in his chair, enjoying his daily after-dinner nap; and Margaret had gone out—no doubt, as she had said she must—to do some errands at the shop.

There was no one to speak to indoors, and Jenifer, eager to escape from her tormenting thoughts, put on her hat and went out too.

The sea was still rough, and the waves were

breaking in clouds of spray at the foot of the cliffs, and a watery sun tried to show his face through the scud that was flying about.

The fishermen were mostly standing in groups on the quay, idly chatting and watching the weather; but no one seemed disposed to put out to sea to-day, and the boats had been hauled close up under the rocks.

As Jenifer walked slowly downhill, she passed the post-office, which stood half-way down the street, next door to the Golden Lion. The mail had just come in, and Sally Goodman, one of the two sisters who managed the post-office, was looking through the contents of the bag.

Like most other things at Port Ruan, the sorting of letters was done after a primitive fashion.

The driver of the mail-cart emptied his bags on the threshold of Sally Goodman's door, which was, fortunately, spotlessly clean; and Sally herself inspected the pile and handed the letters one by one to her sister, who stood in the street ready to take them round.

There was no attempt at privacy in the whole arrangement, and as Jenifer passed by she heard Sally saying to herself in an audible tone—

“Mrs. Jewell. Stop, Mary Jane; there's one for Mrs. Jewell, up town. No; let me see—it's Mrs. Richard Jewell. Lawk-a-mercy! I never heard of her.”

Jenifer heard the exclamation, but as yet was so little used to her new title that she did not at the minute recognize this description of herself, and it was Mary Jane who was the first to set her elder sister right.

“That’s Dick the cap’en’s wife, of course, Sally. Here, hand it over quick, for there she goes herself.”

Jenifer took the letter eagerly, and a glance at the feeble, straggling handwriting told her that it was from her aunt at Rosewall. Although she had been at Port Ruan five or six weeks, this was the first letter she had received from home ; for Aunt Lispeth was a poor scholar, and took her time about putting pen to paper. This was a treat for her, and, determined to enjoy it to the full, Jenifer turned aside by a narrow footpath which led across the stream at the foot of the ravine, and walked along the sheltered side of the valley, away from the houses and people, reading her letter as she went. It was a very characteristic specimen of Aunt Lispeth’s style, and, saving for some account of the fowls and the new barn, did not enter into half the details which Jenifer longed to hear. Of course she talked of her headaches, and grumbled about the new servant-girl she had hired to do Jenifer’s work ; and she did not mention her uncle and the boys, excepting to say that they all sent their kind love.

But perhaps what went most to Jenifer’s heart was the little postscript at the end, to add

which Aunt Lispeth had kept the letter a whole day longer.

“Your uncle and me, and us all, are pleased to think you have such good parents and such a happy home at Port Ruan. Some day, please God, Jack says he’ll come and see you there.”

Jenifer shed a few tears over that part of the letter. It sounded strange in her ears to be congratulated on her happiness, when her mood just now was anything but a contented one. It reminded her, too, what a short time it was since she had written that letter, in which she spoke of herself as so entirely happy and satisfied.

What had happened in these few weeks to make her look on her life in so altered a manner? Circumstances had not changed around her. The first sense of novelty had, it is true, passed away, and she had settled down to an ordinary, perhaps somewhat monotonous, round of existence; but her surroundings were all unchanged. The cottage on the hillside was just the same, if the trees in the valley were mostly stripped of their leaves, and there were still a few flowers in the gardens. Some hardy sorts, indeed, blossomed all through the winter in this sheltered spot. And the people were each and all the same, in fact, that they had been that first day when she arrived and the world had looked so fair to her.

Was her husband hard upon her, or were his father and mother less kind to her than they had been at first? Jenifer could not honestly say "yes" to either of these questions. And yet she knew too well that the glamour which was upon her new home when she wrote that first letter had vanished, and that she herself now looked upon her surroundings with strangely different eyes.

It was Dick's fault, she said to herself, obstinately—Dick and his mother's fault. If he loved his mother more than any one else in the world, why had he asked her to be his wife, and leave her own friends for his sake? She had no notion of playing second fiddle, as Mrs. Harris had called it, to any one, and if she were not first in her husband's eyes, she should take care to let both him and her mother-in-law know what she thought of their conduct to her. And if Margaret, as she felt convinced, still wished to thrust herself between Dick and his wife, she should learn that it was at her own cost. But all the same, as she reasoned to herself in this fierce, uncontrolled spirit, an uncomfortable feeling that she herself might be partly to blame came over her.

Had she tried to do her utmost to please her mother-in-law? Had she even responded in the faintest way to the affection and kindness which from the first Margaret had shown her? Jenifer knew only too well that she had done none of these things. But, unfortunately, it

was her habit to run away from whatever she disliked, and this time she followed her usual inclination, and in hopes of distracting her thoughts she walked briskly up the hillside.





CHAPTER VII.

“Nay, I spake once, and I grieved thee sore ;
I remember all that I said.”

JEAN INGELOW.



AN old grey tower, the remnant of some ancient cliff-castle reared by our forefathers to defend the coast against foreign invasion, crowned the summit of the grassy down which closed in Port Ruan harbour on the southern side. It was nothing but a ruin now, but it made a picturesque object in the landscape, and served as a beacon for sailors as they rounded the rocky headland. Jenifer had walked there once or twice with Dick, and she thought to-day she would enjoy the wind on the breezy uplands and have a good view of any boats which might dare to put out to sea.

The healthy exercise and strong breeze brought a glow of colour into her cheeks and

helped to restore her equanimity. She climbed on until she had almost reached the highest point, where the tower stood, and paused to look at Lundy, which showed only too plainly in the distant horizon. Dick always said that was a sure sign of bad weather, and the rhyme of the fishermen came into her mind—

“When Lundy is high, it will be dry ;
When Lundy is plain, it will be rain.”

As she climbed the steep path among the gorse and heather which clothed the top of the down, she heard a voice singing in a clear high tone just above her. Suddenly, and to her surprise, she saw Millicent Harris sitting on the rude cairn in front of the old castle, with her hymn-book open before her. She closed her book at sight of Jenifer, and rose to meet her.

“Why, Millicent,” the girl said, “you’re the last person I thought to find up here; you always seem so busy. I never knew you took a walk anywhere.”

“Well, it’s not often I’ve time to spare. But I was coming back from Spratton, so this wasn’t far out of my way, and it’s a spot I love on a rough day, when the waves come dashing up down there, and the foam boils and curdles under the rocks.”

She paused, and led her companion towards the edge of the cliff, where they could look down on the snowy foam of the raging waves,

and feel the salt spray dashing in their faces as one after the other broke against the rocky wall.

“What a splendid place!” exclaimed Jenifer, filled with delight at the sight. “I never saw grander waves. And out here you seem to be in the midst of them. It is almost as if you were at sea.”

Millicent's thoughts were taking another and a very different direction.

“And to think, Jenifer,” she said softly, “that they rose like that when the little boat was tossing on the sea and the Lord Himself walked upon them! Think of that, Jenifer!”

The shy, pale girl spoke so earnestly, and her cheek glowed with such unwonted animation, that Jenifer looked at her in surprise, wondering at this sudden transformation.

“Ah, that was what you were singing about when I came up,” she said. “I knew it was some hymn I had heard before, but I could not catch the words.”

“I will say them over to you if you like,” replied Millicent.

“Fierce raged the tempest o'er the deep,
Watch did Thine anxious servants keep,
But Thou wast wrapped in guileless sleep,
Calm and still.

“‘Save, Lord, we perish!’ was their cry;
‘Oh, save us in our agony!’
Thy word above the storm rose high—
‘Peace; be still!’

“The wild waves hushed ; the stormy deep
Fell, like a little child, asleep ;
The sullen billows ceased to leap
At Thy will.”

She repeated the verses with the same earnest expression on her face.

“Only think, Jenifer,” she continued, as if carried away by some irresistible power—“only think what it must have been for those in the boat when He came walking on the waves, and through the raging storm they knew His face and heard His voice speaking the blessed words! Oh, what must they have felt that moment!”

Jenifer's eyes were fixed in amazement on the plain-featured face, which seemed almost beautiful to her now that it was transfigured by this strange emotion, which lifted the speaker, as it were, out of herself. It was a new experience to Jenifer, who knew little of religion but its outward forms.

Certainly she said her prayers once, and sometimes twice, a day, if she was not too sleepy at nights ; and she had been to Sunday school—well, perhaps not quite so regularly as she might have done if Rosewall had been a less remote place. She had learnt a good many chapters by heart, and a few hymns, and when she left school could repeat the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, and say the Catechism as well as most girls of her age.

But religion as a power in life, as an influence

which could thrill the breast with rapture, a faith for which men will live, if need be die—of all this Jenifer was absolutely ignorant. She could not understand such language from a girl so quiet and demure as Millicent, and she looked at her with some awe as she said—

“You’re a very good girl, Millicent.”

“Nay, Jenifer, you’d not say that if you saw into my heart,” Millicent replied quickly; and there was a pained look in her face as she spoke. “Oh, I am not good. You don’t know how weak and wretched I feel myself at times. But why should I, why should any of us, fear when He is near us—when He, the King, comes, mighty to save? And to know that, to feel Him near us—oh the joy of it, Jenifer, the joy of it!”

She clasped her hands together, and raised her eyes with an expression of such perfect peace, Jenifer thought she must really be face to face with some vision unseen by her.

But the next minute Millicent was walking by her quietly, and asking her in the most natural tone if she had seen her mother to-day.

“You are very good in going to sit with her when I am out, Jenifer,” she said simply. “I take it very kind of you, for it is not all girls who care to think of older people. And it has often come into my mind to say ‘thank you,’ Jenifer.”

“Oh, it’s not worth any thanks, Millicent,” returned the girl; “I do it because I like it.

Your mother's kind to me, and it's a change. At home I was busy all day long, and now—why, it's little enough I have to do, more particular when Dick's out all day."

"Yes, you must miss him," said Millicent, kindly. "But there's his mother: it's a deal of pleasure you must be to her, Jenifer, after all the sorrow she's had, too. I can't tell you how it gladdened me for her sake when I heard Dick was bringing a wife home with him."

"I don't know that she cares much about it, either," said Jenifer, coldly.

"Oh, I'm sure she does," replied Millicent. "How could it be otherwise, when she dotes on Dick as she does—and he her only child living?"

Jenifer said no more, and thought to herself that her cousin knew little of the real state of things. Soon they came to the point where their paths diverged, and Jenifer took the path which led down to the quay. Her cousin kissed her for good-bye, and said she was glad they had met.

"If you go to Spratton another day tell me, Millicent," said the girl; "for I should like to go with you, and hear you talk again about these sort of things."

Millicent seemed pleased, and replied that she should like to have Jenifer's company very much. Then she hastened up towards the upper town, leaving her cousin to pursue her walk, and to muse as she went over this strange

meeting. She was not sure if she quite liked all Millicent had said, but of one thing she felt certain. There was no pretence or hypocrisy about her. Millicent's religion was true and real, something which gave her more happiness and joy than anything else in the world.

Jenifer had known many other Bible Christians at her own home, but for aught she knew they were no better than other people. Anyhow, she had never met with one whose religion seemed so strong and living a thing as Millicent's evidently was. And she began to wonder if that sort of religion could be any help to her, if she should be at all happier were she more like her cousin.

She was still occupied with these serious thoughts when her quick eyes caught sight of two well-known figures walking along under the cliffs below her. The start of surprise which she gave was followed by a flash of passionate resentment, as she recognized her husband and his mother walking affectionately side by side together. That was where they were, then. This was why she had sought in vain for her husband along the quay and up the town, and this, too, was the reason why her mother-in-law was not to be found indoors or at the shop. For one moment she stood still, irresolute whether to turn back and retrace her steps up the hill. But it was too late to retreat now. Dick had already seen her, and was whistling to attract her notice.

Presently his mother disappeared into a cottage close to the beach where a crippled sailor lived, and Dick hastened up the steep path to meet his wife.

“So you’ve braved the winds after all, sweetheart,” he called to her gaily, as he drew near. “I was coming home to tell you your mother had more pluck than you, in spite of years and coming grey hairs. Here she’s been with me a mile and more along the shore—across the cove, too, where a pretty sea’s coming in. Pity you weren’t there too.”

“Thank you!” said Jenifer, scornfully, pushing away her husband’s hand, and starting away from him in a sudden access of fury. “If you think I’m coming when you go dangling after your mother, and show every one plainly that your wife’s nothing to you, you’re mistaken, I can promise you. Do you think I’d have ever said I’d marry you, if I’d dreamed you’d treat me like this? Not I. But I tell you what, Dick—if you go on like this I’ll show you I’ve a will of my own too; and I’ll go away, Dick, and not stay under your mother’s roof another day.”

This torrent of words burst from Jenifer’s lips with a sudden rush, and left her breathless. She stood there in the wind, with her eyes flashing and her lips trembling with anger. The force of her passion seemed to convulse her whole being.

As for Dick, he stood utterly lost and be-

wildered at this sudden paroxysm of rage, so unlike anything he had ever seen before in his wife. Then he gave a little laugh, and shrugged his shoulders, as he had done before he went out.

It was too absurd, too ridiculous altogether. If Jenifer had met him walking with another girl and had blazed upon him after this fashion, it would have been foolish, but there would have been some show of reason in her anger. But that she should take on because he took a walk with his mother, and should be jealous of her, was so utterly absurd and unreasonable that it was hard to take it seriously.

"Oh, you silly wench," he said, "is that all? Why, Jenifer, I didn't know you could put yourself in such a devil of a rage before. And all for nothing, too!"

"You call it nothing, do you?" said Jenifer in her most haughty manner. "I dare say it is nothing in your eyes, but I can tell you it means a great deal in mine. If you think that I am one of your poor mean-spirited creatures, ready to be trampled upon at your pleasure, sir, the sooner you find out your mistake the better. I can tell you that."

"Oh, Jenifer, do be reasonable," said Dick in an imploring tone, as if he were speaking to a spoilt child. "Don't go on as if you were a mad thing, railing at me before other folks' eyes, as if I'd ever given you cause to turn against me, all of a sudden like this. Just try

and behave like a sensible girl if you are going to walk home with me, or you'll have all the neighbours staring out of windows at you."

"I don't care whether they stare or not," returned Jenifer, tossing her head defiantly. "But I know this. - I have not the least intention of going home with you. I shall go back over the down as I came."

"As you like," said Dick, carelessly. "I've no objection if it helps you to recover your temper."

And while Jenifer proceeded to put her threat into execution and marched up the hill-side, he put his hands in his pocket and strolled lazily along towards the quay. Women were queer fish, there was no doubt of that. He had always rather prided himself on having steered clear of their company before, but now he had a wife of his own he supposed he must expect to be treated to some of their strange freaks.

But somehow he had never dreamt his little Jenifer would ever turn on him like that, and all for such an innocent, harmless deed. To do the sailor justice, he loved his young wife fondly, and would not willingly have vexed her for the world, but the sudden and unreasonable outburst of wrath on her part had roused him to make a warm answer, and now he was half sorry he had let her leave him in this angry mood, instead of making it up at once.

Ah, well! she would think better of it presently, he dared say. And meanwhile he would

go and take a look round the other side of the beach, where he saw a group of men watching a ship trying in vain to make for the bar, in face of a heavy sea and the strong wind which was blowing off the shore.





CHAPTER VIII.

“ And ever the fitful gusts between
A sound came from the land ;
It was the sound of the trampling surf
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.
The breakers were right beneath her bows,
She drifted a dreary wreck ;
And a whooping billow swept the crew
Like icicles from her deck.”

LONGFELLOW.



WHEN he left Jenifer, or rather when she left him, in that abrupt fashion, Dick Jewell had meant to be home before many minutes, and neither husband nor wife knew how many long and weary hours would pass before they stood face to face again.

The little group of seamen who were assembled on the quay were entirely absorbed in watching the course of the vessel which was making such desperate efforts to

enter the harbour. She was a French barque from Honfleur, probably on her way to Bristol, and had already suffered considerably in the last night's gale, and apparently lost part of her rigging already. Some of the fishermen who had crossed the bay that afternoon in a trawler had endeavoured to approach her, but their efforts had proved fruitless, owing to the heavy sea that was running at the Point, and the force of the wind that was now rapidly rising and bade fair to become as violent as it had been on the previous night.

For a whole hour Dick stood and watched the struggling vessel, now making a little way against the waves, then again falling back and yielding to their opposing might.

Meanwhile the gale had risen again and had become almost a hurricane, and as the darkness of a November afternoon gathered on the scene, heavy showers of sleet and rain began to fall, hiding the unhappy boat in mist and cloud, and blinding the eyes of the anxious watchers on the shore. Every minute the situation became more critical, until at length a momentary pause in the torrents of falling sleet and a break in the clouds revealed the luckless vessel once more, no longer striving to make her way, but driven on the shore beyond the Point. There was a moment of painful suspense and uncertainty. Then through the darkness and the noise of the gale came the report of a gun.

There could no longer be any doubt of the

ship's fate. It was plain that she was sending up signals of distress, and was in sore need of help. She had gone ashore on those terrible rocks, where so many ships had been wrecked and so many lives had been lost.

The only hope of saving her crew was to send out the lifeboat; and without a moment's delay the Ruan men hurried the boat out, and prepared to go to the rescue of the shipwrecked sailors with the utmost speed possible.

Foremost among the men who made ready to man the lifeboat was Dick Jewell. The captain of the *Mermaid* was too good a sailor, and too well known in the place, for his help not to be eagerly sought on such an occasion. Twice before he had been out in the lifeboat, and each time had distinguished himself by his coolness and daring.

There was no time to waste now, no time to go back home and bid farewells; but the very name of the lifeboat was enough to wake terror in the hearts of the Ruan women, and in all the blinding sleet and gathering darkness, mothers with infants in their arms, and maidens and children, were seen hurrying down to the quay, asking eagerly the names of the men who were going.

Soon a little company of trembling, tearful women were assembled on the quay, and were seen clasping husbands' and brothers' hands in a last passionate good-bye, holding up tiny children to kiss their fathers ere they went.

Dick looked wistfully at the familiar faces around him, hoping to see his wife ; but Jenifer was nowhere to be seen, and with a sad heart he buckled on his belt and made ready to go.

One woman in the crowd who knew him well caught sight of his searching gaze, and called out, "It's your wife you want, Dick? Bless her heart, she doesn't know you're going. Here, Ted, run as fast as you can, and tell young Mrs. Jewell her husband's going in the life-boat, and bid her come quick as lightning if she'd see him before he starts."

That moment a pair of fond arms were flung round Dick's neck, and he felt a silent tear on his cheek.

"Mother," he said joyfully, "I'm glad it's you. We're just off; there was no time to come up the hill. Tell Jenifer not to fret, and keep a good heart; we'll be back presently. I've been out on many a rougher night, and it's only just across the bay, so it oughtn't to take us long."

"God bless you and bring you back, my boy!" was all Margaret could say through her tears.

The boat was already lowered, and swiftly and silently the men took their places.

"Tell Jenifer," said Dick, and he too stepped into the boat and seized the oar.

"Now then, my lads," cried the coxswain, "look sharp; off she goes!"

A thrill ran through the group on the quay,

as the boat and its gallant little band plunged into the raging surf. Women were sobbing and praying aloud; old sailors, with rough weather-beaten faces, and strong men who had dared death many a time, were not ashamed to be seen shedding a tear.

