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**THE
BIRTHRIGHT**

[Pg i]

**BY
JOSEPH HOCKING**
AUTHOR OF "ALL MEN ARE LIARS"



**NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1897**

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"I MADE A LEAP AT SAM LIDDICOAT."

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"I MADE A LEAP AT SAM LIDDICOAT."

"LOOK IN THE CROCK, JASPER PENNINGTON,' SHE SAID."

"JASPER, JASPER!' SHE CRIED."

THE BIRTHRIGHT

[Pg 1]

CHAPTER I

TELLS HOW THE PENNINGTONS LOST PENNINGTON

I am writing this story at the wish of many friends, who tell me it is my duty so to do. Certain stories have been afloat, which are anything but true, and it has been urged upon me again and again to set down in plain terms the true history of events which have set people's tongues wagging. I must confess that, in spite of the pleasure I have in recalling the memories of past years, it is with great diffidence that I at last commence my work. Not because I have any difficulty in remembering what took place. My memory, thank God, is as good as ever, and the principal scenes in my history are as clear to me as if they happened yesterday. It is not that. The truth is I was never clever at putting things on paper, and somehow, while the facts are clear enough in my mind, I feel a great difficulty in relating those facts in a way that is clear and understandable. You see I have lived an open-air life, and have spent more hours with the bridles-reins in my hands than the pen, and although I had a fair amount of schooling I was never considered a quick learner.

Still, as John Major said to me only yesterday, it seems a duty to clear up certain matters which are altogether misunderstood, and what is more, to clear my name from scandal. Moreover, as he truly insisted, there are others besides myself upon whom clouds rest, and one especially about whom the truth ought to be told.

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"People are saying," asserted John Major, "that the land you call yours is not yours by right, and that in order to get your will you were in league with the devil. It is also said that you broke the laws of God and man in your dealings with your relations, and that Parson Inch refuses to give you the right hand of fellowship until you can prove in a fair and straightforward way that you are not the man some take you to be."

Now I am quite aware that many things have happened to me which happen to but few men. I know, too, that I have had experiences which, to say the least of them, are strange, neither am I sure that I can explain certain matters to Parson Inch's satisfaction. At the same time I am not afraid of the light, and so I am determined to set down truthfully, to the best of my ability, the true account of those events in my life which are misunderstood, so that no stigma shall rest upon those who are as dear to me as my own heart's blood.

Let it be understood, however, that I make no pretence at fine writing, neither must it be expected that I, who never boasted great learning, can explain that which has puzzled Parson Grigg, who was in the parish before Mr. Inch came—aye, even puzzled the Bishop himself who came to visit the rectory some years since. All I undertake to do is to put down in plain, homely words the story of my life, in so far as it affects my good name and the good name of those who are associated with me. It may be that I shall have to touch upon matters peculiar to the part of the country in which I was born and reared, and to which I am proud to belong. As far as I can I will make them clear; but even concerning these I will make no great promises.

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To begin at the beginning then, for I must do this to make everything clear, and I desire above everything to make matters plain. My father, Jasper Pennington, died when I was nineteen, leaving me as I thought Elmwater Barton, a farm of about three hundred acres. I am called Jasper too; indeed, for generations back there has always been a Jasper Pennington. Elmwater Barton is by no means a bad farm. Nearly all the land is under cultivation, and the house is roomy and substantial. You must not imagine, however, that the Barton is the principal place in the parish of St. Eve. Far from it. The parish contains twelve thousand acres, and is, on the whole, the richest parish in Cornwall, and so three hundred acres do not count much. Up to the time of my father living at Elmwater Barton the place had always been held by a family of yeomen by the name of Quethiock, respectable people, of course, but not regarded as gentry. No, the principal house in St. Eve is Pennington, which, when my father died, was owned by Richard Tresidder. My father was born at Pennington, and my grandfather and great-grandfather were born there; indeed, the estate, which is a very valuable one, has been owned by the Penningtons for many generations.

The question, therefore, naturally arises, How did a Tresidder get into the possession of the estate which has always belonged to the Penningtons? It is well to explain this because evil tongues have told lies concerning it.

My father's mother died soon after his birth, when my grandfather was a comparatively young man; and when my father was about five years old, his father called him into the library one day, and told him that it was his intention to give him a mother.

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"A mother?" said my father, "you told me my mother was dead."

"Yes, she is," said my grandfather, "and is in heaven if ever it is possible for a woman to get there; that is why I want to give you another, Jasper, one who will take care of you better than I can."

"Will she be kind to me?" asked my father.

"That she will," was the reply; "but more than that, she will bring you a brother, who is about your own age, and he will be a playfellow for you."

My father was greatly pleased at this, and so he welcomed his new mother very eagerly, thinking all the time, of course, of his new playfellow.

The lady my grandfather married was a widow. Her husband, Richard Tresidder, had been a lawyer in Falmouth, but he had died of cholera about four years after my grandmother died. Her little boy, too, was called Richard, or Dick, as they named him for short, and in a little while the two boys became friends.

Now the widow of lawyer Tresidder brought my grandfather no property at all, not a pennypiece, but she brought a great deal of discord instead. She was always jealous for her son, and she hated my father. The very sight of him used to vex her, especially as after several years she did not bear my grandfather a son. There were three daughters born, but no son, which greatly disappointed my grandfather, and made his wife exceedingly bitter toward my father.

As years went by it seemed to be the great purpose of her life to cause quarrels between the father and son, and at the same time to show up the excellencies of her own son, Richard Tresidder. I suppose the wisest and best men are clay in the hands of women; at any rate, such has been my experience in life, especially if that woman is clever, and has a will of her own, which latter quality few women are short of. Anyhow, after many years, she succeeded in setting my grandfather against his only son Jasper. How she managed it I don't know, for my grandfather always had the name for being a just man, but then, as I said, what can a man do when a woman gets hold of him? Just before my father was twenty-one this widow of Tresidder got her husband to make a new will. She persuaded him to let her husband's brother be present when Mr. Trefry, the old family lawyer, was writing the document, and a good many hard words passed even then.

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You see, Mr. Trefry couldn't bear to see my father defrauded, and yet he had no right to interfere. The upshot was that the will gave my father the sum of £500, while all the Pennington estates were to be held in trust for Richard Tresidder. This of course seems very strange, but it goes to show how a woman can twist a man around her finger when she sets out to do it. There was a clause in the will, however, which my grandfather, in spite of James Tresidder, who was also a lawyer, would have inserted. I think the old man's love for justice, and perhaps his love for his son, caused him to have a mind of his own in this case, for in the face of lawyer Tresidder's objections and his wife's entreaties he stood firm. The clause was to this effect—that if Jasper Pennington or his heirs were ever in a position so to do, they could demand to buy the Pennington estates, as they existed at the date of the will, at half the value of the said estates. And that in the case of such an emergency, five representatives of five county families be asked to make the valuation. My grandfather further stipulated that none of the Pennington lands should be sold at any time for any purpose whatever.

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Now, the widow of Tresidder greatly objected to this, and even after it was duly signed did her utmost to get my grandfather to have this clause expunged. But the Pennington blood asserted itself, and although he had given way to his wife in such a degree that he had almost disinherited his son, he still held to this clause.

Not that it could be worth anything to my father. How could he, with only £500, expect to gain many thousands?

As I said, the will was made some few months before my father was twenty-one, and it was stipulated that he was to receive the £500 on his twenty-first birthday.

And now comes a stranger part of the business. About a week before my father came of age, my grandfather grew angry at what he had done. The thought of his only son being disinherited in favour of a stranger just because a woman had twisted him around her finger made him nearly mad. He saw now what his wife had been aiming at for years; he saw, too, that the quarrels he had had with my father were of his wife's making; and anxious to do justly, he wrote a letter to Mr. Trefry telling him that he desired his presence at Pennington, as he wanted to make a new will, which should be duly signed and sealed before his son Jasper's twenty-first birthday. This letter was given to a servant to take to Truro. Now this servant, like almost every one else she had in the house, had become a tool of the solicitor's widow, and there is every reason to believe she saw the letter. Be that as it may, before Lawyer Trefry reached Pennington, my grandfather, who the day previous had been a hale, strong man, was dead, and the doctor who was called said that he died of heart disease.

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My father, however, believed that his father had been poisoned, or in some other way killed, because the woman he had married feared that he would make a new will in favour of his son

Jasper.

And now I have told why Pennington, which had been in the possession of the Penningtons for many generations, passed out of our hands, and became the property of the Tresidders.

After my grandfather's funeral £500 were paid to my father, and he was ordered with many bitter words to leave the home of his fathers. The clause in the will to which I have referred, however, comforted him greatly. He was young and strong, and he determined to save up enough money to get back the Pennington estates according to the provisions laid down. At that time Elmwater Barton was to let. Old Mr. Quethiock, who had just died, had left one son who had a shop in Falmouth. This son did not like farming, and he willingly agreed to let the Barton to my father, who spent nearly the whole of his capital in stocking it. Meanwhile, Richard Tresidder lived in state at Pennington, and sneered at my father, who toiled hard at the Barton, and thus, if my father hated Richard Tresidder, was it to be wondered?

Now, joining the Pennington lands are those belonging to the Lantallick estates, which belong to the Archer family, a family as old as the Penningtons and as greatly respected. Squire Archer had five sons and one daughter, and my father, who was always friendly with the people at Lantallick, visited the house often, and all the more because he loved Mary Archer. Concerning Mary Archer I will pass no opinion. I will only state facts. I have been told that she was a beautiful young woman, and that my father loved her dearly. Indeed, it was generally understood that he should marry Mary when he came of age. It has been said, too, that Mary was simply crazy in her love for my father; but about that I have my doubts.

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Not long after my father settled down at Elmwater Barton, he asked Mary to be his wife, and it was then that Squire Archer told him to leave the house, and informed him, moreover, that his daughter would be shortly married to Richard Tresidder.

"But," said my father, "Mary has promised to be my wife, promised again and again."

"And do you think," asked the Squire, "that I would allow my only daughter to marry a tenant farmer, a wild young scamp that his father disinherited? Leave the house, I tell you!"

I have heard that Mary pleaded with her father, but I will not vouch for the truth of that. Certain it is that some time after she became married to Richard Tresidder.

Thus it was that Richard Tresidder robbed Jasper Pennington not only of his home and lands, but his love.

Now, my father prospered at Elmwater Barton. He was a clever man, and fortune favoured him. He began to lay by money, and he farmed the land so well that folks said he would in a few years, by the blessing of God, have enough to buy back the Pennington estates, according to the terms of his father's will. This was told Richard Tresidder and his mother one day, and they both laughed. About this time my father's cattle began to die. No one could explain why, but die they did, until many rumours were afloat, and people whispered that the cattle were bewitched. Anyhow, it was asserted that Richard Tresidder had been seen talking with Betsey Fraddam, the witch, while many delicacies had been taken to Betsey's cottage from Pennington.