Every eye was fixed on the boat as it hung for a moment suspended, as it were, on the crest of a curling wave, and then dropped again and was hidden from sight as the drenching foam swept over it.

Then it rose again, like a bird-like living thing, and held its course onward right manfully against furious sea and driving wind; while the spirits of the watchers on the quay revived in their turn, and more than one deep, heartfelt "Thank God!" was heard.

The sound of hurrying feet behind made a momentary diversion, and not a few of the women looked round as Jenifer rushed along the narrow quay, and gave a wild cry as she saw the lifeboat ploughing the waves before her.

"Not gone!" she cried passionately; "he isn't gone! Dick—my husband, I mean! Oh, call him back! Oh, stop, Dick, for one moment—stop!"

"Poor wench!" said a kind voice close to her, that of the woman who had sent her boy to fetch her. "Don't take on so; they'll come back safe, please God."

"But I never said good-bye to him. Oh, why did not somebody tell me?" she cried.

“And now he is gone, and perhaps I shall never see him again!” And Jenifer burst into a passion of weeping.

“My poor child,” said Margaret, tenderly, and she tried to take her hand in hers, “where have you been? I never dreamt but what you were here.”

“Why, at home,” returned Jenifer, impatiently, “wondering why he did not come. How could I tell he would go?”

And her tears burst forth afresh as her mother-in-law gave her Dick's message, and explained how she had been on her way home from her visit to the sick fisherman when the alarm had reached her, and had hastened to the quay.

“You know I had left you with him, my dear, so I never thought but what I should find you here.”

Jenifer made no answer. She could not tell her mother-in-law that she and her husband had parted in anger, and that she had gone home over the hill by herself.

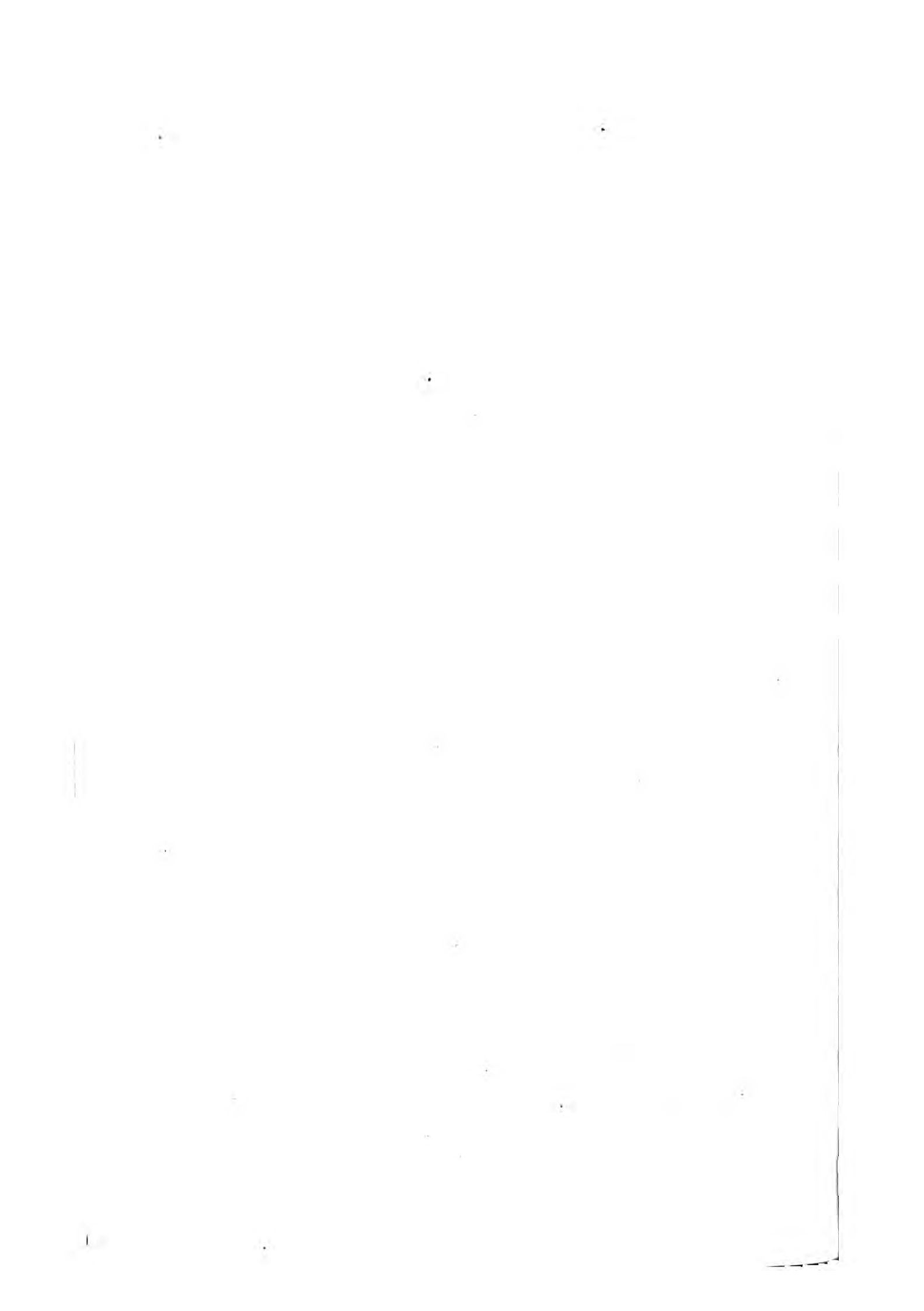
It was horrible to feel she had let Dick go like that in the lifeboat, which was now only to be seen as a black speck on the white waste of waters; horrible to know that he was out there in the rush of the waves and the howling blast, struggling to reach the shipwrecked crew.

“Oh, it was my fault!” she cried, in an agony of grief—“all my fault! And now he will be drowned! Oh, I know he will; and I shall



"AND NOW HE IS GONE, AND PERHAPS I SHALL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN!"

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never see him again—no, not to tell him how sorry I am!”

But her words were lost in a fresh squall of blinding sleet, and fell unheeded on the air.

The night was drawing on fast, and nothing could now be seen of the lifeboat, or yet of the shipwrecked vessel; but still the group of fishermen and women lingered on the quay, careless of cold and wet, peering into the darkness, in the vain hope of seeing the boat return.

How long they waited there, Jenifer never knew.

No entreaties could draw her from the spot; and all Margaret could persuade her to do was to take shelter from the falling rain and snow in a cave where the fishermen stored their nets, close to the quay.

In all Port Ruan no one slept that night but children who were too young to know of the danger to which the brave crew of the lifeboat were exposed; or old people whose senses had become deadened by age and weakness.

Even Martin Jewell sat up all night, and from his cottage door listened for a sound which might tell of his boy's return. And Margaret spent her time, now with him by the fireside, now with Jenifer on the quay, cheering both with her calm face and hopeful words.

At the very height of the storm, when even the old sailors shook their heads and looked grave, and when the men in the boat had to cling to the thwarts and hold on for dear life,

as they tried to fling their cable to the shipwrecked crew; just then, when human help seemed vain, Jenifer heard a voice beside her, murmuring the well-known words—

“Thy word above the storm rose high—
‘Peace; be still!’”

“Oh, Millicent,” she said, with a half-sob, “I did not know you were here. You know he is gone—Dick, I mean—on board the lifeboat.”

“I know it, dear one,” said Millicent, in her low earnest voice—“I know it; but He is with them too, in all the storm and blackness, and where He is all must be well. Aunt Margaret told me just now you were here, and so I hurried down. She is gone up to poor uncle, Jenifer, and I thought you might be lonely, and so I came.”

“Thank you, Millicent,” said the poor girl, pressing closer to her cousin, and laying her cold damp cheek against her arm. “It was very good of you to come. Oh, I have been thinking so often of that hymn what you said to me on the down, Millicent. And the worst is I never saw him before he went. And it was all my fault. Oh, Millicent, you don’t know how bad I’ve been—so bad I don’t even dare pray for him.”

Millicent kissed Jenifer’s cold brow, and rubbed her hands in hers. “God is gracious and merciful,” was all she said, “full of compassion and pity to all who call upon Him.”

“If he will only come back,” poor Jenifer

repeated in passionate tones, scarcely heeding Millicent's consoling words; "if only he will come back, just for me to tell him I never meant it—tell him I loved him all the while as well, nay better, than I had ever done before. Oh, say he will come back, Millicent; say you think so, dear Millicent," she urged, in a voice of piteous, despairing entreaty.

"He is safe, dear, in God's hands," said Millicent calmly. "He can calm the waves and the winds at His word. Yes, Jenifer, I believe Dick will come back to you."

"God bless you for that, Millicent; God bless you for saying that," was the impulsive girl's answer, as she clasped her cousin's hand, and clung to her more tenderly than ever.

After that they sat together in the dark cave without speaking. In such an hour the mere sense of feeling a friend close to her was some comfort. And since poor Jenifer's blind jealousy made her shun Dick's mother, Millicent was the best friend she could have at this awful time.

Soon the sound of voices on the quay brought them out again, and a spark of hope revived in Jenifer's heart, as one of the fishermen said there was a slight lull in the storm.

For a short space of time the wind ceased to blow with so much violence, and the moon, struggling through the swift clouds which swept past her, and at times totally hid her face, threw a momentary gleam on the tossing waves.

By the light of that gleam the watchers on the quay saw what they had seen two hours ago—a black speck tossed to and fro by the breakers like a feather; now vanishing out of sight as it glided into a deep furrow, now rising again and hanging for a moment on the top of a wave before it took another plunge. But there was this difference, that now the black speck became larger and was more clearly seen. Another moment, and it was plain the lifeboat was on its homeward course, still struggling with the fury of the elements, but making steady way onward.

There were five minutes of breathless suspense among the little group, and then a lad, whose eyes were keener than most of those around, cried—

“There are more in the boat—ten, twelve, fourteen. You can see 'em now as plain as a pikestaff.”

“Thank God!” said a clear woman’s voice, which Jenifer knew to be Millicent’s.

Another five minutes of hard, desperate striving with the waves, and a cheer, faint indeed, but still ringing above the noise of the storm, reached the ears of the watchers on the beach, who in their turn sent up a shout of joy.

“They’ve saved them—you may be sure of that,” said one of the boys; and the next moment the coxswain sang out at the top of his voice—

“They’re all saved!”

All saved ! How the joyful cry echoed along the shore ; how it rang up the street and into the houses of the little port, filling hundreds of hearts with glad thanksgiving !

Margaret heard it as she stood at her door, and cried to her husband, who took off his cap reverently, and thanked the Almighty for His son and the rest.

And Jenifer heard it, and broke into sobs as she clasped the hand which Millicent threw round her.

The scene which followed was one of joyous haste and confusion, of welcome and congratulation and cheerful bustle, as the exhausted Frenchmen, saved from a watery grave, but half dead with cold and exposure, were borne to land by their brave rescuers.

They had been found clinging to their shipwrecked barque, which lay on its side, the main and mizzen masts gone, and the hulk fast going to pieces. One or two had injured an arm or hand in their desperate endeavours to hold on to the wreck ; but all were alive, and, as far as their broken English would allow, showed themselves beyond all measure grateful for the care they received, as they were hurried into the nearest houses to be warmed and fed and tended.

But among all the hurry and confusion, Jenifer was one of the first to rush down on the little beach ; and as Dick was helping the exhausted captain of the French barque to

stagger to land, he felt a soft cheek nestling close up to his face, and knew that it was his wife.

He was not sorry to feel his labours were ended, and he could come back to the warm welcome and loving hearts that were awaiting him.

And when they two and Dick's parents were together once more at the warm fireside under their own roof, and Dick had told them the story of the rescue, and how hard it had been to get near the wreck at all, and how twice over the lifeboat had been hurled against her by the breakers and had been forced to sheer off, and once the boat had been full of water to the thwarts, but at length the cable had been got on board and the men drawn into the lifeboat,—when the whole thrilling tale had been told, Jenifer hardly knew how to be thankful enough that her husband was safe back with her. She herself was worn out with fatigue and anxiety, and could scarcely keep her eyes open, but she did manage to whisper before she went to sleep—

“ Oh, Dick, I thought I should never see you again! And to think I had let you go like that! It almost broke my heart. But I'll never speak to you no more like I did to-day—or was it yesterday?—never, never, not if I live to be a hundred, and have grey hair.”

As for Dick, the events of the last few hours had dispelled all other memories from his mind ;

but he kissed his little wife, and thought he had never loved her better. And Margaret, at her bedside, thanked God for the lives that had been saved, and the brave deed which her boy had helped to do that night.





CHAPTER IX.

“ But the tongue is a fire, as you know, my dear,
The tongue is a fire.”

TENNYSON.



HE storms which shake and vex the moral atmosphere too often leave deeper and more enduring traces behind them than the tempests of the natural world. The day after the gale the sun will shine as serenely as before, and the blue waves will sleep under the cliffs as calmly as though they had never been driven to and fro by the wind, or known the fury of the storm. But the poisoned dart of a bitter taunt or an angry retort has still power to sting when the lips which launched the venom are cold. The too hastily uttered word leaves a mark which years cannot efface, and which may darken half a lifetime with its shadow.

A week had passed since the terrible storm when the *Honfleur* barque had been wrecked on the rocks outside Port Ruan, and her men had been saved by the gallant crew of the life-boat; and already the little fishing-town had resumed its ordinary aspect, and the incidents of that night were almost forgotten, and only now and then recalled by some of the chief actors in the work of rescue.

The French sailors, finding their vessel had gone to pieces on the rocks, had left for Plymouth, thankful to escape with their lives; and the only trace of the wreck to be seen was the black hulk of the poor *Rose of Honfleur*, still standing, like some gaunt spectre, in the sea, with its broken timbers and spars of wood floating about it.

Every now and then the waves washed up some fragment of ropes or sails which had belonged to the ship; and the Port Ruan children amused themselves paddling over the rocks at low tide, in search of old plates and boxes, and pieces of iron and tin, which they found buried in masses of tangled seaweed.

But even these scanty remnants of the wreck soon disappeared, and the sailors of Port Ruan forgot the *Rose of Honfleur* and her sad fate, or only counted her among the too numerous victims of that perilous coast.

Jenifer did not forget the horrors of the storm so easily, and at first she felt as if the memory of all she had suffered that night

would make her value her husband's love, and the calm happiness of her life, as she had never valued them before.

But in a few days the old spirit woke up in her again ; she began to look on her mother-in-law in the same jealous, defiant manner, and to resent Dick's love for his mother as if it were an injury to herself.

And Margaret, who had at first tried to shut her eyes to Jenifer's silence, and put it down to a very pardonable timidity, was forced to acknowledge that it was plain her daughter-in-law wished to keep to herself. Naturally, she sighed a little over the cold way in which Jenifer repelled all advances on her part.

There is, in truth, no keener disappointment to affectionate natures than to find the love they long to lavish on another soul met by an unconquerable barrier of hardness and coldness, which seems to resist all gentle influences.

Still she persevered, believing that a day might yet come when the girl would be in a softer mood, and her heart would open to love and sympathy.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days," she repeated to herself again and again, as she contrived some new device for helping or pleasing Jenifer.

One day she would suggest some walk or little expedition to Dick, by way of making a change for his wife ; another she would ask Millicent Harris, pleased to see that Jenifer

was on friendly terms with her cousin. Or else she would try to beguile the long winter evenings by recalling stories of Dick's childhood, and telling Jenifer of his boyish feats of daring and adventure, and describing the admiration which they excited among his comrades.

But to all these separate attempts, Jenifer presented the same stony front, and Margaret confessed to herself that, if the girl was ever to be brought round to a gentler frame of mind, it would not be until "after many days."

Still, as long as Dick was happy, and there appeared no lessening of affection between him and his wife, she said to herself that all was well, and that Jenifer's behaviour to herself was of comparatively small consequence.

One day, indeed, when the girl seemed more than usually peevish and fretful, Margaret said to her son—

"I don't know what to think of Jenifer, Dick. It seems at times as if she were—well, not exactly unhappy, but out of gear, here. Does it never seem to you that you might do better in a home of your own? I was thinking yesterday afternoon, now Mark Cole's house on the hill stands empty, perhaps you might have a mind to settle there."

Dick looked at his mother a minute, as if to see if she were speaking seriously or not. Then he laughed his honest, good-natured laugh, and replied gaily—

"I see you're getting tired of us, mother, and

want your son to shift for himself; but you won't find it so easy, I can tell you that, mother. How do you think I'm going to sea, and feel I'm leaving Jenifer all by herself? Why, she'd go daft before she'd been a week alone!"

"But do you really think it is best for her?" continued his mother, earnestly. The more sure she was of Dick's love for his old home and his parents, the more bound she felt to press her point for his wife's sake. "Remember, she's but a young thing; and young things sometimes like to feel they've a place which they can call their own, and where no one else has a right to meddle with them."

"And who meddles with Jenifer here, I should like to know?" asked Dick, with a kindling eye. "Why, mother, if any one else heard you, they'd think you were the veriest shrew in all the country round, instead of being the best and kindest-hearted woman in all the queen's dominions."

"I don't know, Dick," returned his mother, doubtfully, pleased, in spite of herself, at these marks of the perfect confidence which her son still placed in her.

"I don't know, but it has sometimes seemed to me, specially of late, as if Jenifer got out of sorts, and moped, and then the thought has crossed my mind she'd be better off with a home of her own, away from father and me. You know, Dick, well enough," she continued, with a voice which, in spite of her efforts,

sounded a little shaky and unsteady—"you know there's no joy to us like having you and her under the same roof as us; but you know too, I'd rather ten times be without you, than feel you were not doing just the best thing for her. So if ever it seems to you it would be best to go, why, all I've got to say, my boy, is, don't you stop for our sakes, or think for one moment that your old parents must stand in your way."

Dick heard his mother's words, but their only effect was to make him more fixed than ever in his conviction that there was no place like the old home, and no surer shelter for his young wife in the long separation which he foresaw that summer.

He had never been particularly clear-sighted into other people's ways and feelings, and, as he always said, knew too little of women to understand one-half of the small causes which constitute their happiness. So he said nothing to Jenifer, but went on his way, whistling after his sailor-fashion, careless of rocks ahead.

And so nothing came of Margaret's generous suggestion, and, feeling that she had delivered herself of the load that weighed on her conscience, she was easier in mind and happier as to the future.

As the spring came and the days grew warmer and longer, and the daffodils and blue-bells made the gardens of Port Ruan gay, Jenifer's spirits revived in their turn.

Many were the plans for the summer which she and Dick made. He would be setting out on longer cruises along the coast now, and whenever he had occasion to go south, Jenifer should go with him on the *Mermaid*, and he would put her ashore at St. Ives or somewhere in those parts. And then she would go up to Rosewall and walk in one morning all unexpected, when they were having breakfast, or the boys were doing the milking. How her uncle would stare, and her aunt would give a little gasp and say, "Why, it's never Jenifer!" And her uncle would say, "I'm blest if it isn't the girl herself! Well, my honey, and so you're come back to us again." And then there would be great shouting and laughing, and the boys would come running in, and blind Tom, the old cowman, would put in his head at the door and say, "Glad to see you, young missus." And Frank Trembarth would step up in the evening and stand on the hearth and look at her as he used to do, and perhaps give a low sigh and linger a moment with his hand in hers, as he said good-bye. And of course she would talk of her husband, and show Frank and all the others how proud she was of him, and tell them all how he had helped save the Frenchmen off the shipwrecked barque that winter night.

These were pleasant pictures, and Jenifer dressed them up to suit her own fancy, and took delight in repeating them to Dick.

Unfortunately, the first cruise which the

Mermaid took that spring was to Bristol, and as the cargo of slate and timber was a heavy one, and the weather was unsettled, Dick decided in his own mind that he would not take his wife, and that she would be much better at home, and agreed to take two extra sailors, who wanted a passage to Bristol, on board. He did not inform her of this beforehand for fear she should make any objection, and it was only the day before the start that he first told her of his decision.

“And you mean to say you are going to leave me here after all; and you expect me to sit still at home while you go gadding about Bristol town, and don't come back till Heaven knows when?” she said, in her most indignant tone. For she had been looking forward to this trip for weeks past, and it had never once occurred to her that she might be left behind and not accompany her husband.

At first she tried her utmost to see what persuasion and entreaty could do to induce Dick to change his mind and let her come, but when she found that he was resolute her temper got the best of her, and she broke into vehement reproaches.

“I think you're very cruel and unkind,” she said angrily. “I don't believe you care for me a bit.”

“Don't go on like that, Jenifer,” returned Dick, firmly but good-humouredly enough. “You know quite well what you say's not true.”

But you must see it is impossible for me to take you on board this time, especially now I've given these fellows my promise. You wouldn't have me break my word, would you?"

"I don't see it a bit," said Jenifer, refusing to notice his concluding words, and acting very much like a spoilt child in her vexation. "I am quite sure you could if you chose, but you like to vex me; and you don't care a straw if I'm happy or not. I believe it's all your mother's doing. She's put you up to this trick just to spite me, and because she knew I'd set my heart on going."

It was Dick's turn to be angry now. He seldom lost his temper, but when he did he showed that he was not a man to be trifled with.

"Jenifer!" he said sternly, "how dare you say such things? I tell you what—my mother's a deal too good for the like of you and me; and what's more, if ever I hear you say another word against her, I'll take you right up to her and make you beg her pardon."

"It takes two to do that, if you please," said Jenifer, in a provoking tone. "I'll just tell you, Dick, once for all, I've played this game long enough, and I'm tired of being treated like a baby; I'll not stand it any longer. And if when you come back you don't take me away with you, I'll just bolt when your back's turned, and leave you and your mother to fish for yourselves."

It was the second time Jenifer had indulged

in this threat, and Dick had good cause to be out of patience with her. The angry recriminations which followed on both sides may be imagined, and were not pleasant to hear or to repeat. Dick's temper was thoroughly up by this time, and he too indulged in bitter retorts and reproaches, and in his anger uttered many things best left unsaid, and in cooler moments which he only remembered to repent of.

It was fortunate for his mother's peace of mind that she was out at the time, but there were other ears in the house on whom this angry altercation going on in the kitchen was by no means wasted. Mrs. Harris, as ill luck would have it, had stepped in that afternoon to ask after her brother's rheumatic limbs, which had been giving him a good deal of trouble the last few days; and if from her seat in the front parlour she could not catch every word that passed between the husband and wife, she heard quite enough to know they were having a violent quarrel.

"That's not Dick and his wife I hear in the kitchen?" she said to old Martin, who was fast getting drowsy over his pipe, and was also too deaf to pay much heed to the loud tones which now and then proceeded from the other room. "Seems to me they're having a tidy bit of wrangle."

"And what if they are, sister Harris?" said the old man, testily. "It's nothing new, at any rate."

“Isn't it?” said Mrs. Harris, greedily. “It's early time yet; but, to say the truth, ever since the first day she came I did think I could see a bit of a temper in Jenifer's eye. It's a pity, too, for I'm fond of the girl.”

“She's not a bad sort,” returned Martin; “but, like most other women, she's a tongue in her head, and she knows how to use it pretty free when her's crossed.”

“And Dick's not one to be hard on her, either,” said Mrs. Harris, in her softest, most insinuating tone. “Now, some men are always nagging at their wives, and nothing spoils a girl's temper so much; but your Dick's not one of that sort, we all know.”

“Dick's as honest a craft as ever sailed,” said the old sailor. “There's none as will gainsay that, I suppose; but, like more than one of us, young and old, men and women alike, he went and married all in a hurry one day before he'd had time to turn round and look about him, and it's true of him what's been true of so many before him, ‘Marry in haste, repent at leisure.’” An observation which was not altogether to his sister's taste; for Mrs. Harris's own marriage, as Martin very well knew, had been a case in point, which he himself not infrequently quoted as an apt illustration of the proverb.

So she only said a little spitefully, “It's odd, too, for I always understood Margaret to say that Dick was wrapt up in Jenifer, and her the best of wives; and I must say I thought they

knew how to agree better than they do, it appears."

While she was still speaking, Dick's step was heard in the passage, and he walked out of the house, slamming the door rudely after him, and making the old walls shake.

"My eye and Betty Martin!" ejaculated Mrs. Harris. "This is a pretty to-do! Why, I thought he'd bring the house crumbling about our heads! Goodness, Martin, I don't know how you feel. I know I'm just all anyhow. Here's my cap tumbling off my head, and my knitting on the floor, and my glasses a-going after them if I don't take care, and myself all of a shake and flutter." And she moved about as she spoke, dropping one thing after another in her zeal to collect her property. "Well, to be sure, things are come to a queer sort of pass in this house," she reflected, as she seated herself once more in her chair, and began fanning herself vigorously with her pocket-handkerchief, after the unusual amount of exertion she had taken. "I'm glad you don't worry more about it, Martin. There's some folks I know would take it a deal more to heart, to be sure; but it's a good job you're not of their sort."

Martin's countenance certainly did not show any signs of extreme anxiety about his son and daughter-in-law's affairs, and it was evident to his sister that he was fast subsiding into a peaceful slumber in the recess of his armchair.

She waited a few minutes longer, and then, as Jenifer did not appear, and old Martin in his somnolent condition was an even less lively companion than usual, she gathered up the contents of her work-basket and left the house.





CHAPTER X.

“Happy thou art not ;
For what thou hast not, still thou striv’st to get ;
And what thou hast, forgett’st.”

SHAKESPEARE.



HE next day the whole of Port Ruan was edified by the account of the scandalous matrimonial dissensions which took place under Martin Jewell’s roof. Mrs. Harris’s tongue had not been idle the evening after she had called on her brother, and although she had not been far from home, she had dropped in on one or two neighbours on her way up the street, just to take breath, as she said, in the steepest part, and had made good use of her time.

As may be supposed, the story had not lost in the telling of it, and the scene which Mrs. Harris described had been sufficiently vivid and dramatic to make an exceedingly thrilling narrative.

No one knew what went on under that roof,

she had said. She had often heard of husband and wife falling out; yes—shaking her hand ominously by way of giving emphasis to her words—if the truth must be said, her own married life had not been the happiest on record; but never in all her days had she heard such language as Dick and his wife used, and that in her presence and that of their own father.

It really was a pity, when two people had everything in the world to make them happy, and enjoyed advantages which she and poor dear Sam had never known. But, alas! so it was, and she only knew she should be sorry to hear a child of hers speak to her husband as Jenifer had spoken to Dick in her own hearing.

All the men and most of the women in Port Ruan took Dick's part, as was natural, since they had known him from a child, and were all convinced, as his father had said, that a more honest craft had never lived; but a few of the women were sorry for Jenifer, and ventured to express their opinion. After all, she was but a child, and her home and friends were far off, and it might well be that her husband, for all he was such a capital sailor and knew the coast as well, was a bit hard upon her. At all events, they were inclined to look pityingly at her when, the next morning, the *Mermaid* sailed out of the harbour, and Jenifer was left leaning disconsolately against the stone wall of the little quay.

After that scene with her husband which had afforded Mrs. Harris's tongue so much occupation, Jenifer had preserved a sullen silence, and Dick had not again alluded to the disagreeable subject.

Perhaps he was a little ashamed of his own share in the business, and thought he had treated his wife harshly. Anyhow, he felt sure that angry words did no good, and that in these unpleasant matters the old saying held good, "Least said, soonest mended." The breeze would soon blow over, and he would return from his cruise to find Jenifer as bright and loving as of old.

It never struck him that she could really wish to leave his parents' roof, and he attached no importance to the words she had spoken in anger, although, when he actually bade her farewell, he was somewhat disappointed at the coldness and silence she maintained to the last. But then, as he always said, women were such queer customers there was no fathoming their meaning. And once afloat, whatever trouble he had left behind on shore was soon cast to the winds and forgotten.

Neither he nor any one in Port Ruan had the smallest notion of the tumultuous sea of passions that raged in Jenifer's breast; of the fierce anger and resentment and jealousy which, long cherished there in secret, was every moment on the point of breaking forth.

During the next few days she seldom opened

her lips at home, and there was something so stern and defiant in her looks that her mother-in-law, whose heart yearned towards her in their mutual loneliness, scarcely ventured to allude to Dick's absence.

Even the company of Millicent Harris, whom she always treated as a friend, seemed distasteful to her now. Jenifer steadily avoided meeting her, and spent most of her days alone in her room, or out on the wilder part of the moors and down, brooding over her imaginary wrongs.

"Jenifer, my wench," said Mrs. Harris one afternoon, as she entered Martin Jewell's house with a beaming air, "I suppose you know it's a fortnight or more since you've set foot in my place, and it wouldn't be strange if I had a bit of a grudge against you. But I'm not one for taking offence, and I don't mean to quarrel with you, leastways not this time. But I've good news for you, my girl. My nephew George Harris, him as was sister's son to my poor husband, and has a clerk's place in the slate-quarries at Delabole, he's come for a week's visit, and I want you to come and meet him this evening. Millicent will have it you're fretting for Dick, now he's gone; but I says to her, 'If it's true, more's the reason for bringing her out.' Don't shake your head, Jenifer; George is capital good company, and a cheerful hour or two will do you all the good in the world."

Jenifer replied rather haughtily that she did not want any cheering up, and that she got on

perfectly well without her husband, but had no objection to walking back with Mrs. Harris if she wished for her company.

To say the truth, Mrs. Harris was so fond of talking of her nephew George, his cleverness and perfections, that she had inspired Jenifer with a wish to see the young man, and she was not unwilling to take this opportunity of escaping from her own gloomy thoughts.

"I'm sure you'll like my nephew," repeated Mrs. Harris for the twentieth time, as she and Jenifer walked together up the hills; "every one likes George. And he is particularly anxious to make your acquaintance; and I fancy knows your parts, for he's a great traveller is George, although he's never been to sea either, but has lived on shore all his days. Here he comes to speak for himself," she continued, as a young man, with his hat jauntily set on one side and a forget-me-not in his button-hole, advanced to meet them.

There was nothing very striking in his appearance. He had a fair share of good looks, and thoroughly understood the art of making the most of himself. Consequently, he rarely failed to impress others with a sense of his superiority, and had the reputation of being a well-informed and intelligent young man. He told stories well, and had seen enough of the world to be an amusing companion; and as he was free with his money, and seldom presented himself at his aunt's door without bring-

ing her a present—if it were only a pair of gloves, or a yard or two of ribbon or lace for her caps—he was always a welcome visitor and a great favourite with Mrs. Harris.

On this occasion he exerted himself especially, and what with his stories of Cornish folk, and descriptions of his own adventures in lonely walks across the Bodmin moors and other wild regions, he kept every one alive, and made Jenifer laugh more than she had done for weeks past.

The young wife's pretty face captivated him, while the interest with which she listened to his stories gratified his vanity, and prompted him to tell fresh ones for her amusement.

She, on her part, was bent on showing Mrs. Harris and Millicent that she was not fretting for Dick, and, grateful for any distraction which took her out of herself, she talked away in her liveliest strain. Soon they discovered that they had more than one friend in common, and that George knew the neighbourhood of Jenifer's old home.

“So you come from the south?” he said, taking advantage of a pause in the conversation to seat himself on a low stool at Jenifer's feet, and evidently bent on making himself agreeable in the eyes of this new and pretty visitor, whose bright cheeks and black locks attracted his fancy.

Mrs. Harris was fussing backwards and forwards into the kitchen to prepare supper,

and Millicent had gone out to fetch another loaf from the shop, so they were by themselves, and George continued, not sorry to be rid of his aunt's perpetual questionings—

“I was down in these parts not a month ago—near St. Ives it was. I had business at the foundry at Hayle, and there I fell in with a young man I used to know when my father lived at Truro. Trembarth is his name. Perhaps you know him,” he added, seeing a responsive gleam in the girl's eyes.

“Not Frank Trembarth!” Jenifer cried joyfully. “Of course I know him; he was our nearest neighbour, and I remember playing with him—well, as long as I can remember anything. And do you mean to say you were staying with him the other day?”

“Indeed I was,” replied George, gratified to light on this mutual acquaintance; “and now I come to think of it, it must have been your home he showed me on the hill. He told me the nicest girl in Cornwall used to live there.”

Jenifer laughed and blushed a little, not at all displeased to find she was still remembered by her old friend.

“Did Frank Trembarth tell you that?” she said. “You see, we played together and we went to school together, so he couldn't well help knowing me.”

“He said what a pity it was you had gone away and married a sea-captain—those were

his words, I know. But I never dreamt it was Dick Jewell he meant, or thought I should find you here in Port Ruan," continued George. "Don't you find it mighty dull here?"

"It is rather dull now my husband is away," said Jenifer, without noticing the shadow of a smile which crossed the young man's face. Of course Mrs. Harris had taken care to inform him of the unkind gossip which she had helped spread abroad about Dick and his wife's quarrels. "But, then, it was not exactly lively at Rosewall either."

"You should make Dick take you to Bristol with him," remarked George. "That's a fine place, if you like. I almost wonder you didn't go with him this time. It seems a thousand pities a man should leave his wife behind when he goes to a big place like that. And look at all the folk he knows there, and all the coming and going in the docks—to say nothing of the shops. You would wonder at them, for they are a sight worth seeing. I suppose they beat London."

Jenifer bit her lip, but made no reply. Her bosom swelled with fresh anger as she listened to George's bombastic description. Of course Dick ought to have taken her with him. She knew that quite well, and even this man, who was a stranger to her, thought so too.

"If I were you I would have insisted upon it," George went on. "I'll be bound," he added, in a lower tone, "Dick couldn't say no to such pretty lips as yours, and you his wife."

Millicent's return interrupted the conversation and spared Jenifer the necessity of a reply, but these few careless words which George Harris had let fall helped materially to strengthen her deeply rooted conviction that she had been ill treated by her husband.

If Frank Trembarth had married her she was certain he would never have neglected and thwarted her in this fashion. But the worst part was that she felt morally convinced that the whole thing was her mother-in-law's doing, and that Dick would have allowed her to accompany him if his mother had not interfered, no doubt, Jenifer said to herself, out of jealousy.

As long as this belief rankled in her mind, Margaret's attempts to win her confidence proved worse than fruitless. Each fresh appeal which her mother-in-law made to her, every kind word which she addressed to her, were, in Jenifer's jaundiced eyes, part of a cunningly devised plot to rob her of her husband's love and keep her apart from him.

She went home that day in a fiercer mood than ever, and if George Harris, who insisted on seeing her home, had known how little she was attending to the fine speeches and skilfully turned compliments he addressed to her on the way, he might have saved himself a good deal of trouble.

Long after he had left her, and every one in Port Ruan was sleeping, she sat up turning

over the wildest schemes and ideas in her head.

On one thing she was determined. She would not remain under the roof of Dick's parents, to be neglected by her husband and pitied and scorned by the rest of the world. Since he had refused to listen to her prayers, the time had come for her to assert her independence and act for herself.

But if she left Port Ruan, and the shelter of her father-in-law's roof, where was she to go? If she returned to Rosewall, her appearance without her husband might arouse disagreeable remarks; and besides which, this would be only, as she thought, playing into her mother-in-law's hands, and putting a still greater distance between herself and her husband. Should she take a bold step and, without telling a creature in Ruan, go straight to Bristol and join Dick there?

The idea pleased her fancy, and there was a reason which made the plan appear more feasible in her eyes. The eldest of her aunt Lispeth's children, her cousin Susan, had married many years ago, and was now settled with her husband and a large family of children in Bristol. Jenifer had scarcely seen her since she was a child, but knew her cousin Susan to be a kind, warm-hearted woman, who used to make a great pet of her in old days. Not long ago, at the time of Jenifer's own wedding, Susan had sent her a kind message, begging

her to come and see her at Bristol, if ever she came as far as those parts. She had kept the address carefully, and now it seemed to her this would be an excellent opportunity for her to take advantage of the friendly offer, and so escape from Port Ruan and rejoin her husband. But since she had not heard from Dick since his departure, and knew that it was uncertain how long the *Mermaid* would be kept at Bristol, she determined to wait a few days until she received a letter from him. During this time her schemes would have leisure to ripen before she put this daring plan into execution. Who could tell, indeed, what a day might bring forth?





CHAPTER XI.

“The little rift within the lover’s lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner’d fruit,
That, rotting inward, slowly moulders all.”

TENNYSON.



DURING the week that followed, George Harris managed to spend a considerable portion of his time in Jenifer’s company. He looked in of a morning and sat with Martin on the bench in front of the coastguard station. In the afternoons he found out her favourite haunts on the beach or rocks, while some part of the evenings at least were spent at Mrs. Harris’s house.

Margaret did not altogether approve of Mrs. Harris as a companion for Jenifer, and felt somewhat fearful of her influence over the girl; but, on the other hand, she trusted Millicent implicitly. She was glad, too, that Jenifer should have some cheerful company in her husband’s absence. As for George, she knew little of him, and it never crossed her simple,

unsuspecting mind to think any harm of her sister-in-law's nephew. Once, indeed, old Martin, who disliked George's brilliant ties and general foppishness of dress, asked her if she did not think it was dangerous for that young Harris, with all his airs and graces, to be for ever dangling about the place after Jenifer, and observed that, if it were not for his sister's sake, he would be the first to order him off the premises.

Even then she was more amused than alarmed, especially when Mrs. Harris informed her one day that her nephew thought Dick an uncommonly lucky fellow to have such a wife as Jenifer. But before the week was out, the even tenor of their lives was disturbed by an incident which banished George Harris, his red ties and airs and graces, completely from the minds of both Martin and his wife.

They were sitting at dinner in the back parlour one day with Jenifer, when Sally Goodman knocked at the door with a letter for the younger Mrs. Jewell.

"It's from Dick at last!" Jenifer exclaimed, as she tore open the envelope and began to devour its contents with breathless haste.

Martin continued his meal without disturbing himself, but Margaret waited to hear the news of her son, with her eyes fixed on Jenifer.

To her surprise the girl did not speak or move for a few minutes. Then she folded the letter again deliberately, tore the sheet across,

and walking slowly towards the fireplace, flung both the envelope and its contents into the flames without a word.

Margaret gave a smothered exclamation as she watched this strange proceeding, and her heart sank within her at the sight of Jenifer's face as she walked back to her place at the table. The girl's brows were knit together, and made one dark line across her face, and her expression was not pleasant to see.

"Well, my girl, what's the news?" asked old Martin, looking up for the first time from his plateful of suet-pudding. "Heyday! what's the matter now?"

For Jenifer's eyes were flashing like angry swords, and the colour had spread over her brow and temples, as she spoke in a voice that trembled with rage.

"You may well ask, indeed, when it's you and your son who have done it all! You've tried your hardest to keep me away from him, and now he writes word that he's gone on to Wales, and it's likely enough he'll not be back till June. That's what he says, and I hope you'll be pleased with it. As for me, I think he may as well stop away altogether, then; for I'm sure it won't be me that wants to see him back, if that's all he cares for me. But it's your doing—I know it is—from first to last, because you hate me and never wanted him to have me."