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Now, as I said, there will be many things in this narrative which I, an unlearned man, cannot explain. Still, I must tell of matters as they occurred, this, among others, especially as my relations with Eli Fraddam, Betsey's son, have been condemned by Parson Inch. It is said that the Fraddam family has witchcraft in its veins. Anyhow, it is well known that Betsey was regarded as a witch, while Eli, her son—but of the poor gnome I will tell later on.

My father tried everything to cure his cattle, but could not, and what was more perplexing was the fact that other people's cattle in fields adjoining suffered not at all. In a few months he was driven to extremities; he saw his chances of buying back his old home slipping through his fingers, and what maddened him most was that whenever he passed Richard Tresidder, the man who lived on his estates, laughed him in the face.

One day my father was in a field adjoining the Pennington lands when he saw Richard Tresidder.

"Well, farmer," said Tresidder, with a sneer, "and how are you getting on?"

Whereupon my father accused him of having dealings with Betsey Fraddam, and told him he was a black-hearted knave, and other things concerning himself, which maddened Richard Tresidder so that he jumped over the hedge that divided them and struck my father with his heavy riding-whip.

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Now the Penningtons have always been a large-limbed, powerful race, and, while they have been slow to anger, they have—thank God—always had a strong sense of what is just, and have always been regarded as brave men. Richard Tresidder was a slim, wiry man, and, while strong and agile, was no match for a man who, when he hadn't an ounce too much flesh, weighed over eleven score pounds. What my father would have done by him I know not, but while he was in the act of thrashing him two of Tresidder's men came up, and thus the business ended, at least for the time. A little while later my father was summoned for attempted murder.

The affair was the talk of Cornwall for some time—at least, that part of Cornwall—and most people thought my father would be hanged. The magistrates, who knew the Penningtons and liked them, however, did not allow this; but he had to pay Tresidder a sum of money which,

unless he were helped, meant his utter ruin.

Again had Richard Tresidder and his mother, who, I believe, was behind all this, got the upper hand of my father, and again by unfair means. Was it a wonder, then, that Jasper Pennington should regard them as enemies? Was it any wonder that I, when I came to know about these things, should feel bitterly?

After the sentence was passed my father, wondering what to do, went to see Betsey Fraddam, the witch.

"Betsey," said my father, "tell the truth about my cattle. You can't harm me, because I'm the oldest son, indeed the only son, but I can harm you. Did Tresidder hire you to ill-wish the cattle?"

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"Jasper," said Betsey, "ded 'ee bait un—ded 'ee bait un, now, right bad? Zay you ded, now."

"Yes, I did," said my father. "I'm glad the two men came up, or I should have murder on my conscience, and that's not right, even when the man is your enemy."

"But you ded bait un! Aw! aw! Jasper; ther's they that can kill, an' ther's they that can cure. Some can do both."

"You can, Betsey."

"P'raps I can, Jasper. Ave 'ee seed my boy Eli, Jasper?"

"No," replied my father.

"Then come in and zee un—come in, Jasper," and she led the way into the cottage.

My father, who told me this years after, said he should never forget the curious feeling that came over him as he saw Betsey Fraddam's son. He looked even as a child like an old man, and he had a wild look in his eyes that made him shudder.

"He 'ed'n wot you may call a purty cheeld, es a, then?" asked Betsey.

My father did not reply.

"Well, we ca'ant expect for Betsey Fraddam to 'ave purty cheldern, can us, then?"

My father was still silent, for Betsey had a strange way with her that made people afraid. Even I can remember that.

"You may have a son some day, Jasper."

"No," said my father.

"But you may," said Betsey, "you may; I do'ant main nothin' wrong, Jasper. Margaret Quethiock es well off, and her father do oan the Barton. Think about it, Jasper. And then ef you do ever have a son, you'll tell 'im to be kind to Eli, wa'ant 'ee now, Jasper?"

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"Yes," said my father, wondering all the time why he should give the promise. And that was all the conversation they had together at that time, for my father told me, and he was always a truthful man. But his cattle got better from that time, and as Mr. Quethiock, of Falmouth, lent him £300 he was able to tide over his difficulty.

A little while later my father married Margaret Quethiock, and the fortune that her father gave her was £200, besides the £300 he had borrowed, and Elmwater Barton rent free during her lifetime. If she died before my father, the question of rent was to be considered. They had been married about two years when I was born; but my mother died at my birth, so I never knew a mother's care and love.

My grandfather Quethiock said nothing about rent after my mother's death, but my father did not become a rich man. Somehow things were constantly going wrong with him, and he was in endless trouble about money matters. It was his stepmother, he told me, who was constantly persecuting him, because she feared his getting rich, while her son, who enjoyed my father's wealth, had all sorts of people ready to do his will. Only for him to hint at a thing, and his satellites would do it. Thus, one day a herd of cattle would get into a cornfield and destroy it; and on another, without any apparent reason, a corn-mow would catch fire. We could never trace it to them, but we always knew by the jeering laugh on Tresidder's face when he passed us who was the cause of our trouble.

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All this shortened my father's life. When I was nineteen, at the time when he should have been in his prime, he was a worn-out old man; and so, when sickness overtook him, he had no strength to fight against it. It was during this sickness that he told me some of the things I have written, and also informed me of other matters which will be related later.