And, without waiting for a reply, she had rushed out of the room, leaving the door to

close behind her with a heavy bang. Martin was the first to recover from the shock of this furious torrent of words which had been so suddenly launched at him and his wife by the passionate girl. For although he had asked the question which provoked this fierce assault, it was Margaret on whom Jenifer's eyes were fixed, and to whom she directed her bitter speech.

"Is the wench clean daft?" he said, taking up the knife and fork which had dropped from his hands in his amazement. "Or doesn't she know that a man must attend to his work, and take whatever comes handy, and that a sailor can't be for ever tied to his wife's apron-strings, like some of your landsmen? Nay, Margaret, don't you go after her," he continued, as his wife rose from her chair and looked towards the door, as if doubtful whether to follow Jenifer or not; "you just leave her to herself, and she'll come round. If you meddle with her while she's in this fransy, you'll only get more kicks than ha'pence for your pains."

"Oh, Martin," said Margaret, with a deep sigh, as she sat down again, obedient to his words, "I never thought to see the day when Dick's wife would turn upon us like this. And to think of her burning his letter, too! Oh, Martin, what are we to do? What will happen next?"

It was touching to hear the strong woman, who generally both thought and acted for her husband, pleading for his help and advice in this

piteous manner; and there was a softened look in the old sailor's eye as he replied—

“Do, my wench? Why, nothing but just sit still. Wait a bit, and she'll come to her right mind again. It's a stiffish breeze, but it'll blow over all the sooner, maybe. And if it doesn't, it's no sort of use to fret. She must go her way, I take it, and leave us to go ours.”

The philosophy of this speech was undeniable, but it hardly satisfied poor Margaret or allayed her alarms.

“I know it's no use, Martin—I know,” she said sadly; “but all the same one feels one would like to do one's best by her poor child. She's young and a bit hasty, and just now she seemed like some wild thing, as if she hardly knew what she were about. And I'd like to put out my hand and help her, for Dick's sake, Martin—for Dick.”

“It's no use,” said Martin, doggedly. “It's no sort of manner of use. I always told Dick long ago that the first thing to look for in a wife was a good temper; but he was in too great a hurry, and he wouldn't stop to think. And now he must take the consequences. A fellow can't eat his cake and have it too. He's made his bed and he must just lie upon it. Seems to me, all the same, it's us who has to do that part of the business.”

The old man chuckled to himself over this last notion, which tickled his fancy considerably.

But Margaret had no mind to laugh. Jeni-

fer's words were still ringing in her ears with their angry vibration, and she could only wonder in silent terror what the next scene of the drama would be.

It was not till late that night, however, that she saw Jenifer again; for that afternoon Millicent came down to ask her cousin to return with her, to meet a friend or two whom Mrs. Harris had asked in to spend the last evening of George's visit.

At first Jenifer refused to go, but afterwards she changed her mind, glad of this excuse for escaping from home and avoiding her husband's parents after that last stormy scene.

That evening, strange to say, she appeared gayer than she had ever done. She rattled on in a careless, thoughtless manner, and with an almost noisy merriment which surprised her companions. But there was a forced air about her levity, a hard ring in her laugh which did not escape Millicent's observant eyes. She had noticed the troubled look in her aunt Margaret's face, and had been aware of a certain perplexity that was visible in old Martin's rugged countenance. The atmosphere of Dick's home was disturbed, it was evident, and forebodings of evil haunted Millicent with a vague alarm, even while Jenifer laughed and joked that night. It was late when the gathering broke up, and George escorted Jenifer home down the street.

Every one was in bed, and the stars shone

down through the trees of the quiet hillside and on the sleeping houses, while the sound of the waves breaking far down on the beach below fell softly on the ear with their long-drawn musical murmur.

Just so had the stars shone and the waters whispered another evening, when one September night, not so long ago either, Jenifer had stood by Dick's side at the open door with her husband's arm round her, and her hand fast locked in his.

That evening—how well she remembered it all!—she had told Dick for the twentieth time that he was dearer to her than all the world beside—that, come what may, she would never, never cease to love him. Then it had seemed quite impossible that she should ever do aught to vex him, ever knowingly distress him and those dear to him by the least word or deed of hers.

And now—now she was meditating a step which would wound him and his mother in their deepest, tenderest affections; a step which would bring sorrow and shame, if not actual disgrace, on this bright and smiling home.

As she stood there, with her hand on the latch of the door, scarcely heeding the farewell words which George Harris was speaking, the memory of that last scene rose vividly to her mind, and the startling contrast between her feelings then and now forced itself rudely upon her mind. She was thankful when the foolish youth, of

whose company she had by this time grown very tired, left her to her own reflections. Something prompted her to stop and think what she was doing before it was too late and she had taken the irrevocable step.

She had made up her mind that afternoon to wait no longer. Dick's letter had been the last drop in the cup of her imaginary wrongs, and it was now filled to overflowing. From the moment she had read and burnt those lines the course before her was clear. She would run away from his home and parents without a moment's delay. No one, not even Dick, should know where she was gone. Perhaps, if he thought she were dead or as good as dead to him, his old love would revive, and he would be sorry, and repent that he had treated her so badly; and then, if he tried hard to find her, she might reveal her hiding-place to him.

And then there was some vague hope in her mind that perhaps afterwards they might begin life afresh in some new place, where no one could come between them and spoil their happiness. But whatever happened she would be avenged on her worst enemy, and her mother-in-law should find out to her cost how deeply she had wronged her.

Jenifer said this to herself as she opened the door and went in from the starlit skies, and which in their clear stillness seemed to look down coldly on her fiery mood.

A light was still burning at the upper

window, and presently she heard her mother-in-law's voice, speaking in its firm, gentle tones from the top of the narrow staircase.

"Is that you, Jenifer?" she said; and as she came down the girl replied in a more courteous tone than usual—

"Yes; I did not know it was so late. I am afraid I have kept you up."

"No, my dear," said Margaret, kindly. "I hope you have had a pleasant evening at Aunt Harris's. I like sitting up, you know, when most people are in bed. It reminds me of the old days when Dick and his brothers were put to bed, and I could sit still for a bit and think."

She spoke so kindly, and her gaze met Jenifer's so frankly, and the tone of her voice was so absolutely free from anything like reproach, that for a moment the girl's resolution was shaken, and as she followed Margaret upstairs an uncomfortable suspicion crossed her mind that she might be judging her mother-in-law wrongfully.

What if, after all, Dick's mother did not hate and despise her; what if she really cared for her happiness, and the jealous dislike and plots against her happiness, in which Jenifer so firmly believed, were but the creations of her own brain?

She felt a sudden inclination to rush into Margaret's arms then and there, and confess everything, and beg her forgiveness both for the angry thoughts she had nourished and for

the desperate intention which she had formed. But, as ill luck would have it, old Martin's voice was heard just then, calling out in hoarse, sleepy tones to know what was wrong, and why his folk were not all in their beds at this late hour. The creaking of the old stairs had woke him in his first sleep, and with a hasty good-night to Jenifer, Margaret hastened upstairs to pacify and reassure him.

The mere sound of the old man's scolding voice had been sufficient to drive away all Jenifer's remorseful feelings. It was not that she disliked him—on the contrary, until the last fortnight she had always been on particularly good terms with him; but his imperious tones reminded the impulsive girl that she was living under her father-in-law's roof, in subjection to Dick's parents, and brought back the sense of her supposed wrongs and of her husband's neglect.

She felt the old hardness and coldness come stealing over her again, and stood still for a few minutes, uncertain how to act. Should she give up her scheme for to-night and wait for another day? But that moment's hesitation, the sound of Martin's voice, and Margaret's disappearance, had been sufficient to turn the scale. Her better self gave way to the old feelings of jealousy and anger, of resentment and eager desire for vengeance, at whatever cost. Her mind was made up now.

The golden opportunity had drifted past and

was gone. It was too late, she felt now, for further hesitation or retreat, and with a sudden energy she set about making preparations for the flight which was to take her far from her mother-in-law, and from all she hated and feared in her present life.





CHAPTER XII.

“An exile through the world who bade thee roam?
None; but I wearied of a happy home.”

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.



IN the dim light of early morning, while the grey dawn was stealing slowly over sea and shore, Jenifer lifted the latch of the door noiselessly, and slipped out of her father-in-law's house.

She had a few pounds sewn up in her dress which Dick had given her before he left, and carried what clothes she thought absolutely necessary packed in a bundle slung over her shoulders. Besides this, she had taken the precaution to slip a crust of bread and a couple of sea-biscuits into her pocket, and thus slenderly equipped she set forth on her flight.

No one was stirring yet. The night dews lay heavy on the grass and flowers, and the paved stones of the street were wet and glistening. Here and there an early bird sang from the leafy thicket behind a down;

in the ferny hollow the brook was babbling noisily over the stones. Once a cock crowed, and his shrill voice made Jenifer start and look guiltily round. But the green shutters remained closed, and no one looked out from the low windows of the white houses on either side as she passed along with quickened step and watchful eye.

She had only one other alarm, and that was as she passed Mrs. Harris's house. George, she knew, was starting at an early hour to go by coach along the North Cornwall line on his way back to his work in the Delabole quarries, and so she was not surprised to see the blind of an upper window drawn up and the lattice thrown back.

It was Millicent's window, Jenifer knew, and she glanced anxiously up through the red blossoms of the japonica which grew thickly round the little casement as she passed, and almost thought she could distinguish the outline of Millicent's form, in her dark-brown bodice, kneeling at her bedside. But then she turned the corner, and was safe out of sight as she plunged into the oak woods which spread along the ravine.

She knew that her best hope of escaping discovery lay in avoiding the road which the coach took, and she had decided to walk across the downs as far as Wenstow, where she had heard Dick say a mail-cart started for Launceston three times a week. There she could take

the train, and once on the main line she would be soon at Bristol, where she had made up her mind to find out her cousin's abode, and remain with her as long as she thought fit to keep out of sight, or until the *Mermaid* should return from Swansea, and she should reveal herself to her sorrowful, penitent husband.

The scheme was a wild one for a girl who had been brought up in a remote region of Cornwall, and had never been further by rail than from St. Ives to Penzance, or possibly, on some rare occasion, to Falmouth. But Jenifer was in a wild, reckless mood. She had given the reins to her impetuous nature, and, however ill directed, her courage and determination were unbounded.

She walked on briskly over these bleak hills without meeting a living creature saving the flocks of sheep here and there cropping the pale-green sward, following the white path which led now by the creeks and rocks of the shore, now inland across the moor.

Once, when she had reached the top of a high hill, she sat down to rest a few minutes on a stone, and, looking back, she saw the white houses of Port Ruan nestling among the woods and rocks, close to the blue-green waters of its winding harbour.

There was the old church, with its low grey tower, where she had often walked on Sundays with Dick and his mother, and where to-morrow Margaret would have to go alone. And there,

too, like white specks on the distant sea, were the fishing-boats sailing out into the bay, rounding the Point where the lighthouse stood, and where the black hulk, which was all that remained of the *Honfleur* barque, reminded her of that terrible winter's gale.

Jenifer could not look down on these familiar objects without feeling something of a pang of regret for these scenes which belonged to the first happy weeks of her married life. But those days were gone for ever, she said. There was no longer any happiness for her in Port Ruan, and she rose and pursued her journey down the steep descent into Wenstow.

The white houses and the grey church tower dropped behind the hill, and the last links with her old life were severed.

Soon she found her way among the houses of the straggling street to the door of the inn from where the mail started. The cart with its yellow wheels was already in the yard, and the horses were harnessed, and the ostler was on the top of the box, stowing away packages of the most varied description—sacks of potatoes and flour, barrels of beer, and the heavy, iron-bound boxes of a commercial traveller. All of these had to be disposed of as could best be managed, since at this time of year this was the only communication which Wenstow enjoyed with the civilized world.

Jenifer was hot and thirsty after her walk, and, having secured her place by the mail-cart,

she asked for a cup of milk, and drew out the bread and biscuits with which she had provided herself. Before she had finished her scanty meal, the driver, with mail-bags under his arm, had issued from the doors of the inn, where he, too, had been refreshing himself, and Jenifer had only time to clamber up to her seat at his side before he caught up the reins, smacked his whip, and was off.

A mail-cart in these parts is rather a lumbering kind of vehicle, and the first part of the road was steep, so Jenifer had abundance of opportunity both of surveying the country and of becoming acquainted with the driver.

He was a talkative, genial man, apparently a great character in the neighbourhood, from the smiles and greetings which welcomed him on all sides. Everybody knew Bobby Frewin, as he was called along the road. He was "hail-fellow-well-met" with all in turn, and had a nod and a smile for every creature he passed, were it man, woman, or child; while his alacrity in taking off his hat to the girls who looked out from the windows was only equalled by the anxious solicitude with which he inquired of mothers as to the health of their teething babies.

"Have a rug, young woman," was his first friendly salutation to Jenifer, when they had fairly started, and were half-way up the first hill; "you'll find the wind keen on the top of the moor, and you're not over well clad;" and he glanced at her thin jacket as he spoke.

Jenifer accepted the offer gratefully, and presently Bobby returned to the charge.

"You're a stranger in these parts, I take it," he said, eyeing her more closely. "Never driven along my road before, eh? No, I thought as much. It's fifteen years, come Lady Day, that I've driven the mail regular backwards and forrards, and I've a good memory for faces. But it's a splendid track o' country. There isn't such another, it's my belief, in all England. You just wait a bit and you'll see."

They had reached the top of the ascent, and looked down over a wide expanse of moor and fields which lay below.

"There, now, you haven't seen such a view as that in all your travels before," said the eloquent Jehu, pointing with his whip to the long ridge of granite crags in the far distance. "Yonder's Dartmoor, and here over on your left, where the sun's shining on the fields, that's the edge of Exmoor. It's miles you can see on a clear day like this. Now, my duckies, here's for you!"

This last appeal was addressed to his horses, who responded to his endearing voice by setting off at a brisk trot down the hill. On they went across the country at a swinging pace, turning corners sharply, and only relaxing their pace when they came to rising ground.

The air was exhilarating, the sun shone brightly; and all around them stretched the swelling moorland, with its wide acres of barren

ground, broken by golden patches of furze and marshy pools, whose waters reflected the light of the shining skies. Here and there big rolling clouds threw purple shadows over the vast stretch of open country, and far behind them the narrow streak of sapphire sea lining the shore was still in sight.

It was an agreeable change after Jenifer's long walk; her spirits revived, and she began to be amused with her companion's vivacity, and the amount of business and conversation which he carried on with the inhabitants of the villages through which he passed.

At one point he stopped to drop a pair of ploughshares behind a hedge where their owner was to find them; at another a child ran out from a lone cottage to fetch a can of vinegar which Bobby handed down, not without sending his respects to "grandmother at home."

Sometimes he threw a paper out as they passed a field, and he shouted to a labourer who was turning over the clods to fetch it. Sometimes he sent a note flying in through an open window. Once he shouted to a man who was driving some pigs along a lane—

"How's Tim Stannard's cow?"

The pig-driver was apparently deaf, for he gave no response at first, and Bobby had to repeat his question, this time in a stentorian voice which would have roused the Seven Sleepers themselves.

The man looked round and replied, with a solemnity worthy of the occasion, "Dead, Bobby—dead as a nail!"

"I never! That's bad luck, if you like," said Bobby, resuming his seat and shaking his head sympathetically. "He bought that cow, Tim Stannard, not three weeks ago; fifteen pounds he gave for it, and it's been ill ever since. But Tim's always down on his luck, poor fellow! so much the worse for him."

After that the events of the road became less stirring, and Bobby had more leisure to bestow upon his companion.

"You're a Port Ruan girl?" he asked in a friendly tone.

Jenifer gave a little start, but was so completely taken by surprise, that, in spite of all her intentions to conceal her identity, she replied, "Yes, I am."

"Ah! I thought I saw the name on your luggage;" and he put his foot on Jenifer's bundle.

Then she noticed for the first time, to her surprise and vexation, that the cord which she had used to secure her package had a card which bore the words "Port Ruan" affixed.

It had evidently belonged to some one on board the *Mermaid*, and she resolved to take the first opportunity which presented itself to tear off the treacherous label.

Meanwhile her companion continued: "It's a tidy little place, Port Ruan—most too near

the sea for my taste, though ; and there's as good people in it as ever lived. Were you there, I wonder, that night last winter, when the lifeboat went out and saved the Frenchmen that were wrecked off the Point ? ”

Jenifer had it on the tip of her tongue to say that her husband was one of the sailors who manned the salvage boat, but she stopped herself in time, and simply replied in the affirmative.

“ That was a gallant thing if you like, lass. But it's terrible, too, for women who stay at home, to see their husbands and sweethearts go out on such errands. You'll find it out for yourself some day, my girl, if it's ever your lot to marry a sailor.” Perhaps he noticed the blush which spread over Jenifer's cheek, for he added, “ My stars ! I believe you've one in your eye already. Well, I won't say don't marry him, for they're better husbands than most, and if they're a deal away at sea they make it up to their wives when they're ashore. But, talking of Port Ruan, I've been there more than once ; and I've a kinswoman lives there now—a niece of my grandmother's she was, if you can put that into words. I dare say you know her by name—Margaret Jewell ; and her husband, Martin, he must be an oldish chap by this time, and he was middling when I was there last, and that's some three years ago.”

At the sound of the familiar names which met her ears thus unexpectedly, Jenifer trem-

bled so violently she had to cling on to the box behind her, and she was grateful to a flock of noisy geese who happened to start up behind a hedge that moment, and with their hissing and cackling effectually diverted Bobby's attention.

But a little further on he began again. "Poor Margaret! she was a handsome girl—the beauty of Ruan, I've heard my father say they called her; but she's had a hardish life of it, and many troubles. Folks tell me she's never been the same since her boys were drowned; that nearly broke her heart. But there's one left who's a ship of his own, and an uncommon smart fellow, people say; and a Ruan fisherman who was up our way at Christmas-time told me that he was married, too. You don't know them, then?" he said, seeing that Jenifer preserved a rigid silence.

It seemed as if she were doomed never to escape from Port Ruan—as if perpetual questionings as to her past life were to follow her, and Margaret's name were to vex her like a ghost with its continual presence.

"I've heard of them," she said abruptly, and then hastily asked some question as to the hour when they should be at Launceston.

"I forgot you were a stranger," said Bobby, kindly. "Let me see; I'll tell you where you can get a bit o' dinner, and put you in the way of the station, where I know a porter who'll find out your train. You're going to Taunton, I think you said?" For Jenifer had pur-

posely avoided any mention of Bristol, and was not, indeed, at all sure how far she could get on her journey that day.

But although her companion did not again allude to Port Ruan and its inhabitants, the journey on the box of the mail-cart, which had begun so pleasantly, afforded her little gratification now, and she was glad when it was over and the honest driver bade her farewell.

“A good journey and a safe return,” were his last words, as he deposited her bundle by her side on the platform; “and when you’re back at Port Ruan, don’t forget to tell Margaret Jewell that Bobby Frewin asked after her, and hopes she and hers are all well.”

A message, thought Jenifer to herself, which he would hardly have given her had he known how small were the chances that it would ever be delivered. So far she had at least proceeded on her journey without actual discovery, and now she was on the line of rail there was not much fear that her progress would be stopped. But this last encounter with her mother-in-law’s kinsman had disconcerted her a good deal, and served to awaken afresh the pricks of her guilty conscience. If only he had known, she could not help thinking, if only he had known who it was to whom he gave that message, what would he have thought of her?