I was with him shortly before he died, and then he said to me very earnestly, "I leave you Elmwater Barton, Jasper, for I don't think your grandfather Quethiock will ever charge you rent, and he told me it should be yours completely at his death; but your real property is Pennington, my boy. Now I want you to make me a promise."

"I will promise anything in my power, father," I said.

"Then," he replied, quietly, "I want you to promise me that you will never rest until you get back

your own. Never rest until you are back at Pennington as master and owner. You have been robbed, my son. I have tried to get your rights and have failed, but you must not fail."

"No, father, I will not fail," I replied. "I will never rest until I have got back Pennington."

"And never trust a Tresidder, Jasper; they are all as deep as the bottomless pit, and as cruel as the fiend who rules there."

"I hear, father," was my reply, "and you shall be obeyed."

This was in the month of July, in the year 1737, when I was nineteen years of age.

What I have to tell is how I tried to get back my home, of the battles I had to fight, of the love which came into my heart, of many mysteries which I cannot explain, and of the strange experiences through which I passed in seeking to obey my father's will. [Pg 14]

Whether I shall be believed or no I cannot tell, but I will tell only the truth, strange as it may all seem. Moreover, let God be the judge whether my quarrel with the Tresidders was not a just one, and whether I did not fight fairly, as every honest man should.

CHAPTER II

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TELLS HOW I, JASPER PENNINGTON, TRIED TO GET MY OWN

I do not think I have as yet mentioned it, but Richard Tresidder—I mean the man who entered into my father's possessions—had three sons and one daughter, and each of these was brought up with the thought that I was their natural enemy. Of course, they were informed that my grandfather's will provided the means whereby I, if I were sufficiently fortunate, could buy back the estate at half its valued worth. And they were in constant suspense about it. If I were to marry a rich wife it could be done; if I were to have some stroke of fortune their home might be taken from them, they having only a given sum of money. And thus it was to their interest to keep me poor, as well as to damage my reputation in the neighbourhood.

The eldest son was a year or more older than I, and was, of course, respected as the heir to the Pennington lands, for it is strange how people's sympathies veer around on the side of the people who are in power. My father has told me many times how, when he was thought to be the prospective heir of Pennington, people could not make enough of him, while Richard Tresidder had but scant courtesy paid him. When it became known that my father was disinherited, no matter how unjustly, these same folks discovered that Richard Tresidder was a very mine of wit and goodness, while my father was made a butt for fools' jokes. [Pg 16]

And so I discovered that my being a Pennington counted but for little, while it seemed to be forgotten that but for the wiles of a clever, selfish woman, I should be the Squire of the parish.

When I was old enough I was sent to Tregony grammar school, my father being determined to give me a schooling befitting the position he hoped, in spite of his misfortunes, I should some day occupy. Now Nick Tresidder had been attending this same school for some months when I went. For this I was very glad, because I thought it would give me an opportunity for testing him. I had not been in the school a week, however, when my father came to fetch me away. The reason was that Richard Tresidder had demanded it, as he would not allow his son to be educated at the school where the son of a tenant-farmer was admitted. He told the schoolmaster that he had two other sons whom he intended to send, but that he should immediately withdraw his patronage if I were not sent away.

All this angered me as well as my father, but there was no help for it, and I was sent to Probus instead, where the education was as good, but where I had no chance of meeting the Tresidders.

I have said that Elmwater Barton was a good farm, but I must confess to looking longingly at Pennington. This was in the nature of things very reasonable on my part, for I always looked upon it as my home. But besides this, I doubt if the whole country can present a stretch of land so fair, or a house so pleasantly situated. There may be bigger and more imposing houses, but there are none more comfortable. Besides, Pennington faces a beautiful glen that is about half a mile wide. I know of no grass as green as that which grows there, or of trees so fine and stately. Besides, the river which winds its way downward, and which sometimes runs side by side with the drive leading from the house to the main road, is the most beautiful stream of water I ever saw. Then sloping away from this glen are wooded hills, the sight of which in the early summer time is enough to make a man sing for joy; and in addition to all this, while standing at the main entrance of the house you can see the blue sea, say a mile and a half away. I, who have seen something of the world, say there is nothing finer in the way of green and pleasant land, while all the world knows that nowhere are cliffs so fine and the sea so blue as that which is to be seen in this part of my native county. Besides, all that land from the house where my father was born right to the sea belongs to the Pennington estates, while at the back of the house it stretches just as far, and just as fair. [Pg 17]

One day—it was before my father died—I had climbed Trescowal Tor, just to feast my eyes upon so much loveliness, when I saw Richard Tresidder walking with his mother toward the

Pennington woods. Now a great desire came into my heart, not to see Tresidder, but to speak to his mother, whom I knew to be the evil genius of my family. And so I made my way to the woods, and stood in the pathway as they came up.

They both knew me, not only through my likeness to my father, but because of my size, for it is well known that the Pennington family on the male side are at least six inches taller than the ordinary run of men.

"Do you know you are trespassing?" asked Tresidder.

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"My name is Jasper Pennington," I said, proudly.

"Then get off my lands at once," he said, sternly, and with a black look.

"Not until I have had a good look on the man and woman who have robbed my father and me," I said—and I knew I had aroused the devil in them as I spoke. For the woman who had robbed us fairly glared at me, while Tresidder grasped his stick as though he would strike me. The woman was nearing seventy, but she was strong and hale, and her eyes flashed like those of a young girl. I saw, too, that she must have been handsome when she was young. I marked the cruel, resolute expression of her mouth, and I did not wonder at the difficulty my grandfather had in resisting her.