Bobby Frewin would indeed have stared had he been told that the pretty, modest young

woman who shared the box of the mail-cart with him that spring day was Captain Jewell's wife--none other than his friend Margaret's daughter-in-law, who was running away from home and friends, and she not six months married! But happily he did not know, and it only seemed to him that she was a little strange and unaccustomed to travelling, and in his good-natured anxiety to do her a good turn he asked his friend the porter to put her into a carriage and tell her where to change for Taunton.





CHAPTER XIII.

“Fears, like the needle verging to the pole,
Tremble and tremble into certainty.”

W. S. LANDOR.



THAT Saturday was a dark and terrible day in Margaret Jewell's life—a day unlike any other which she remembered during the whole course of her existence.

Since the disaster in the bay, that fearful blow to which she looked back as the one great sorrow of her life, no grief which had befallen her was to be compared to the agony of mind which she felt when she found that her daughter-in-law had run away from home. Even that old sorrow, which had crushed all the joy out of her life for years afterwards, had not come with the same bitterness. For there at least was no disgrace, and here was shame, perhaps ruin, to her only son's wife, and consequently to that son himself.

It was some time before Jenifer's flight was discovered.

Margaret knew she had been out late the night before, and took care not to disturb her at the early hour when she rose. Little did she or any one else in Port Ruan imagine that by that time Jenifer was already many miles on the way to Wenstow.

She even went out after breakfast to do some necessary jobs, and helped her husband down to his favourite seat that he might watch a brig which had just come in from the north.

When she returned she supposed Jenifer must have made her appearance in her absence, and gone out and sat down herself to go on with a bit of darning she had to do. But then she noticed that the teapot, which she had put on the hob to keep warm, and the small pat of butter which she had carefully saved for Jenifer's breakfast, was still on its fresh vine-leaf on the shelf, and for the first time an anxious misgiving crossed her mind. Perhaps the poor girl was ill; and Margaret remembered that her face wore a flushed and disturbed expression last night, and reproached herself with not having been upstairs before to see after her.

She hastened to repair for her neglect, and after knocking twice over at the door of Jenifer's bedroom without obtaining any response, put her head in and called her by name. What was her surprise to find the room empty, the bedclothes carefully folded down, and the girl herself gone!

A terrible suspicion flashed through her

mind, and then she said to herself, perhaps, after all, Jenifer had only gone out without any breakfast. Her box was still there, and most of her clothes were hanging upon the cupboard, but the drawer of the table was open, and the watch which Dick had given her when they were first married was gone. So were the coral brooch and earrings, which she only wore on Sundays.

Margaret looked round the room, in the vain hope of seeing something which might allay the fears which filled her breast with a vague alarm. Then her eyes fell on a scrap of paper—the fly-leaf of her Prayer-book it was—which, for want of anything better, Jenifer had torn out, and on which she had written these few words—

“I am going away. Don't try to look for me, for you will not be able to find me. It is all Dick's fault for leaving me here. I shall be happier away from here, and you will be glad to be rid of one whom you hate. If he asks where I am, tell him that I am dead.”

All Jenifer's passionate nature and vindictive feeling was revealed in these short, bitter sentences. As Margaret read them she felt the full weight of their hard meaning. It meant that all her efforts and prayers for the last six months had proved useless, and worse than useless; that her kindness, her thousand little endeavours to make Jenifer happy, even at the cost of her own inclinations and feelings,

that all the affection which she had proffered so freely, had been rejected and met with the blackest ingratitude.

And worse than this—ten thousand times worse—it might even mean that Dick's happiness was blighted, his fair fame overshadowed; that his wife had broken her marriage vows, and done him the most irreparable wrong that a woman can do her husband.

For, in the first shock and horror of her discovery, Margaret not unnaturally, considering the circumstances, looked on Jenifer's flight in the darkest light, and supposed that she had fled with another man. Had not George Harris been with her every day that week, and had he not accompanied her home at a late hour the night before? What else could she think?

It was no wonder that she stood still for some moments, utterly crushed and paralyzed by the weight and suddenness of the blow which had fallen upon her.

But Margaret was a noble woman, and even in her bitterest grief her first thought was of others. The momentary anger against the passionate girl who had brought such misery upon them all soon died away, and she only thought of her with pity and compassion. After all, what was she but a child, who would soon repent of her foolish and hasty action, and who must, as far as possible, be shielded from the effects of her folly before it were too late?

It might be, too, that she could yet save her from disgrace, and bring her back before she had irretrievably ruined herself in the eyes of the world. And perhaps Millicent might be able to throw some light on the matter, since George Harris had only left his aunt's that morning.

So, without a moment's hesitation, she hastened up the street, and was fortunate in finding Millicent at work alone in her cottage.

"It is you, Aunt Margaret," the girl began, in her quiet, pleasant voice; but at the sight of her aunt's pale, terror-struck countenance she broke off in dismay. "Dear aunt, tell me what has happened."

With a trembling voice and palpitating heart, Margaret told her niece the story of Jenifer's flight, and showed her the few lines she had left behind her.

Millicent clasped her hands together as she listened, and the same horrible suspicion which her aunt could not speak flashed across her mind.

"He went early, too," she said, trying to collect her thoughts. "About eight o'clock—on his way home, he said; but he was to stop at Camelford to-night, and spend Sunday with some friends there. But, Aunt Margaret, some way, now I come to think of it, it does not seem to me it can be true—I mean, that she is gone with him. She was amused with him at first, it is true, but latterly I noticed that she seemed

to weary of him. Dear aunt, I do not really think you need fear that."

"Thank God you say so, Millicent," said poor Margaret, scarcely daring to cling to the hope held out in the girl's words. "God forgive me if I thought evil wrongfully of any one, but I could think of nothing else at first. What else could make her take such a step, poor child?"

"She is young, and I think hasty," said Millicent, calmly. "Perhaps she has gone home to her own friends; or else she may have tried to follow Dick."

Her aunt shook her head sorrowfully. From the tone of Jenifer's letter she did not think either course were at all likely.

"As for Dick, I do not even know where he is, for that poor child tore up his letter; so we are all in the dark as to his address, even if he gave her one. But perhaps it is as well we do not know that. Who can tell?—she may return before he is home again. But oh, the shame, the misery of it all, Millicent! God help us, indeed, for it is hard to know where else we can turn." And the poor mother buried her face in her hands, and gave one long heart-rending sob of anguish.

Even Millicent, who could meet most troubles calmly, was appalled in the presence of such grief as this.

"God will send light, dear Aunt Margaret," was all she could say, as she took her aunt's hand in hers and kissed it almost reverently.

Neither spoke during a few moments, and before long Margaret had recovered herself and regained a tolerable degree of composure.

"No one must know," she said quickly, fancying she heard the sound of Mrs. Harris's voice; "as far as we can help it, no one must know but ourselves and Martin, my poor man! We must shield her as far as we are able. And as to George, what would be best? Could we find out where he is?—if he knows anything of her?"

Millicent considered a few moments before she spoke.

"I see a way, aunt. I will go at once to Camelford and find him. That will be best. He is not a heartless fellow, poor George, if he is vain and foolish. And I cannot think he meant any harm. But I will see him, and then we shall know better. I will start at once; it is a market-day, and once I am across the hill I shall find carts going that way. I will just run across to Sally Goodman's, where mother is, before I go."

Margaret could not find words to thank the girl.

"You are a true friend, Millicent," was all she said as she pressed her hand; and, having helped her to put the kettle on and set things straight before her departure, she returned to break the bad news to her husband.

He took it on the whole more quietly than she had expected, whether it was that years

and infirmities had enfeebled his senses, or that he was more prepared than Margaret had been for Jenifer's strange behaviour.

"I could see she wasn't content in mind, and was hankering after something fresh. Let her alone, and don't worry yourself to death about her. She'll take in her sails after a bit, and be glad enough to put into port when she's tired of cruising."

Of course his wife took care not to mention George Harris's name, and she hoped he would not think of him in connection with Jenifer's flight. But it did not escape the shrewd old man, and he observed once in the course of the day—

"My belief is that youngster of sister Harris's is at the bottom of the whole thing."

The remark did not help to restore Margaret's peace of mind, and the day was a long and difficult one for her. It seemed impossible to work or think of anything else. During the tedious afternoon hours, while Martin enjoyed his after-dinner nap, she sat and tried in vain to discover something which might account for Jenifer's sudden flight. It was difficult for her, in her complete innocence of all selfish and jealous feelings towards her daughter-in-law, to realize the motives which had prompted her action, the working of the ungovernable passions which had inspired Jenifer with the bitter resentment which breathed in every word of her note.

She recalled many little incidents of the past few months, and the recollection of the displeasure which Jenifer had showed at her husband's departure, which alone seemed to her to throw any light on the girl's behaviour. None the less she felt deeply humbled and saddened by the sense of her own failure. It had never entered her mind that Dick's wife would not be happy under the same roof as his parents, but now it seemed to her she ought to have been wiser, and to have understood the girl's feelings better.

And then there was Dick to think of—Dick, who, in spite of any little misunderstandings and sharp words, loved his wife so dearly. What if he were to return to find Jenifer had left him and gone, and had in the eyes of the world disgraced herself? And the mother's heart bled for her unconscious boy far away on the seas, and she prayed in her agony that whatever happened this might be spared him.





CHAPTER XIV.

“‘Watchman, what of the night?’ we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred ;
‘No speaking signs are in the sky,’
Is still the watchman’s word.”

CHRISTINA ROSETTI.



T was many miles over a hilly road to Camelford, and all that evening Margaret watched in vain for Millicent’s return, waiting with an impatience that became almost sickening as the hours wore on ; and yet she did not come.

Martin, who was unconscious of Millicent’s errand, and who put down his wife’s strange restlessness to the fact of Jenifer’s disappearance, went to bed at his usual time, leaving Margaret alone in the little parlour.

At length, to calm her feverish impatience, she fetched down her Bible and tried to read a psalm.

Strange to say, the book opened at the

passage in Canticles which she remembered looking out the day she heard of Dick's marriage—the text which the strange minister had taken for the sermon upon Dick and Jenifer's wedding-day.

“Love is strong as death ; jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

That last half of the text was what had seemed to her so strange before, which she should not have believed if it had not been in the Bible. Seen by the light of to-day's experiences, the words wore a new and deeper meaning, and were no longer so strange and unreal. But still, she said to herself, clutching at this fresh ground for hope, love may be the stronger. There was that other verse, which spoke of its unconquerable might : “ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it ; ” the one text which had comforted her most when the cruel waves had robbed her of both her darlings at one breath.

Yes, that was still true—love might yet be victorious ; and with all her might she called on the God who for love laid down His life to save the world. Her lips were still moving in the passion of her pleading, although her prayer was ended, when she heard a light tap at the window, and hastened to open the door.

It was Millicent, a little weary and exhausted after her long expedition, but satisfied that her errand would at least have the good effect of bringing her aunt some comfort.

"It is all right, dear aunt," she said, with a bright gleam in her eyes, as she sat down in the chair which Margaret pushed forward. "I have seen George, and he at least knows nothing of Jenifer. She never went with him, and he had not seen her since they parted last night. You may rest safe on that score."

"Thank God for that," was Margaret's deep, heartfelt response. "And thank you too, Millicent, for all you have done."

The pale, quiet girl had indeed shown an energy and a courage worthy of admiration. Undaunted by the distance to be traversed, or by the fear of what others might say or think of her, she had gone all the way to Camelford, getting a lift from a friendly dealer who was taking his corn to market, and had luckily stumbled on George at the door of the inn where the coach stopped.

She had explained to him that there was some anxiety about Jenifer, and had asked him if he had seen or heard anything of her on his journey, and his answers had completely reassured her as to his innocence in the matter.

"He did stare rather, and wondered I should come so far after him, and why he, of all people, should be supposed to know anything about Jenifer," she said with a smile; "but that was, after all, a thing of very little consequence. I am quite sure, dear aunt, that he had nothing to do with it. So at least we know now that Jenifer has only run away in a fit of

temper, and that we need fear nothing worse for her, poor child. And one other thing, too, I learnt from George. Quite early this morning, when he was going up to join the coach, he met a boy, who showed him a red handkerchief he had picked up on the downs between this and Spratton. He is almost sure it was the same which Jenifer had in her hand yesterday. But the boy was a stranger, and he went on and thought no more of it till he saw me."

"That looks as if she were gone to join the coach for Holsworthy," said Margaret, catching eagerly at the least thing which might help to put her on the girl's track. "I will go to Spratton myself to-morrow and see if I can find trace of her. I tremble to think of her in those strange parts, and she so young, and without a friend to help her. It makes it all the stranger that she should have left us and gone out all alone."

"It would be worse had it been as you feared at first," said Millicent gently, sensible that she had but poor comfort to offer at best, and yet anxious to cheer her aunt and make her look on the hopeful side.

"Yes, indeed; the mere thought of that made one shudder," said poor Margaret with a sigh. "But it seems bad enough that she should run away at all. If she had only told me what she meant to do, instead of writing those hard words! It is that which pains me most, Millicent; to think she should have looked on me as

her enemy, when God knows I would have died for her. But it is little use fretting," she said, wiping away a tear; "and for you, Millicent, I can never thank you enough for what you have done. It is a load lifted off my mind."

"Don't thank me, dear Aunt Margaret; you know I would have done much more than journey to Camelford and back for you," said Millicent, as she rose to go home—"and for Jenifer too; I always felt drawn to her. There is a deal of good in her, poor child, if she is a bit hasty and doesn't see what a friend she might have found in you. But she'll live to find that out yet, please God."

And with a tender embrace Millicent left her aunt to go out into the dark street and make her peace with her mother, who was not in the sweetest of tempers. She had, it must be owned, received an unusual amount of provocation that day, and might not unjustly accuse her daughter of having treated her rather badly.

"You go your ways and leave me to myself a whole day long," she said querulously to Millicent, while the tired girl sank into a chair and asked for a glass of water; "and you never tell me what's taken you or where you're gone, and first one, then another comes in to ask for you. There's Mrs. Mallam's been down twice from the vicarage to know when that suit will be done for Master James. It's twice the clothes children wear out nowadays to what they used

to when I was in service, and yet, if ever there was a young pickle, it was my Master Tommy. And then there's Sally Goodman came for some pattern or other; and I turned out all the drawers, and could light on nothing but a bundle of rags. And all the while you're tramping the country on some errand for your aunt, I suppose, since it's her you've been seeing at this time of night. It's very hard on a mother, Millicent—very hard, I say. But it's always the same story; you consider every one else but her that gave you birth. And now you'll tell me you don't want this cup of tea which I've got ready for you, just fit to drink."

In spite of this last assertion, Millicent accepted the cup of tea gratefully, and proceeded to offer her apologies and explanations for her strange course of action.

But all Mrs. Harris's displeasure vanished the moment she heard the true reason of Millicent's sudden departure. She listened with absorbing interest to every word the girl said, and not content to rest satisfied with the little Millicent knew, asked a hundred questions about Jenifer, her father- and mother-in-law, which Millicent was quite unable to answer.

"There's more behind, depend upon it," she said solemnly. "You'll see that, Millicent; and it's my belief it's all kind of things we shall hear to-morrow. And then," she continued, unable to conceal her secret satisfaction in the misfortunes of the mother-in-law whose circum-

stances had been decidedly more prosperous than her own, "only to think of it—your aunt's son, her who was always so mighty strict, and thought no one in the place was fit to hold a candle to her Dick! But I knew it from the first; I knew Jenifer was not the one for Margaret. I told your uncle so only the other day. And he'll be mindful of my words now, although they weren't just what he liked at the time. But it's a sad disgrace for all that. To think of her running off with our George!"

"Hush, mother! you mustn't speak so," said Millicent, firmly. "You know it's not George she's gone with; haven't I told you so just now? And isn't it just to make sure of that, that I've been all the way to Camelford and back?"

"Well, if it's not George, it's another, and a worse one, I dare say," returned Mrs. Harris. "It's all the same, so long as she's gone."

"I tell you, mother, we don't know; and it's most probably not in the least true that any man has gone with her," said Millicent, whose patience was sorely tried at this wilful perversion of facts upon which Mrs. Harris insisted. "And whatever it is she's done, we've no right to judge her beforehand."

"I suppose I've as good a right to my own opinion as you or anybody else, Millicent," returned her mother, tartly.

This time Millicent, seeing how worse than useless it was to argue the point further, kept silence; and Mrs. Harris, seeing that she was

not likely to extract much more interesting information from her daughter, left her to her own reflections, chuckling to herself as she retired to bed over this unexpected piece of news.

"You'll not talk about it, mother," Millicent called after her as she went upstairs; "you'll not tell the neighbours. They are sure to get wind of it soon enough, without any one helping to spread the news."

But Mrs. Harris either did not or would not hear, and no answer to Millicent's entreaty came but the creaking of the old wooden stairs under her mother's heavy footsteps.

The girl felt half sorry she had confessed the purport of her errand to her mother, and yet, considering the circumstances, she did not see what else she could have done. The fact of Jenifer's disappearance could not fail to become known in the town before long, and perhaps it was as well Mrs. Harris should know what had actually happened, and not be tempted to arrive at conclusions framed by her own imagination.

And then her thoughts flew back to her Aunt Margaret, and to her heart-broken looks and words.

If she could by any means bring her help, and lighten the burden which weighed so heavily upon her this evening, Millicent felt that no trouble of hers would be wasted.

It was hard to see where to turn, and little

enough which she could do to bring Jenifer back; but the Bible Christian girl was possessed with a faith which rose above the hopelessness of present conditions, and she lay down that night calmly sure that the morrow would bring the light for which she prayed.

Over there, in the jasmine-covered cottage, among the hydrangeas and the wallflowers, the same prayer was going up to heaven, with yet more passionate earnestness, from the depths of a mother's heart—the prayer that love might prevail, and the wanderer return.

But many mornings were to break over the eastern hills, many suns were to set in that far western sea, before any tidings of Jenifer were to reach Port Ruan.





CHAPTER XV.

“A roofless ruin lies my home,
For winds to blow and rains to pour ;
One frosty night befell, and lo !
I find my summer days are o'er.

“The heart bereaved, of why and how
Unknowing, knows that yet before
It had what e'en to memory now
Returns no more, no more.”

A. H. CLOUGH.



AIR and sweet, in its soft sunshine and melting clouds, was the April morning when the *Mermaid* sailed once more into the bay and made for the harbour bar.

All around the waves lay calm and blue, with scarcely a ripple on their shining surface. Above, the granite rocks lifted their golden-grey into the skies, and the lichen which clothed the purple masses of slate glowed a fiery orange in the warm sunlight.

The beach was all alive that morning, and the quay was thronged with sailors and fishermen, women and children, waiting to welcome the crew home, as the gallant vessel, with sails spread and flag flying, made its way under the castle rock and entered the harbour waters.

At the helm stood the captain, proud and glad, as he always felt when the grey tower of Ruan church first came into sight, and the white houses gleamed up the slopes on either side of the opening ravine. And to-day he was in high spirits; for not only had his voyage been uncommonly easy and prosperous, not only was he home two days earlier than he had expected, but he was returning, after his first absence of several weeks, to the young wife whom he had so lately married.

The thought of Jenifer had often filled his mind during the cruise of the *Mermaid*, and especially in the course of the last week or two. For one thing he had received no letters from home, which seemed strange, since he felt almost sure he had told his wife to write to Swansea in his last letter from Bristol.