"I will have you put in the stocks, and then taken to the lockup, if you are not gone at once," said Tresidder, savagely.

"I will give your three sons the chance of doing this," I said, with a laugh. "Three Tresidders against one Pennington isn't bad in fair fight. Of course, where cunning and cheater comes in I should be nowhere. Or perhaps," I continued, "you would like to try yourself. I am only eighteen, and you are in the prime of your life; still, I should be pleased to give you the chance."

But he laid no hands on me; instead, he put a whistle to his mouth and blew.

"Yes," I said, "get some one else to do the work you are afraid to try yourself; that's a Tresidder all over. Well, I'll go now; I've had a good look at you both, and I shall know you again."

With that I turned and walked away, for, if the truth must be told, I did not care about fighting with Tresidder's minions, and my father had told me many times to be careful.

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The path was very crooked, and the foliage was very thick, so that I had not gone more than a few steps before I was out of their sight. Acting on the impulse of the moment, I stopped and listened.

"A regular Pennington," I heard the old woman say. "You must be careful, Richard, for he has more brains than his father. He has all the good looks of the family, too. We must be silent about all our plans, for if he knows he will spoil them. Remember the will."

"I do remember; that is why I am anxious about our boys. Still, there can be no fear, and it will not be so very long before we shall get her. That settled, and Nick will be all right."

I heard no more after that, but I wondered often what he meant. I told my father, too, but he could give me no hint toward the solution of Tresidder's words.

After my father's death I ceased to think so much of Pennington; for I had Elmwater Barton to look after. I was determined to make the farm pay, and now that all the responsibility rested on me, I made up my mind that the Tresidders should not play fast and loose with me, as they had done with my father. In order to do this I looked carefully around me for a man in whom I could trust; for, be it remembered, this was a very difficult matter. My father had engaged two hinds, and each of these had been bribed by the Tresidders to injure his property. You see, his enemies had almost supreme power in the parish, and they used it to his injury. Still, I knew that the Tresidders must have enemies as well as other people, and it was for me to find out who they were. This I had no great difficulty in doing. A man named William Dawe had farmed a place named Treviscoe, on the Pennington estate, and the poor fellow had several seasons of bad luck. One year his turnip crop failed; the next the foot and mouth disease got hold of his cattle; and the next, during the lambing season, he lost a great number of sheep. Indeed, so bad was his luck that he was unable to pay his rent. Perhaps Tresidder would have been lenient with him but for two things: one was that he had refused to take sides with him against my father, and another was that when Nick Tresidder insulted William Dawe's daughter the farmer gave him a thrashing. The end of all this was that William Dawe was sold up, and even then he was not free from all his difficulties.

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One of the first important things I did after my father's death, therefore, after a serious conversation with the farmer, was to lure him to come to Elmwater Barton, with his wife and son and daughter, in order to manage the farm. I do not think in all my life I have ever seen a man so grateful.

"Will you come, William?" I asked, when I told him what wages I could afford to give.

"Come, Maaster Jasper, come! I reck'n I will! Why—" And then he caught at my hand, and behaved in a way that made me think for the time that I was serving him only, and not myself at all.

In a few days William was settled down at the Barton, and right well did he arrange for the

harvest, and right hard did both he and his son work for me. Indeed, both William and his son George seemed ready to work their arms off for me, and were both anxious to serve me night and day. George Dawe was a strapping fellow of twenty-five, nearly as tall and strong as myself, though not quite. This was proved one day when we wrestled down in the calves' meadow. I had hard work to master him, for George had taken the wrestling prize at St. Eve's Feast for three years in succession. I was proud to have thrown him, especially as I had not yet got my full strength, not being twenty years of age. George had had a varied experience. He had been to sea in a trading vessel, and, if the truth must be confessed, had done a fair amount of smuggling. Be that as it may, George Dawe loved me like a brother, and nothing was too much for him to do for me. Thus I regarded myself as very fortunate. Eliza Dawe, too, was a careful, sensible woman, while Selina, her daughter, was a strapping, healthy wench who could do as much work as two ordinary women.

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Now, I say this was a great help to me, for they all watched my interests closely.

"Lev any ov the Trezidders try any ov their dirty capers now," said George to me, "and we'll laive 'em knaw."

Those who know nothing about farming can have no idea what a great amount of harm a seemingly little mistake can do. Suppose, for instance, there are two ten-acred fields side by side. Suppose the month is early July, when the corn has nearly reached its full height, and the heads have all bursted ready to ripen. Well, suppose, again, that one of these ten-acred fields has barley, or oats, or wheat, while the other is a browsing field in which twenty or thirty head of cattle are feeding. Then let some evil-disposed person open the gate between these two fields, and the thirty head of cattle get into the cornfield—what happens? Why, £20 worth of damage can be done in a single night. And things like this were often happening in my father's days, and thus he was kept poor.

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But things changed after I got George Dawe on the Barton. His eyes seemed to be everywhere, and always in my interests.

Let me give one example (and then I will soon get on to my story proper) how George Dawe saved me a large amount of money, and at the same time helped me to teach the Tresidders a lesson.

It was the June after I had got William Dawe's family to live with me. We had had several dry weeks, so that the fields had become parched and bare, and we were anxious lest the sheep should not have enough grass. One field had been planted with vatches, which, as every farmer knows, grow quickly and are cut for the horses.

"William," I said to Dawe one day, "I am afraid we shall have to sacrifice a hay field. The browsing fields are all brown; the sheep can't get enough to eat. We must be careful not to turn them there when the dew is on the grass, though, or they'll get vlayed."

"I wudden trouble, Maaster Jasper; ship c'n nibble a lot on a dewy mornin', and we sh'll git rain zoon, I reck'n."

"Well, as you think best; but I fancy we'd better turn the biggest lot into the 'Sheeps' Close' to-night." The "Sheeps' Close" was the name of one of the best meadows, which at this time was very bare owing to the long spell of dry, hot weather.

Well, I had to ride to Truro that afternoon, so I did not get home till late at night. I found George Dawe waiting up for me.

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"Anything the matter, George?" I asked.

"Iss, ther es, Maaster Jasper."

"What?" I asked.

"The Trezidders be up to the ould gaame. When I wos comin' 'ome from St. Eve two or dree 'ours agone, I 'eared young Nick plannin' ev it weth Buddle."

"Explain, George," I said.

George told his story, with the result that we made our way to the "Sheeps' Close" and hid behind the hedge. Just before dawn—that is, about three o'clock in the morning—we saw two men coming toward the gateway. We saw them unfasten the gate and open it wide, then we heard one say to the other, "Now let's fetch up the sheep, and the fool will be worth a bit less money in a few hours."

Then they went away, and in a little while we heard them "whishing" up the sheep. George closed the gate, and we both waited until they came up. There were a hundred and seventy-five sheep in the flock, and they brought them up for the purpose of turning them into the vatches. Here they would be knee-deep in rank vegetation, and the poor things, glad to get to such juicy meat, would eat ravenously. The result of this would be that they would get filled with wind and would swell horribly, and if not immediately relieved would die a painful death. If the design succeeded in this case I should be hundreds of pounds poorer before the men would be at their work.

It may be imagined, therefore, that my blood was pretty hot, and that my feelings toward the Tresidders were not those of a lover, and I will leave it to any fair-minded man whether my anger

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was not reasonable.

As I said, George and I waited by the gate until they came up. The sheep came close to the gate, as if waiting to be let in, and the two men stood behind, not knowing, evidently, why the poor creatures did not go to their death.

"What's the matter, Jacob?" asked young Nick Tresidder.

"Dunnaw, aw'm zure," answered Jacob, who was the eldest son of Tresidder's "head man" and the worst rake in the parish. "Lev us go up an' zee."

So they came up, as we expected they would.

"Why, the gaate es cloased and apsed!" cried Jacob. "The devil must 'a 'bin 'ere."

"Nonsense," said Nick, "you couldn't have opened it; you must have been dreaming. There, open it."

"You tackle Nick Tresidder, an' I'll 'ave a go with Buddle," said George to me, in a whisper; "he's allays a-braggin' as 'ow 'ee c'n bait me. Now then, jump out!"

At this we both leaped forward. I took Nick Tresidder by the scruff of the neck, while George gripped Buddle like a blacksmith's vice.

The sheep jumped away frightened, while these two blackguards cried out as if the judgment day had come.

"Es et the devil?" asked Buddle.

"No," I roared out, "it isn't the devil; we're not related to you in any way, and your master won't help you."

By this time they found out who we were, and began to wriggle finely.

"Look you, Nick Tresidder," I said; "the law will do nothing for us, so we are going to take the law in our own hands." [Pg 25]

"What do you want?" asked Tresidder.

"Nothing unfair," I said. "We are man to man. You are on my land, and you were doing a trick worthy only of the devil, your master. We will wrestle fair, as becomes Cornishmen, and you must show no mercy, for as God is above me I'll show none."

Now I will do these men justice. They were not afraid of us, and when they knew that we were people of this world and not ghosts from the other, they showed no desire to run away. Nick Tresidder was a year older than I, while Buddle always sneered when folks said that George Dawe was a better man than he. Besides, they both saw that we did not mean playing at wrestling.

But Nick Tresidder, Tresidder-like, was not fair; he jumped upon me before I was ready, a thing always regarded as cowardly at a wrestling match. I saw in a minute, too, that he knew the tricks of the art, and were I not a wrestler, too, and a strong man to boot, my arm must have been broken before I could put forth my strength. This angered me more than I like to be angered, for now, when we were to meet man to man, I felt not so bitter about the sheep. So I put forth all my strength and made him let go his vantage hold, then I put my arm around his chest, and right glad was I when I found him a strong man; so I played with him for the pleasure of wrestling, just as any true Cornishman will. But I was wrong in doing this. My father had told me never to trust a Tresidder, and I did trust him to wrestle fairly, even although he had tried to kill my sheep. While I wrestled, merely for the pleasure of wrestling, I felt a stab at my side, and I knew that a knife had entered my flesh just under my arm. [Pg 26]

"You are a coward, Nick Tresidder," I said, "a coward in every way;" then, not knowing whether I was dangerously wounded or no, I played with him no longer, for a man cannot bear everything. I caught him in both my arms and lifted him from the ground; then I wrestled in earnest. I heard one of his ribs snap, but he did not cry out, then another, and he became but a child to me; so I let him go, and he staggered away like a drunken man.

"Now go home and tell your father what you have done," I said, "and tell him who you found in Elmwater Barton 'Sheeps' Close."

Then I turned to George, who was still struggling with Buddle, and who, just as I came to him, threw him heavily.

"George," I said, "I have been stabbed. Just tie this cloth tightly around my chest."

"The coward!" said George, panting; "but where es a, Maaster Jasper?"

"He won't wrestle any more for a month or two," I replied; "but I would not have hurt him so if he had not stabbed me."