But he had heard nothing, and although he was not easily anxious, he had wondered at her silence, and still more at not hearing from his mother, who would be sure to write if anything were amiss with Jenifer.

There had been a bit of a breeze the night before they reached Swansea, and thinking Jenifer might be anxious, he had sent her a

telegram from that port, but even this had produced no answer.

The six weeks had seemed long to him, and he reflected with satisfaction that, when he next went to sea, he should be able to gratify his wife's wish and take her with him, since it would only be for a coasting voyage along the Cornish shores.

And now Jenifer would be there on the quay watching for him; nay, he almost fancied he could distinguish her among the group of mothers who were so eagerly awaiting their husbands' and sons' return.

But no! he was doomed to disappointment this time, and neither wife nor mother were there to welcome him when he went ashore.

More than one gruff voice greeted him, and more than one hand was stretched out in cordial welcome as he made his way past the little crowd, nodding now on this side, now on the other, speaking a kindly word, first to this one, then to that one.

He did not know the meaning of the compassionate looks that met his, and the pitying eyes which more than one woman in the street bent upon him as, having seen the vessel safely moored, he hastened up the hill towards his home.

Every one in Port Ruan knew Dick Jewell. Even the children said to each other as he passed them, "There goes Cap'n Jewell!"

But no one breathed a word of the trouble

which had darkened his home ; only one of the women whispered to her husband, as she watched his manly form and cheery smile—

“ Ah, poor fellow ! it's a sad home-coming for him.” And the girl at her side looked up in her face and asked—

“ Doesn't he know, mother, that his wife's run away ? ”

“ Hush ! ” said her mother quickly. But the captain was already half-way up the street, and did not hear the child's question, or suspect that his family affairs were the topic of discussion down on the quay, or that the story of Jenifer's disappearance was being retailed for the benefit of his comrades.

Of course it had got abroad quickly enough, and Mrs. Harris, who had kept silence almost the whole of one day out of deference to old Martin, of whom she stood in considerable awe, felt her reticence very ill rewarded when she found how soon the bad news got wind in Port Ruan.

The event was so unusual a thing in the place that it made a great sensation, the more so that Dick and his family were so well known and highly respected, and that his marriage had taken place so recently.

“ As pretty a kettle of fish as you're likely to see on a calm day,” was the sailors' comment.

The elder women moralized on Jenifer's love of finery and idle ways, and agreed that her mother-in-law had been too easy with her ;

and all the inhabitants of Port Ruan came to the conclusion that this was the evil result of bringing home a wife from distant parts, instead of wedding a girl you know all about, and whose birth and bringing-up would be the best safeguards against accidents of this kind.

Not a word had been heard of Jenifer since that day when she climbed the hillside in the grey dawn of the early morning. Margaret had been to Spratton herself, and had made inquiries in every direction, but without success; for it never crossed her mind that Jenifer would go as far as Wenstow, which she herself scarcely knew, and was off the ordinary high-road along which the coach passed. She had even written a carefully worded epistle to Jenifer's aunt at Rosewall, asking if they had by any chance heard of the girl, and had, as may be supposed, received an unsatisfactory answer. And when a whole fortnight had elapsed without further news of the girl, Margaret's heart began to sink within her, and she longed for Dick to return, if only to take some measures for discovering his wife's hiding-place.

There was still the hope, faint although it seemed, that Jenifer had joined him at some seaport, and was on board the *Mermaid*. Millicent, above all, clung to this hope with a tenacity which her better knowledge of the girl seemed to warrant. But with the arrival of Dick's telegram from Swansea this last hope vanished, and it was with fear and trembling

that his mother awaited the home-coming which must prove so terrible a shock to her son.

It was impossible, she felt, under the circumstances, to go down to the quay and welcome him home, and when she heard the children calling to each other as they went up the street to school that the *Mermaid* was in the bay, she only closed the doors and windows with a nervous terror lest any stranger should know what was passing in the interior of that once happy home.

But at last he came. For the first time in her life the sound of Dick's ringing voice, the tread of his footstep on the stones outside, fell painfully on her ear, and it needed all her courage and resolution to go to the door to meet him.

"Mother, you didn't expect me back so soon, I'll warrant," he began, in his gay, careless fashion, embracing her on both cheeks as he spoke. "Ha! father, how are you? Jenifer, where is she? Jenifer—girl, come down!" he called, thinking his wife must be upstairs.

The sound of his voice and his evident unconsciousness of what had happened during his absence were too much for Margaret, and in spite of all her efforts to command her feelings, she burst into tears.

"What is it, mother? What has happened?" Dick asked in an impatient tone. "I come home and there's no one about, and when I ask for Jenifer you begin to cry. Can't you speak

and tell me if there's anything wrong? Is she upstairs ill, or what?"

Martin was the first to break the silence. It was not his habit to mince matters, and when he spoke, his few words told Dick the plain facts of the case.

"She's not ill. She's run away and left us. Since last Saturday fortnight we've never heard a word of her. We don't know any more than you do where she is or what she's about. You may well stare, my boy, for it's a queer state of things."

"A queer state of things, father! I should say it was," returned Dick, turning pale with anger and dismay at the sudden blow which had met him on the threshold of his home. "Do you mean to say she is gone—gone clean away without any one saying a word to me, or sending after her to stop her. By all the——" and as he spoke he brought down his fist heavily on the table.

"Hush, Dick, my poor boy!" said his mother, struggling to check her tears and laying her hand gently on his arm. "You shall hear all, if you will only be patient with us. God knows we have done what we could."

The tones of her clear firm voice brought Dick to reason. He was passive under her touch, and remained silent while his mother told him as briefly and as gently as she could all that had happened since the day his letter from Bristol came, suppressing naturally all mention

of George Harris and of Millicent's hurried journey to Camelford.

Strong man that he was, he staggered as he heard the tale, and although he did not utter a word, Margaret could see how terrible was the anguish which rent his heart.

"And you mean to say she has never written, never written or sent?" he asked passionately.

It seemed as if he could hardly believe it possible. And yet it was true; and there was the empty room, and Jenifer's box standing against the wall, and the red cap which she had worn hanging up on a peg all just as when he had left home—only she herself was gone.

"Better she were dead, a thousand times better, than she should have brought this disgrace on herself and us all," he said, in the first bitterness of his grief; and it was long before even his mother could soothe his angered spirit, or revive the hope which had died out of his heart.

"Nay, don't say so, my poor boy," said Margaret; "after all, she may come back any day. I can never believe she does not love you too well to hide away from you much longer, poor child!"

"How she could ever go, beats me!" said Dick, passionately—"when she had everything in the world she could wish for here, and knew that I would have given her anything she cared to have."

Margaret was silent. She could not bear to

tell him that Jenifer accused him of neglect, and thought herself hated by her mother-in-law. But Dick had not forgotten his quarrel with her that last day before the *Mermaid* sailed for Bristol.

“ I suppose it was all because I did not take her on board,” he said slowly. “ She might have known I would have taken her if I could have managed it. But I had promised to take those tars to Bristol, and I could not go back from my word. And I never thought she would take on like that.”

He spoke in a dull, sorrowful tone, out of which all the anger had passed. A sudden revulsion of feeling had passed over him, and all his love for Jenifer came rushing up in great waves of emotion.

“ Oh, Jenifer, Jenifer !” he said to himself, turning away from his mother to hide the violence of his grief, “ to think you should leave me like this—when you loved me so well, and we looked to spending such happy days together !”

And Margaret knew that it was vain for her to strive to comfort him. For there are some sorrows which even a mother's love cannot heal.

It was a sad little household which met together that evening in the old home. Margaret thought mournfully of past home-comings, when Dick's return had always been the occasion of a little festival. And now everything spoke of that last home-coming, when they had been so

joyous in honour of the bride he had brought back with him.

Martin was the only one of the three who made any attempt at cheerfulness. The sight of his boy cheered him, and he talked on at random, as he often did of an evening, telling old sea stories of his seafaring days, and asking Dick now and then questions about his voyage.

But it was little he could get out of Dick that evening. The captain of the *Mermaid* sat there in the deepening twilight by the window, with hands firmly clenched and eyes fixed on the streak of light which still shone in the horizon above the white waves, thinking bitterly of the morrow.

As ill luck would have it, Mrs. Harris must needs take it into her head to step across to her brother's, prompted partly by an ardent curiosity to see what sort of face Dick put upon his trouble, partly by a well-meaning but sadly ill-timed desire to show her friendliness. Millicent had vainly endeavoured to persuade her to defer her visit until the next day ; but it was not often that Mrs. Harris condescended to pay any heed to her daughter's wishes, and since Millicent refused to accompany her, she went alone.

It cannot honestly be said that any one in the house looked pleased to see her, although Martin growled out a welcome, and Margaret gravely bade her good evening as she set a chair for her.

“So you’ve come home, nephew,” she said, as she settled herself in the chair and rested her elbows comfortably on either arm; “glad to see you back from your journey. You must have had a rough night at sea last week.”

Dick’s answer was not such as to encourage further conversation, but Mrs. Harris could be indomitably persevering when she chose, and returned to the attack presently.

“We’ve had stirring times since you’ve been gone, Dick.” Just then she caught Margaret’s eyes turned imploringly upon her, and she added, a little nervously, “I mean, Millicent and me. We’ve had George staying with us—George Harris, you remember, Dick, who’s got a place in the quarries over at Delabole. He’s an uncommon fine fellow, now, is George, and can be vastly amusing, too, when he sees fit. Goodness me! how he made us laugh that night when——”

She was on the point of saying Jenifer’s name, when her sentence was cut short by a sudden move from Dick, who, unable to sit still any longer hearing his aunt rattle on in this fashion, sprang to his feet, and without another word walked out of the house, leaving Mrs. Harris to recover from her consternation at this strange proceeding.

Once outside in the fresh air, away from the jarring sound of tongues, he felt he could breathe more freely. It was already dark, and no one arrested him as he took his way up the

hillside, and made for the downs by that very path which Jenifer had taken on her way to Wenstow a fortnight ago.

Here, with no human eye watching him, with no sound to break the silence but the ripple of the waves on the beach, and the rustle of the evening breeze in the leaves of the oak woods under the hill, he could give way to his grief, could think of Jenifer without fear of breaking down. It was little he knew of women and their ways, as he often said, but none the less there was not a truer or a tenderer heart than that which beat in Dick Jewell's manly breast. Now, as he paced the lonely hillside with the bleak moorland spreading away to the north, all his being went out in one long silent cry of misery.

"Oh, Jenifer, Jenifer!" he repeated to himself; and it seemed to him if only she could hear that cry, if only she could look into his heart and see the hollow void there, and know the passionate yearning with which he longed for her, his wife would come back to him without delay. For he loved her with all his might; and she, too—she had loved him, he knew that, and he did not think she was one to forget so easily; and his anger had been of brief duration, and he only thought of her with pitying affection. Foolish and wrong-headed she might be, but he could not believe she had ceased to love him. And however much she had failed in her duty, she was still his wife,

and it was his part to bear with her and shield her from harm. Ah, if he could only find her, and throw his strong arm around her and tell her of his great love, he had no fear but she would come back to him and the past would be forgotten.

And as he thought of Jenifer in this softened mood, the stars came out one by one over the sea and shone down, in its surface of crystalline brightness, on the foam which curled in lace-like patterns of creamy whiteness on the edge of the black rocks. He looked down over the brink of the cliff and felt the sweet night-air, laden with the breath of springtime and opening flowers and budding leaves, and something of hope revived in his heart.

Wherever Jenifer might be, he was determined to find her. The very next morning he would set out, and would not rest until he had found the wife he loved so well, and brought her home again.





CHAPTER XVI.

As some lone bird without a mate,
My weary hour is desolate ;
I look around and cannot trace
One friendly smile or welcome face ;
And even in crowds am still alone,
Because I cannot love but one."

LORD BYRON.



“ET away, you naughty, unkind
Cousin Jenny ! I don't love
you one bit, and I wish you
had never come here at all.
I can't think why you did.
I am sure no one wanted
you, and you might just as
well have stayed away.”

This sweet speech proceeded from the lips of an amiable young lady of six or seven years old, who sat on the floor with begrimed pinafore and hands, licking a stick of barley-sugar. Not content with smearing this lump of delight over her own small person, she had been trying to rub it against her cousin's gown. Having met

with a repulse and slap in this quarter, Miss Emily Jane had burst into tears, and vented her wrath in this fashion.

A boy of four, and a fat infant, who, unable to walk, rolled over and over on the floor, to the detriment of the clean pinafore which Jenifer had unwarily put on, were the other occupants of the dark small room which looked out on a noisy alley in one of the back streets of Bristol. And there, with a disconsolate expression on her pretty face, sat Jenifer Jewell, trying to finish a bit of sewing as best she could among the endless disturbances and interruptions caused by three refractory children, whose tempers had not been improved by the absence of their mother and the confinement indoors which a rainy day necessitated.

In her neat dark gown and white collar and cuffs, she looked far too clean and dainty for her dingy surroundings, and if her cheeks had lost some of their bright rose-colour, and the change from moorland and seaside life to the slums of a big town had made her eye dimmer and her step less elastic, she was still decidedly the pleasantest object in the room.

“Hold your tongue, Emily Jane, or you shall go straight to bed,” was all Jenifer condescended to say in return. After administering this severe rebuke, which only had the effect of making both Ned and the baby set up a terrific howl, she folded up her work in disgust and moved towards the window.

It was a warm, close day, and in spite of the showers which fell heavily at intervals, Jenifer felt a longing to be out-of-doors and get a breath of air to freshen her up, after spending the whole afternoon in this hot room with these tiresome children to mind. A very different look-out it was, either from that which she had been accustomed to see from the windows of Dick's home, or from her uncle's farm at Rose-wall. There were no deep blue-green waters here; no rocks glowing with colour, or woods bursting into leaf. She missed the vast expanse of sea, the far-reaching horizon to which she had been accustomed from her earliest childhood. Here the houses were so closely packed together, there seemed scarcely room for the blue strip of sky which showed between the roofs. The cries of children playing in the gutter, and the sound of cart-wheels and a hundred other discordant noises filled the air, and unsavoury odours of stale fish and decaying cabbage-stalks did not help to improve the atmosphere of the street.

Jenifer felt a choking sensation, and longed to leave the tiresome children and the dirty alley, and take a walk in the brighter and more open part of the town. But her cousin Susan, in whose house she was living, had gone for the day to Clifton, and Jenifer had promised to take care of the children till she returned, so there was no help for it.

Certainly it was strange that any girl should

of her own free will, choose to live in this dark narrow alley, among these squalid surroundings, instead of in the pretty cottage at Port Ruan ; stranger still that, when she was perfectly at liberty to return to her own home, she should prefer to remain in so unattractive a spot.

But to this Jenifer's wilful and headstrong nature had brought her. A fit of jealous anger had driven her away from home, and now, however much she might long to be there again, she was too proud to confess her fault and return.

Besides this, she was still firmly convinced of the wrong which had been done—convinced that her husband's affections had been enticed away from her by the selfishness of his mother, and that she could never be happy again at Port Ruan.

Three weeks' absence had not yet changed her ideas in this respect or softened her angry spirit. She was getting heartily sick of being in her cousin's home at Bristol—indeed, she had been tired of it before the end of the first week ; but she said to herself that here, at least, she was free, and that anything was preferable to living with her mother-in-law.

She did secretly wonder what was happening at Port Ruan—how soon she had been missed, and if there had been any search for her. On the whole, she thought not. Millicent, and perhaps Mrs. Harris, would be sorry, but she felt sure her mother-in-law would be glad to be rid of her, and that no one would really care

after the first few days. But then there was Dick.

Whatever might be the force of her angry passions, however blind they rendered her at the moment, Jenifer's love for her husband was real and strong—the strongest and truest thing in her whole nature—and since the day when she had run away from home she had never ceased to think of him. True it is, she was still firmly persuaded that he had neglected and wronged her, but none the less she knew that she loved him still, and could never be really happy away from him.

Each morning she woke up wondering where he could be, and if he were thinking of her; each evening she sighed for the day when she would once more see her husband. On windy nights—and there had been more than one since she had left Port Ruan—she would lie awake shivering at every blast, wondering if Dick were at sea; and for several mornings afterwards she would buy a paper and scan the list of wrecks and casualties with fearful anxiety, always dreading lest the name of the *Mermaid* should catch her eye. At other times she would reflect with a pang that perhaps he cared no more for her, and would make no effort to find her, and she made heroic resolutions that if this were the case, she would never reveal her hiding-place, or let her husband hear of her until she were dead.

When she left Port Ruan she had purposely

decided on going to Bristol in the hope of finding Dick, who, she felt sure, would stop there on his way back from the Welsh coast. With this intention she had come straight to the house of her cousin, the only creature in Bristol of whom she had ever heard, and whose address she had fortunately by her.

Susan Johnson, the eldest daughter of Jenifer's uncle at Rosewall, was a good-natured woman, and although her hands were already full, and she and her seven children were all dependent on the earnings of her husband, a clerk in a large warehouse, she welcomed her cousin warmly, and bade her stay as long as she liked.

Just at first she asked one or two rather awkward questions; but when Jenifer explained that her husband was at sea, and she had become tired of living at Port Ruan without him, Susan was quite satisfied, and as she rarely wrote to her family in Cornwall, Jenifer hoped there was no fear that her hiding-place would be discovered.

She had still some of the money she had brought with her from Port Ruan, and with her natural cleverness soon found means of helping her cousin in many little ways, and insisted on paying for her lodging. Susan's eldest girl was employed in a shop, and often brought home work to do at night, which made her grateful for the assistance of Jenifer's needle. Then the children were always requiring attention.

and although Jenifer's patience was soon at an end, and she did not enjoy the charge, she was glad to do the hardworked mother a good turn by looking after them occasionally.

But this afternoon she had found the children too much for her, and they in their turn were cross with her. The fat baby bellowed lustily when she tried to take him up, Ned threw his crusts in her face, and Emily Jane, who was in an especially aggravating mood, would smear her nasty sweets all over the nice clean collar and cuffs which Jenifer wore, until at length, in despair, she retreated to the window and left the tormentors to themselves. Very weary and out of heart she felt as she stood there, listening to the cries of the gutter children and street noises, and recalling the cottage home at Port Ruan, which, compared to this, seemed a paradise of delight.

Now that she could look back more calmly on the past, her supposed slights and wrongs, Dick's unkindness, even what she persisted in calling her mother-in-law's dislike, no longer seemed so intolerable. After all, perhaps she had been hasty and foolish, and it would have been wiser to have waited at home until Dick returned. Anyhow, she felt she would give a good deal for one draught of pure sea-air, and, better still, one sight of her husband's face.

Now she felt sorry she had not gone straight to Rosewall; but she knew that must be a very long journey by land, and feared her stock of

money would not be sufficient to take her there. Besides which, her pride shrank from appearing at home without her husband. She could not face her uncle and aunt and all her old friends, and she knew the boys and every one would ask questions and want to know where Dick was. No, there was no other place where she could remain so safely hidden as in Bristol, and here she must stay for the present, unless she could make up her mind to go back to Port Ruan and beg Dick's parents to forgive her.

But that she would never do, she said to herself haughtily; and with a weary sigh she turned back from the window to the children, who had by this time relapsed into a quieter mood, and were playing at knucklebones and ninepins on the floor.

She was not sorry that just at that moment Polly, the eldest girl, came in, and she was able to escape from the close room and get out for a stroll and a breath of air.

As usual, Jenifer bent her steps towards the harbour, where the ships from all parts of England and Ireland and foreign countries were lying. She had been there almost every day since her arrival, always looking along the quay, among that forest of masts and shipping, in hopes of seeing the little *Mermaid*. But her search had always been in vain, and she had little hopes of finding it now. Still she walked on, past the great dockyards which stretch for

miles and miles, by rope-walks and manufactories for sails and anchors, and a hundred more connected with the shipping trade.

The day's work was over now, and crowds of carpenters and workmen were pouring out of the gates of the ship-building yards, to seek their homes and enjoy a well-earned rest.

There was a general air of repose and contentment on their faces. They were going home to those who loved them best, to wives and children and mothers who were eagerly awaiting them, and Jenifer heard one man say, in reply to an invitation from a fellow-workman—

“No, thank'ee, old chap; I'd have come and gladly, but my wife's all alone and I can't leave her.”

These words made her start, and sent a sharp sting of remorse through her breast. Dick had no one waiting at home for him. It was a bitter thought, and she quickened her pace and walked on through these hurrying crowds, feeling strangely sorrowful and alone.

Oh, how longingly she looked at the tall masts and black hulls along the quay, wishing that the dear *Mermaid* with the brown sails and tiny red flag, might be there! Oh, how wistfully she gazed at one coaster which belonged to Padstow, and wore a family likeness to the Port Ruan vessels! Oh, how yearningly her eyes turned out towards the ships that were always passing up and down in the harbour,

and the homeward-bound boats spreading their sails in the wind !

If at that moment Dick had met her walking on the quay—if, among the crowds that hurried past her, his familiar figure had suddenly stepped out from a knot of sailors—Jenifer knew quite well that she would not have hesitated one instant, but would have flown to meet him. But no Dick came, and as the evening shadows lengthened and the crowds on the quay began to disperse, Jenifer felt it was time to be going back to her cousin's home.

It was late by the time she got there, and the interior of the house in Paragon Row was a good deal quieter than it had been when she started on her walk. The children were in bed—all but Polly, who was upstairs, and Tom, the eldest boy, who had gone out with his father to a reading-room in the neighbourhood.

Susan was by herself in the living-room, busy clearing away the remains of supper, which was spread in a slovenly manner all about the room.

“Come in, Jenifer ; I'm glad to see you,” she said cheerfully. “It's getting dark, and I was half afraid you might have lost your way. We've been home a goodish while. And Jem, he's had supper and gone out again to read the papers. Here, sit down, child, and have a mouthful of something ; there's plenty more in the cupboard yonder.”

She was a thoroughly good-tempered, kind-hearted woman, Susan, although the bodice of her gown had lost half its buttons, and her hair partook largely of the nature of a mop. Of the two, she resembled her father much more than her mother in her kindly, open-hearted ways, and it was impossible to help liking her, whatever opinion you might entertain as to her other qualities.

Jenifer's walk had given her an appetite, and a good meal revived her drooping spirits. She asked Susan about her day at Clifton, and was glad to hear she had enjoyed herself and seen her friends there.

"And thank you kindly, Jenifer, for minding the children," added Mrs. Johnson; "I'm afraid you found them a handful. Polly said Emily Jane was as saucy as could be. But they're all alike, bless you; if they can't be out in the streets after school-time they leave a poor body no peace."

"Oh, they weren't very bad," replied Jenifer; "but it was hot, and I was tired."

"You look weary, Jenifer," said her cousin, kindly; "I expect it's fretting for your husband makes you look pale. You thought he'd be back before now, didn't you, child?"

"I did," said Jenifer, shortly; but the colour rose to her cheeks as she spoke, and there was something in her faltering voice which made Susan say—

"Don't you think he'll be home soon? It's

not much I know of sailors, to be sure; but I suppose you've some notion when to expect them home. You said he'd gone across to Wales, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Jenifer; and she added with some hesitation, "Perhaps he's gone back to Port Ruan without coming here."

"But does he never write to you, Jenifer?" asked Susan, inquisitively. "I suppose he can put pen to paper. And considering you've not yet been married a year, I think he might show you a little more attention than he does."

Jenifer was silent. She had not expected this kind of questioning, and began to feel a little uneasy, when Susan continued, in a confidential manner—

"I hope he's good to you, Jenifer. I'm sure father would break his heart if he thought any one used you badly. What! you're not crying, child, are you?"

"No, Susan, I am not crying," said Jenifer, hastily brushing away two big tear-drops which belied her words. "But I'd rather not talk about these things, if you please. You've been very good to me, Susan, and I don't want to seem unkind, but I'd rather tell you all about it another day. And if the *Mermaid* isn't in soon, I must settle what to do and not trouble you any longer."

"Oh, never mind about that, Jenifer," said Susan, warmly. "You know you're welcome to stop as long as you like; and instead of

trouble, it's help you give. Jem was saying to-night it's not every girl would be willing to look after a parcel of troublesome brats for a whole afternoon. Only he, too, was wondering if your husband wouldn't soon be coming after you; and when I saw you looking so white and tired-like, I thought you might be worrying about him. But we won't talk about it any more if you'd rather not, and you'd better go and get a good night's rest before the children wake you with their chattering tongues."

Jenifer obeyed willingly. But as she went to her room it struck her forcibly that this state of things could not last much longer. She must either make up her mind to go to Rosewall, or else find out what had happened to Dick.

And meanwhile Susan was telling her husband that she did not feel altogether happy about Jenifer, and was beginning to fear that there really was, as he had hinted, something between her and her husband.

"It's a pity she ever married a sailor," was the conclusion at which she arrived. "They always seem to me shifty sort of folk, and they're so taken up with watching the winds and waves they've no time left for their own belongings. Leastways, Jem, I'm glad you're not a sailor."

Jem laughed. He thought his wife was hard on the sailors, although he had no wish to be one. He was a stolid, plodding fellow, who made his way in the world by sheer obstinacy

and steadfastness of purpose, and was content to cast up figures and sit over ledgers from one year's end to another. But he was of a more practical turn of mind than his wife, and it struck him as decidedly odd that a girl who had been married but a few months should never even allude in the faintest manner to her husband.

"It doesn't look as if they were comfortable together," he had observed; and his remark had aroused Susan's suspicions, although she was too good-natured to say a word which might hurt her cousin's feelings, and had accordingly dropped the subject the moment the girl had appeared distressed.





CHAPTER XVII.

“ Many times a cheerful mien is worn,
And men say, all tears are staunchèd quite ;
Little guessing what has been erewhile
In the lonely chambers out of sight.”

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.



LIFE has many and varied sorrows. Countless are the ills which human flesh is heir to; suffering and sickness throw their blight on many thresholds; death darkens the brightest homes. But the sharpest pains and the longest heartaches are the work of human passions and follies, of our own mistakes and our own sins. Let alone the heavier crimes and wrongs of deeper dye, the small ones have enough to answer for. A careless word, a chance look, a story repeated with just a little additional colouring to give it spice,—these things have parted hearts which were meant for one another, and cast a shadow over the whole of life. And if ever wretchedness and suffering

were the work of a human being, and brought about in a purely gratuitous manner, this was the case with the troubles which Jenifer's action had brought upon herself and her family.

She was miserable enough herself, in spite of her efforts to maintain outward composure, that evening at Paragon Row, but she had not yet realized in the least how much misery she had caused to others.

Her surprise was great when the next morning's post brought a letter to Susan from Rosewall, written by Mrs. Pengellas, in a state of the deepest despondency over what she termed her niece's untimely end. For this was the only meaning she could put upon recent events. Already some weeks back, Mrs. Jewell had written to ask if they had heard any news of Jenifer, since she had apparently left her father-in-law's without giving any address. From what Dick's mother had said, the family at Rosewall had concluded that Jenifer must have rejoined her husband, and did not greatly distress themselves, expecting to have more certain news of her before long. Mrs. Pengellas, however, was careful to add that she had not in the least shared in this delusion, but had from the first prepared herself for the worst. And now that worst had come about. A few days ago Jenifer's own husband, Dick Jewell, captain of the *Mermaid*, had been at Rosewall himself to find out if there were any news of his missing wife.

Mrs. Pengellas did not enter into particulars as to his visit, only making mention of his distress at not hearing any tidings of Jenifer, and her own absolute conviction that the poor girl had either fallen over the rocks, or been drowned while taking a walk on the beach. So positive was her belief, that as soon as she had recovered from the shock of the first news, she had hastened to write to her absent children, informing them of the sad fate which had befallen their unfortunate cousin, and adding an expression of her intention to put on mourning by the following Sunday.

There was something at once so characteristic of Mrs. Pengellas in immediately taking the most gloomy view of the situation, and so ludicrous in reading her funeral sentences aloud with Jenifer herself in flesh and blood sitting opposite her, that Susan could not help bursting out laughing.

She soon recovered herself, however, and was not slow to take a true view of the situation. It was plain the family at Rosewall, and her mother especially, were plunged in the deepest distress and anxiety on Jenifer's account, and had not the smallest notion that she was with Susan at Bristol.

It was equally plain that her husband was seeking her in every direction, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, all alike were beginning to fear that some terrible fate had overtaken the young wife.

Jenifer herself was, to say the truth, not a little disturbed on the receipt of this melancholy epistle. To think that Dick had been at Rosewall without her, that was enough to fill her with grief and dismay, not to say guilty remorse for the anxiety and distress she was causing him. And then, how every one would talk and wonder over her possible fate; and what evil constructions might not be put upon the step which she had taken in her headstrong folly!

Susan began to understand at last what was the real state of matters, and in her eagerness to set things straight, she turned to Jenifer as soon as ever the children were packed off to school, and asked her what she meant to do.

"Shall I write to mother?" she said, thinking this might be the easiest course, in spite of an incurable reluctance on her part to compose a letter. "Shall I write and say you had come here, thinking to find Dick, and had no thought of his being back at home?"

Jenifer hesitated. She felt that in the present state of affairs this step was equivalent to letting Dick and his parents know where she was, and would involve her immediate return to Port Ruan, and for this she felt scarcely as yet prepared.

But Susan was resolved on taking this line of action, and after a few moments' hesitation, Jenifer agreed it might be the best thing to do.

"Dick will know where I am then," she said

aloud, more to herself than to her cousin, "and if he likes he can come and fetch me."

"But you will write to him yourself, Jenifer?" said warm-hearted Susan. "Of course you will, now you know he is so unhappy about you. You would not leave him a day longer in such suspense."

She was more convinced than ever that there had been some misunderstanding between the husband and wife, and very possibly Dick had been to blame; but now that he was evidently sorry, and anxious to make it up again, it could not be right for Jenifer not to make some advances on her part.

"Unless you were to go yourself," she said, as if this after-thought had struck her. "If you were to start at once, you could take the fast train and be there by night, I should think; or else you might sleep somewhere and send him word to come and meet you."

"I must think it over," said Jenifer, coldly; and by way of satisfying her cousin, she added, "Letters take longer to reach Port Ruan than you are aware. It is such an out-of-the-way place—much further from the railway than Rosewall."

"In that case, the sooner you write your letter the better," replied Susan, who began to think that Jenifer showed a strange apathy in the matter. "At any rate, I shall write to mother. We can't have her and the boys and them all thinking you're in your grave

and you here in the house with me all the while."

Jenifer tried to look indifferent, but did not succeed very well. It was, to say the least, unpleasant to feel that Jack and the others were all lamenting over her as if she were dead, even if some allowance were to be made for her aunt's exaggerated way of describing things.

She got up and said that she would go out, and Susan, thinking she meant to inquire about trains, said no more.

Presently Jenifer reappeared with her hat on, and went downstairs into the street. But this time she did not take her accustomed walk towards the docks. Instead of this, she went up the hill into the more fashionable parts of the city, where the chief shops and handsomest streets are to be found.

She had a new scheme in her head, which she did not choose to tell Susan. She thought she would leave her cousin's house, since after the morning's events it did not appear desirable to remain there any longer, and would instead seek out a lodging where she could live unknown to all.

Here she would await the course of events, and if at the end of a few days Dick had not come to Paragon Row in search of her, she would write to him and reveal her hiding-place. The idea of returning to Port Ruan and facing her mother-in-law, after all she had done, was still far too disagreeable for her to consent to

such a course, and on the whole this seemed the easiest and safest plan of operation.

Dick would no doubt hear through her aunt that she was in Bristol, and would hasten thither in hopes of finding her, while she, on her side, would not be far removed from Susan's home, and would keep a careful watch on the house in case of her husband's arrival.

So she knocked at several doors and looked at several rooms, in the hopes of finding one to suit her. But this was by no means an easy task, since her funds were rapidly diminishing, and she did not wish to exhaust her scanty stock of money and leave herself without a sum sufficient to take her home, if need be.

At length she found one which she thought she could afford, but the dirty-looking woman who kept the house was so repulsive in appearance that she hesitated before deciding upon it finally, and left without clenching the bargain.

Before she returned to Paragon Row, she thought she would call at the shop for which Polly worked and see if she could get a little employment on her own account, and with this intention she walked up one of the principal thoroughfares in search of the draper's windows.

She had almost reached the door, when a familiar face caught her eye on the opposite side of the street, and she recognized the brown cheeks and mobile features of her friend Bobby Frewin, the driver of the Wenstow mail. His

hat was set jauntily on one side, as usual ; he wore the same short coat and topboots ; and the only difference in his attire to that which he always wore, was the crape band that was attached to one of his sleeves.

Before Jenifer could recover from her surprise, and while she was still wondering what in the world had brought this eccentric personage to Bristol, he had crossed the road and had accosted her, cap in hand, with his most chivalrous air.

“Cap'en Jewell's wife, to be sure ! I'm not wrong, am I?—that is to say, I meant no offence,” he continued, as Jenifer blushed up to her eyes on hearing the sound of her husband's name ; “but I felt sure it was you the moment I caught sight of you. It's a queer thing I should happen to light on you, seeing it's the first time I'm in Bristol, come Michaelmas, this three years. But I was forced to come to a brother's funeral—a sad thing, you'll hold with me, Mrs. Jewell ?”

Jenifer said she was sorry to hear it, but did not dare to ask him by what means he had discovered her name.

Bobby, however, did not leave her in suspense long.

“Now, you might have told me, when I drove you across the moors the other day, you were Cap'en Jewell's wife, instead of leaving me to find it out for myself. Not but that I dare say you'd reasons of your own for holding your

peace, and those I'll not inquire into," he said, waving his hand grandly as he spoke. "But what I've got to say is this. They're in high dudgeons about you yonder—down at Port Ruan, I mean. I took up a young fellow—Harris his name—half-way between Wenstow and Launceston last week, and he told me how they were all fretting about you, and how Margaret she was ill in bed, and Dick pretty near at his wits' end, and all because they couldn't tell what had become of you. And some will have it, he said, that you are lying at the bottom of the sea, or under the Spratton cliffs; and there was a deal of lamentation all along of your having vanished. And then I put two and two together, and it seemed to me you were the young woman who'd been so pleasant and chatty that day I took you up, and I thought it were just a pity you couldn't hear how badly you were wanted at home."

"Oh dear! I wish I had known before," said Jenifer, smitten with sudden remorse. "Why didn't some one tell me?" she exclaimed, somewhat inconsequently, seeing her aunt's letter told much the same story, although she might fail to convey her meaning as graphically as did Bobby Frewin, in his lively concern for the welfare of others.

"Now, don't take on, young woman," he said, putting his hand on her shoulder in a friendly manner. "Don't you take on, but you just hear what I say, and take a friend's advice, and I

promise you, as sure as my name's Bobby Frewin and I've driven the mail between Wenstow and Launceston this fifteen years, you'll not live to repent of it. You get your traps together and meet me at the station in an hour's time, and I'll see you safe to Launceston; and what's more, I'll give you a lift on the box of the mail, and we'll say nothing to nobody; and I'll put you in a cart for Port Ruan at Wenstow if I can't drive you over there myself; and, as I said before, you'll not repent. For you're a nice young woman, and Dick he's a capital good fellow, and I'd be sorry not to do you both a good turn."

The suddenness of the proposal, and the amazing rapidity with which Bobby Frewin had evolved the whole plan from the depths of his fertile brain, almost took Jenifer's breath away.

But there was something in his manner, in the tone of his voice, which would not take a refusal, and, strange to say, the impulsive, wilful girl felt constrained to yield and obey his directions.

Half an hour later, and she had collected the few clothes she had brought with her and stood at the door, taking an affectionate farewell of Susan, who was only sorry to think Jenifer should leave without seeing the elder children to say good-bye.

But she held up the fat baby for a last embrace, and Ned toddled out into the street with

a lump of peppermint in his hand as a parting bequest, and before Jenifer knew where she was Susan had put her into a cab, and she was rolling along over the stones towards the station of the Great Western line.

And there, true to his word, was Bobby Frewin, with an important air on his face, looking out for the companion whose arrival he expected.

Jenifer felt so upset, so altogether bewildered by the sudden course to which she found herself as it were compelled, in spite of herself, that she scarcely knew what she was doing, and could not believe that she were really and truly going home. After several hours' travelling by rail they left the train, and proceeded by the mail-cart across the moors. Then for the first time she began to realize what was happening to her, and when at length they drew near to Wenstow, and she saw the dark-blue line of sea stretching far as eye could reach along the coast, she knew that she was really on the way back to Port Ruan.

For one moment a fit of terror seized hold of her—terror lest she should meet with hard looks and angry words. The old jealousy and distrust was waking up again within her, and she felt half inclined to get down from the box and turn back. But then she thought of Dick in sore trouble, with his mother ill, no one in the house that he could turn to, and she rejoiced to think that she had delayed no longer, but

had followed Bobby Frewin's advice and started at once.

Yes, she had been wrong and foolish, she said to herself, and had given those who loved her best a sad time of trouble; but she was coming back now, back to her home and her husband whom she loved, and who, in spite of all that had happened, must, she thought, love her yet a little.

It was few words that she spoke as she sat on the box by Bobby Frewin's side this time, but he guessed pretty well what was passing in her mind, and showed his respect for her silence by addressing the whole of his conversation to his horses, who might well be supposed to have missed him during his two days' absence.





CHAPTER XVIII.

“Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.”

COWPER.



HERE was sorrow in the little household at Port Ruan. A heavier blow than had ever before darkened the threshold with its shadow had fallen upon the inmates of that once happy home. Margaret Jewell, the wife, the mother, who had been so long the stay and support of all about her, who had thought of others and toiled for others all her life long, lay helpless and insensible, struck down by an attack of brain fever.

The long spell of continued anxiety which had succeeded Jenifer's sudden flight, the vain efforts she had made to find her, the physical and mental toil, the long walks and perpetual trouble of mind, had told upon her vigorous frame.

From the moment of Dick's return she had never been the same. The sight of his grief, and the sense of her own utter helplessness to shield him from the consequences of his wife's act, had been more than she could bear, and she had sunk under the prolonged strain.

Dick returned from his fruitless expedition to Rosewall to find his mother prostrate and his home in confusion. In his despair he had fetched Millicent Harris, and during the last fortnight she had not left her uncle's house, and had been seldom absent from his wife's bedside.

Mrs. Harris had been eager to proffer her services, but Dick, who had never cared for his aunt, and who since his troubles shrank from her with invincible diversion, had sternly rejected all her offers of assistance, and was supported in his resolve by the doctor, who insisted on the necessity of absolute quiet for his patient.