So there, in the early morning light, while the birds began to sing, and the sheep tried to find food on the dewy ground, George Dawe tied a cloth tightly across my naked chest, and I could not help wincing at the pain. Just as he was finishing, Jacob Buddle got slowly up from the

ground. He had been badly stunned, but no bones were broken.

"Look after your master," I said; then I saw the knife with which Nick had stabbed me lying on the ground. "There," I said, "you know that knife, I expect; your master used it while we wrestled."

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But Buddle was dazed, and did not reply. So when I had put on my coat I went to Nick Tresidder, who was very faint and unable to walk, so ill had he become. Then my heart softened, and together we took him up to Pennington, and Buddle, who was by this time better, said he could manage him.

The next day I heard that Nick Tresidder had fallen from his horse and broken his ribs, and Dr. Hawke, who had been called in, said that he must remain in bed many days. But of this I am sure, although neither George Dawe nor I said a word, Richard Tresidder knew the truth.

Now I have told this, not because I delight in such things, but because I want it to be known how I was treated, and what I had to contend with, for this was but a sample of the many ways in which the Tresidders had tried to harm me. I have often wondered why they felt so evilly toward me, seeing that they were rich at my cost, and I have come to the conclusion that it is a law of human nature for a man to hate those whom he has treated unjustly. But I am an unlearned man, and the heart of man—and woman—is past finding out.

And now I must tell how, in spite of myself, I was drawn more and more into contact with the Tresidders, with other matters which strangely affected my life later on.

CHAPTER III

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HOW I WAS ROBBED OF ELMWATER BARTON; HOW I FLOGGED THE TRESIDDERS, AND WAS PILLORIED BECAUSE OF IT

A month after the event I have just related I was walking down toward the sea, for my wound, which was but slight, had healed up, when, passing by Betsey Fraddam's cottage, I saw the old woman sitting by the door mending a garment.

"'Ere, Maaster Jasper, I want 'ee," said Betsey.

So I went toward her, not caring to offend her. Now I am not a superstitious man, neither did I ever believe in some of the stories told about Betsey. At the same time, I knew better than to offend her. Even Parson Grigg was civil to her, and admitted that she had powers which could not be trifled with. It is also a fact that she had cured some of my cattle which had been stung by adders, by charming them, while, on the other hand, my father believed that she had, at Richard Tresidder's bidding, ill-wished his cows. She had on several occasions cured terrible diseases which the doctor from Falmouth said were incurable, and I have heard it said that when Mr. John Wesley visited Cornwall, and was told about her, the great man looked very grave, and expressed a belief in her power. This being so, it is no wonder I did not like to offend her; neither had I any reason for doing so. She had been kind to me, and once, when I had scarlet fever, gave me some stuff that cured me even when Dr. Martin said I should be dead in a few hours. Besides, according to my father's promise, I had been friendly with Eli, her son. Now, Eli was several years older than I, but he never grew to be more than about four feet high, and was the most ill-formed creature I have ever seen. He had bow legs, a hump back, and was what was called "double-chested." His thick black hair grew down close to his eyes, which eyes, in addition to being very wild and strange-looking, were wrongly set, so that no one could tell which way he was looking. He was rather sickly-looking, too, and was thought to be very weak. But this I know to be wrong. Eli, ill-formed as he was, was much stronger than most men, nature having endowed his sinews with wondrous hardness and powers of endurance. Eli did no work, but lived by poaching and begging food at the farmhouses. As Betsey's son he was never refused, especially as some believed he had inherited his mother's powers.

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Well I entered the cottage and sat on a wooden stool while Eli sat in a corner of the open fireplace and looked at me steadfastly with one eye, and with the other saw what was going on out in the road.

"Well," said Betsey, "and so you found out what Nick Tresidder wanted to do, then? An' I 'ear as 'ow you've nearly killed 'im."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"How do I know? How do I know everything? But you'll be paid out, Maaster Jasper! Tell y' Dick Tresidder 'll pay 'ee out. I c'n zee et comin'."

"See what coming?" I asked.

"Look 'ee, Maaster Jasper; 'ave 'ee bin to zee yer Granfer Quethiock lately?"

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"No."

"Then you be a vool, Jasper—tell y' you be a vool. Wy, 'ee's nearly dead; he may be dead by now.

What 'bout the Barton, Jasper? 'Ave 'a willed et to 'ee?"

At this my heart became heavy. Up to now no rent had been charged, and I hoped that my grandfather would make it over to me. My uncles, I knew, did not like me.

"Old Mester Quethiock es dead, es dead, es dead," said Eli, in his funny, grunting kind of voice.

"How do 'ee know, Eli?" asked his mother.

"I know, I know," grunted Eli, and then he laughed in his funny way, but he would tell nothing more.

"What ought I to do?" I asked, for I felt a great fear come into my heart, although my father had told me that my Grandfather Quethiock meant to give me the Barton.

"Go and zee, go and zee," said Betsey.

So I went back home and saddled my mare and rode to Falmouth. When I got into Falmouth town I saw an ironmonger whom I knew, and he looked as though he would speak, so I stopped my horse.

"Well, and so yer poor gran'father is gone," he said.

"Is he?" I replied; "I did not know till now."

"Iss, he's gone, and a good man he wos, too. His two sons, yer uncles, 'ave been waitin' a long time to git into his shoes. Ah, there'll be a change now! Th' ould man was the soul of generosity; but the sons, Peter and Paul, nobody'll be able to rob one to pay the other of they two. But I 'ear as 'ow you'm safe, Maaster Jasper. The Barton es yours, I'm told."