For several days Margaret Jewell lay in the most critical condition, and nothing could exceed the misery of the poor little household. It was hard to know which of the two were the most to be pitied—the old father, who sat all day in his chair in the parlour, with big tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks ; or the son, who roamed to and fro in the house, unable to take any rest. Had it not been for Millicent's gentleness and patience they would have been in a pitiful state indeed ; but, with her quiet tact and quick perception, she thought of everything, and managed both to nurse the patient with

the tenderest care, and to comfort the poor old man as far as might be, and soothe Dick's restless spirit. Poor fellow! the double sorrow was enough to break down the stoutest heart. For a few days, when Margaret was at her worst, he seemed completely absorbed in his mother, and had no leisure to think of Jenifer, but directly she took a turn for the better his thoughts turned to his wife, and he began to take fresh steps in hopes of finding her.

It was plain that she was never absent from his mother's thoughts, and in her fevered wanderings it was always Jenifer or Dick of whom she spoke.

At times it made Millicent's heart bleed to hear her asking with entreating looks for Jenifer, and saying again and again, "For Dick's sake; you know it is for Dick."

One night when she was at her worst, and Dick and Millicent were both in the room, listening anxiously to every sound, and watching each sign and movement, they saw her lips moving, and Dick bent down to hear what she was saying. It was not his name this time or Jenifer's either, but some fragment of a text that she was conning over and over again with strange tenacity.

"Yes, yes, I know it; 'cruel as the grave—cruel as the grave.'"

Three times she repeated the words, and Dick looked at Millicent as if seeking an explanation.

But the girl only shook her head, and held a cup of milk to the sufferer's lips.

Margaret drank thirstily, and then she looked up at Millicent, and said in a calmer tone, with a sudden smile breaking over her face—

“But love is stronger still; love can conquer death.”

Then Millicent remembered the sermon by the strange parson which had struck her aunt so much, and catching her train of thought, she replied—

“Yes, love has conquered. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends.’”

The clear tones of her voice seemed to fill the room with sudden light and peace. The sick woman felt their influence, and lay down her weary head on the pillow. The tried and troubled man felt it, too. A tear dropped from his eye as he stood there at his mother's bedside, and he turned away with a calmer and braver heart.

Her love had been strong as death—he knew that—and perhaps it might yet be the conqueror.

That night proved to be the crisis of the illness. Before morning Margaret had sunk into a refreshing sleep, and when she woke the doctor spoke hopefully.

She was very weak and feeble, and it would be weeks before she would be herself again; but the immediate danger seemed to be over,

and this of itself was enough to fill all the members of the family with thankfulness.

At least her mind was perfectly clear; she knew Millicent, and tried to thank her for her attentive care, and the next day she asked for her son.

That day, by a strange coincidence, Millicent received a note from her cousin George, to say he had been through Wenstow the other day, and had heard something of Dick's wife from the driver of the mail-cart.

There were only a few lines, which George had written hastily in pencil in the train, on his way to Exeter, but it was so long since a word had been heard of Jenifer, that this seemed a great boon, and Millicent hastened to tell Dick.

The message seemed at first to fill him with hope and joy, and he looked brighter than he had done for many days. But on second thoughts it seemed most improbable that Jenifer should be at Wenstow, which was comparatively near, and not have been heard of before this. Dick shook his head sorrowfully, and said he feared there must be some mistake.

"Perhaps she went through Wenstow," Millicent suggested; "and the driver can tell us more. Shall you go there, Dick?"

Dick's intention was to set off at once. "If necessary I can sleep there. She needn't know, and I'll be back early."

It was late in the afternoon when George's

note had come, but he would not wait till the next day. It was, in fact, quite a relief for him to find something he could do, and now that his mother was out of danger there could be no reason to keep him at home.

But before he started, he went upstairs to see his mother, and remained with her a few minutes.

She was very calm, and scarcely spoke, but smiled up at him very tenderly.

As soon as he was gone she called to Millicent, and said in a low voice, "Millicent girl, I have had a dream, but so clear and plain before my eyes it came, I thought at first it must be true. It was about Jenifer."

She paused, and Millicent felt half alarmed to hear her speak of Jenifer, since the name had never once been mentioned in her hearing during the course of the illness, and feared the fever must be returning.

But there was nothing feverish or light-headed in Margaret's appearance now. She looked as calm as possible, and it was in the quietest tone that she continued: "I dreamt I saw her standing on the opposite bank of a stream. I called to her, but she did not hear me, and went on with her face turned away; and between us the river came rushing along. Then I plunged into the midst and felt the cold waters closing over me, and I thought I heard a voice saying, 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it'—"

the old text, you know, Millicent, on my boys' grave ; and the next minute I was by her side, and we were walking together on the shore, with the sun shining round us. I was quite sorry to wake and find it was all a dream. But somehow, Millicent girl, it has made me feel happier."

Millicent listened wonderingly, but said little for fear of exciting her aunt, and tried to divert her attention by speaking of other things.

But Margaret could not forget her dream, and kept harping on the same string. "I would not tell Dick," she said, "for fear of grieving him ; but now I know he will find her again. I always hoped he might, and now I am quite sure."

Millicent did not venture to tell her of George's note, and the fresh hopes it had aroused both in her own and Dick's minds, and was glad when the doctor's arrival interrupted the conversation.

All that evening Margaret seemed wonderfully better. Martin came upstairs and sat by the bedside, overjoyed to notice her improvement ; and the little attentions of the old sailor to his sick wife, and the eager way in which he listened to every word which fell from her lips, were touching to see.

"We shall have her up and about before many days now," he said with a pleasant smile to Millicent, as he hobbled across the room. "I told Doctor Pratt only just now, 'It's a good

stroke of business you've done in pulling her round, doctor, for we can't spare her yet awhile.' Can we, my lass?"

"No, uncle, indeed we can't," said Millicent, warmly. "But we have good cause to be thankful now; ay, and hopeful too, for it's many days since I've seen her look as cheery and peaceful sort, as she does to-night."

"There's only one thing wanting now, to my mind, Millicent," said Martin, dropping his voice to a whisper, lest his words should reach the patient's ears. "It's my belief, if there could but be good tidings of the lad's wife, of Dick's Jenifer, we'd see *her* up and about to-morrow. But it's not likely; nay, wench, it's not likely, and as you say, that's neither here nor there. Only it just crossed my mind."

Millicent did not tell her uncle how often the same thought crossed hers, nor did she think it wise to tell him of Margaret's strange dream. So she made no reply.

The sound of voices below caught her ear, as she helped her uncle along the passage towards his room, and she wondered who had come in at this late hour.

Could it be Dick, who had given up going to Wenstow that night and had turned back?

She hardly thought this was likely, and listened a moment at the head of the stairs.

Yes, sure enough, that was his voice; and there was another, too. It was not her mother's, she knew, and she wondered whose it could be.

Perhaps it was Sally Goodman, or one of the neighbours who had met Doctor Pratt returning from his rounds, and, hearing of his patient's satisfactory progress, had stepped in to express her pleasure at the good news.

She had half a mind to run down and see for herself, but just then she heard her aunt's voice calling her, and hastened to answer.





CHAPTER XIX.

“ Strong and free, strong and free ;
The floodgates are open, away to the sea.
Free and strong, free and strong,
Cleansing my streams as I hurry along,
To the golden sands and the leaping bar,
And the taintless tide that awaits me afar ;
As I lose myself in the infinite main,
Like a soul that has sinned and is pardoned again.”

CHARLES KINGSLEY.



JENIFER found her friend Bobby Frewin as good as his word that day, or, as he would have expressed it himself, “ a turn better.” Not only did he show himself most attentive to Jenifer on the journey, insisting on giving her the seat on the box at his side, to the disappointment of a young man from town who had made sure of securing it ; not only did he provide her with wraps and supply her with refreshments at the first inn where they stopped, but when they reached Wenstow he hired a

gig, and informed her that he intended to do himself the honour of driving her over to Port Ruan.

His grey pony trotted briskly along, and although the road was rough and stony, the greater part of the journey was accomplished by daylight, and the last beams of the setting sun lighted up the headland cliffs as they reached the top of the downs where Port Ruan first came into sight.

Here the road diverged from the coast, and, as Jenifer knew, the shortest way home could only be managed on foot. So she took leave of her kind driver, and refused his offer to leave his pony in a cattle-shed and himself carry her bundle over the hill.

No, she could manage for herself; and the shrewd-witted man readily understood that, considering the manner in which she had left Port Ruan, she preferred reaching home by herself, and did not press his services upon her.

“Good evening to you, then, my lass,” he said; “and you’ll give my respects to the cap’en and his mother, and I hope you’ll find Mrs. Jewell mending, and all besides well. And next time you come this way, you’ll not forget to let me know, and I’ll keep the box seat clear for you.”

Jenifer again expressed her gratitude, and tried in vain to make Bobby accept of half a crown in payment of his services. But he would take nothing beyond the actual fare of

the mail-cart, which she had already paid before leaving Launceston.

“ You see, we’re kinsfolk, and I don’t hold with taking money off your own flesh and blood,” he said, with a knowing nod and wink. “ And, to tell the truth, I’m uncommon glad I lighted upon you down yonder in Bristol town, for I knew you’d take it to heart when you heard how things were at home. Good day, missus, and a pleasant walk, and when I’m back at Wenstow I’ll drink a glass to our next happy meeting.”

And so, with a flourish of his whip and a wave of his cap, Bobby Frewin set off in his rickety trap as gaily as if he were driving the mails along the posting road.

Grateful as she felt for his kindness and help, Jenifer was not sorry to be alone during the last mile or two which still lay between her and Port Ruan. She was tired with her long day’s journey, and fearful and troubled in mind as to the prospect before her.

Would her husband be there? And how should she find her mother-in-law? Would they meet her with reproachful looks and harsh, angry words? Would Dick accuse her of being the author of all the troubles which her action had caused? And would not every one in the place point her out as the wife who had run away from her husband’s home, and perhaps people shun her presence, and say all sorts of hard, wicked things about her?

As she drew nearer to Port Ruan, her fears increased so much that she paused a moment, and hesitated as to whether it would not be best to seek out Millicent Harris, who had always been a good friend to her, and ask her to come home with her. But then she recollected that Mrs. Harris would be there too, and would no doubt assail her with a dozen questions, and make fuss enough to bring all the neighbours out into the street.

No, she must go home straight to Dick, and beg his pardon. And when he saw her again, somehow she did not think he would be very hard upon her. She was sorry now, very sorry she had ever run away, since it seemed to have brought so much trouble upon him and everybody else; and the news of Margaret's illness had helped to soften her resentment against her mother-in-law.

After all, it might be she had not meant to do her any harm; and her only fault, even in Jenifer's eyes, had been that she loved her son too well. All these reflections passed through Jenifer's mind as she sat down on a stone by the side of the path, and looked down on Port Ruan in the ravine below her.

It was getting dusk now, but there was still light enough for Jenifer to see the low white houses nestling under the green hillside, and the blue thread of curling smoke rising up among the dark oak woods. Out there beyond the crags of grey granite and rose-tinted quartz,

there was a long red streak in the sky marking the spot where the sun had just gone down over the sea.

At her feet a bed of pink campion stretched, and a little further the ground was gay with bluebells. In spite of all her fears and doubts, it was pleasant to breathe the sweet moorland air, heavy with the scent of thyme and flowers, pleasant to hear the bees humming about her among the yellow blossoms of the broom, pleasanter still to feel the freshness of the wind from the sea, and to enjoy the freedom of this vast expanse about her after the close confinement of the streets.

She looked at the tiny brook which ran babbling over the brown stones, one of a hundred streams descending from the hills to join the great sea, and she rejoiced to feel she too was following its course, and was going back to her home by the shore—back to the old life, which to-night seemed to be fairer than it had ever done before.

Why—oh, why had she ever left it, she asked herself, when a little patience, a little gentleness, a little unselfishness, might have made all right?

Well, she was going back now, to enter on a new and better course. She meant to try and make the best of everything; and if there was a good deal to put up with, she would remember the stuffy rooms and tiresome children in Paragon Row, and that would help to make her gentler and more patient than of old.

And, for all her anxieties as to what Dick would say, her heart beat faster to think of seeing him again, of clasping his hand, and looking up once more into that true, good face, which, in spite of all her faults and follies, she still loved so well. The thought made her start to her feet, and she was standing at a point where two paths divided, hesitating which would be her shortest way, when the sight of a figure ascending the hill by one of the two made her decide on the other.

She had not taken many steps when something made her look a second time at the form of the man who was approaching by the path she had left.

The hill was steep, and he advanced but slowly. Jenifer was partly concealed by a tall furze-bush, so that she could look at him without fear of being seen herself. Just now the trend of the zigzag path had taken him out of sight, but presently he would come this way towards her, and then she must see his face.

Another minute, and Jenifer felt all her pulses tingle as she saw her husband emerging from behind a projecting boulder a few yards from her. It was Dick, but oh, how pale and careworn, how tired and dispirited to what he had been when she saw him last, waving his farewells to her from the deck of the *Mermaid*!

He was coming slowly along, and as he came he thought mournfully enough of his late visit to Rosewall. It had all been so strange



ANOTHER MINUTE, AND JENIFER FELT ALL HER PULSES TINGLE AS SHE SAW HER HUSBAND EMERGING FROM BEHIND A PROJECTING BOULDER A FEW YARDS FROM HER.

and melancholy, and he had been reminded so painfully of his happy wedding-day. Little had he thought, as he stood by Jenifer's side in the big church at St. Ives, that the first time he returned he should be alone.

The promise of that day had failed him sadly. And now his thoughts were going back to another, even earlier time—that day when he returned from his long voyage, and had found Jenifer at the church doors as he came up the steps from the beach. Then she had rushed into his arms, and had promised him she would never, never doubt his faith again.

But all that was far behind him now, and he knew not if he should ever see her face again in this world.

And all the while his wife was there close by, looking at him with hungry eyes, hesitating what to do. Then he, too, looked up, and Jenifer held her breath. But it was only for one moment. The next she had rushed across the rough ground which divided the two pathways, and had flung herself into his arms, crying out, "Dick! dear Dick—my dear, dear husband!"

It was many minutes before either husband or wife could recover from the shock of that meeting—so sudden, so altogether unexpected. They could only hold each other's hands and look into each other's face, and tell each other that they were together, and that nothing should ever part them again.

Naturally Dick's surprise was the greatest. He had started on his way expecting a long walk, a weary, perhaps hopeless search, and a drearier return, and instead, almost before he began his task, he had found all, and more than all, he sought.

Jenifer had met him at the outset, not haughty and indignant and rebellious, but humble and gentle, loving him better perhaps than ever before. Her one concern seemed to be for him—her own sense, grief that she had ever left him.

"Oh, Dick, you look so ill, so tired!" she said to him, as soon as she could put words together. "It was all my fault, I know."

"I am not ill, darling, and now I have found you I am fit for anything," said her husband, so brightly Jenifer felt in a measure consoled; "but mother—did you know," he added in a gentler tone, "she has been very ill?"

"How is she?" asked Jenifer quickly, dropping her eyes with a guilty look on her face. For the first time she began fully to realize the consequences of her own actions, the suffering and misery which she had brought on others. She might repent and return now, but she could not so easily undo the past, or wipe out the effects of her bygone words and deeds. It was impossible for her to forget how she had left home, and the bitter words of the letter which she had written that last night.

"Oh, Dick," she said, when her husband had

given her the latest accounts, "say that you forgive me. I can see it all now, how foolish and wicked I was; but I was wild, almost mad then, because I thought you didn't care about me any more, Dick."

"Silly little one," was all Dick said. "Perhaps I had been hard upon you; but I think you might have trusted me better."

And that was the nearest think to a reproach which he had to make to his wife.

It was as well for every one that it was quite dark by the time they reached Port Ruan, and that they were able to enter the house unperceived.

Dick said to his wife that it was a good thing for his mother, as the news might prove too great an excitement in her weak state, if she heard of Jenifer's return that night.

But although they came in very quietly, and although Dick restrained himself, and did not even call for his cousin, his mother heard the sound of his voice from her bed, and sent down Millicent to speak to him.

After that it was impossible to keep Jenifer's return a secret from her mother-in-law, and if the joy and surprise of that night were a severe test of her strength at the moment, in the long run they helped powerfully to hasten her recovery.

Love had conquered, and her dream had come true in a marvellous way—far beyond all she had ever hoped or dreamed possible. The

victory was complete, and if Jenifer suffered during the first days that succeeded her return home, it was by reason of the coals of fire that were heaped upon her head.

From first to last she never heard one word of reproach in her husband's home. Martin only looked at her with rather a comical expression on his face, and said—

“ I take it you'll 'bide at home now.”

“ I'm sorry I ever went away,” said Jenifer, humbly. The kindness with which she had been received had done more to melt her heart than any amount of harsh words or cold looks.

And she was pleased and surprised when the old man said, pointing upstairs with one hand, “ You must stay for *her* sake, my wench. She wants some one to see after her, and she's been asking for you a score of times.”

Outside, a good deal of surprise was naturally expressed at Jenifer's return, which had been as sudden and unexpected as her departure ; but no one ventured to make any ill-natured remark in her hearing or that of Dick, who looked ready to knock down any one who dared to say a word against his wife.

Some busybody started a story that Jenifer had gone to join her husband and had got lost, some said in Bristol, others on the moors ; while some insisted that she had gone on board a steamer, intending to go to Wales, and had been taken by a wrong boat all the way round to Plymouth.

In fact, there were a dozen different ways of accounting for her absence ; and although a few, following the example set them by Mrs. Harris, shook their heads and said mysteriously that if the truth were only known people would see their mistake, most of the simple Port Ruan folk were content to see that Dick and his wife were not in the least estranged by their separation, and sought for no further solution of the problem.

And malicious tongues were silenced by the devoted manner in which Jenifer waited on her mother-in-law during the tedious weeks of convalescence, and by the eagerness she showed to gratify her smallest wants and wishes. Margaret could only wonder at the change, and did not know how to be grateful enough for her daughter-in-law's thoughtfulness, especially as regarded Dick's father.

One day—it was the week when she first got downstairs again—she thanked Jenifer with tears in her eyes for all her kindness. This was more than the girl could stand. The recollection of the past rose up before her with a vividness which set her own conduct in a worse light than ever, and with reddening cheek and downcast eye she began to stammer out some expression of sorrow and remorse.

“I have never told you. I am very sorry. I ought never to have written that note, but I was angry ; and I want to know if you can ever forgive me——”

But Margaret stopped her half-way through this awkward and halting sentence.

"There can be no question of forgiveness between us, my dearest child. Now that all is over, let us be thankful you are with us again, and not recall things that are painful to both of us. And if you would get me the inkstand off the shelf, and the quill that lies in the drawer below, I think I should like to write a few lines to your aunt, my dear, just to tell her what a good nurse you have been to me."

Jenifer hastened to obey with a sense of great relief, and felt freer and happier from that day forward.

"You were right, Millicent," she said to her cousin a day or two afterwards; "Dick's mother and mine is a noble woman. You told me so long ago, but I did not believe you then. Now I know it is true."

Millicent smiled kindly at Jenifer's impulsive words.

"I knew you would not take long to find that out for yourself," was all she said in reply.

They had been friends from the first, these two, and if Millicent's life was less full than that of others round her, it was the richer for the love which Jenifer bore her to the end.

Margaret survived her husband, and lived to see Dick's children, and to hear young voices gladden the old home which had been hers so long.

She never left her son's roof, and in the whole of Cornwall there was not a brighter home than this, nor a prouder and a happier man than Dick Jewell, the captain of the *Mermaid*.

THE END.

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