This cheered me, so I rode on toward my grandfather's house. Just before I got there I saw my two uncles coming down the street, and with them was Richard Tresidder. I checked my horse and watched them, and saw that they entered a lawyer's office, and the lawyer who owned it was the son of the man who was present when Lawyer Trefry drew up my grandfather's will. [Pg 31]

I got to know nothing by going to my grandfather's house, save to find out the day of the funeral, which was fixed for three days later, and which I attended. After the funeral was over the will was read, and the lawyer who read it was Nicholas Tresidder, a bachelor after whom young Nick was called.

Now, I do not pretend to be a learned man, but I do love honesty, and I do say that the will was drawn up to defraud me. Neither do I believe that my grandfather ever intended the words written down, to read as the lawyer said they read, for he had told my father that Elmwater Barton was to be left to me. According to Lawyer Tresidder, however, the whole of my grandfather's property was left to his two sons, Peter and Paul Quethiock, and it was left to their generosity as to whether I, his grandson, Jasper Pennington, should remain at the Barton free of all rent, and whether the land should be eventually mine. Thus, according to the lawyer's explanation, it was left to my uncles' generosity and judgment as to whether my grandfather's desire should be carried out. I desired that this part of the will should be read again, but so many words were used that I had difficulty in making head or tail of it. All the time I noticed that my uncles looked very uneasy.

Now, I know that my grandfather was very fond of me, and in spite of the fact that I had been robbed of my rightful heritage, he was proud that he had a Pennington for a grandson. Thus I am sure that it was his will that I should have the Barton for my own. But during the last few years he had been very feeble and infirm, and thus in the hands of a clever lawyer he could easily be deceived as to what was legal. [Pg 32]

I will not attempt to give a lengthy account of what followed. Indeed, I have not a very distinct remembrance. I was not long in seeing what was in the minds of my two uncles, and I quickly realised that they had been in league with the Tresidders; and so, feeling that it was their intention to defraud me, I became dazed and bewildered. I have a confused recollection of asking some questions, and of the replies given, and after hearing them I left the house, with the consciousness that I was not the owner of Elmwater Barton, but a tenant liable to be dismissed by my uncles, both of whom were, I was sure, tools of Richard Tresidder.

Still, I determined not to give up without a struggle, so I rode to Truro that same day and saw Lawyer Trefry, the son of the old lawyer who drew up my grandfather's will. He listened to my story very attentively, and when I had finished declared that Nicholas Tresidder was a clever fellow.

"I think it is possible you may have a case though, Jasper," he said; "I think you may have a case. I will see to it at once. I will examine the will, and if there is a chance you may depend that I will seize on it. But remember this: Nicholas Tresidder is a clever fellow, and when he sets his mind on a thing it's a difficult thing to find him napping."

That night I went back to the Barton with a sad heart, speaking not a word to any one. I longed to ease my pain by denouncing the people who sought to work my ruin, but in spite of William Dawe's anxious solicitations I held my peace. It is true Lawyer Trefry gave me some little hope, but I did not sleep that night, and for the next few days I wandered around the farm like one demented. Presently I saw Lawyer Trefry again, and I knew directly I caught the look on his face [Pg 33]

that my case was hopeless.

"Nicholas Tresidder is a smart fellow," he said, with a grunt, "a very smart fellow. There is no doubt but that your grandfather meant you to have the Barton—not the slightest doubt; but then, you see, it is not legally yours. Let us hope that your uncles will abide by your grandfather's evident desire and make it yours."

But I had no hope of that, and I shook my head sadly. "As well expect water from a stone," I said. "For a long time I have wondered why Richard Tresidder should be so friendly with Peter and Paul Quethiock; now I know. He has been for years trying to ruin me, and now he has accomplished it."

"How old are you?" asked Lawyer Trefry, suddenly, as though a new thought had struck him.

"Twenty next month," I replied.

"Bah! why did not old Quethiock live a month longer?" grunted the lawyer.

"Why, what would have been the use?" I asked.

"Use? Why, if you could prove that you had held the land for twenty years, you could lawfully claim it as yours."

And thus everything was against me, and although we talked over a dozen things together, no ray of light came to cheer the darkness. [Pg 34]

The next thing that happened was the event of a letter which I got from Nicholas Tresidder, the Falmouth lawyer. This letter was to the effect that as I was neither a lawful tenant of Elmwater Barton, nor the owner thereof, I must immediately vacate the place, as Paul Quethiock intended to take possession thereof immediately. I had expected this, and had been for days trying to value the stock on the place. As I have before stated, I was barely twenty years of age, and although my father had appointed as my guardians two neighbouring farmers, they took but little interest in my affairs—indeed, I do not think they understood what their duties were. Anyhow, they took no steps to help me, neither did they interfere with me in any way.

On the receipt of this letter, which was brought from Falmouth by messenger, I saddled my mare, and immediately rode to see Lawyer Trefry.

He read the letter very carefully, and then asked me if I had received nothing else.

"Nothing," I replied; "what is there else to receive? They have taken away the farm, they have ordered me to leave it; now I am come to you to arrange with James Trethewy and John Bassett about selling the stock. I suppose the crops will have to be valued, too, and a lot of other matters before I can realise on my property."

He looked very grave, but said nothing for some time.

"I will do what I can at once," he grunted, at length; "but believe me, Jasper, my boy, Nicholas Tresidder is a clever dog—a very clever dog. He's been set to work on this bone, and he'll leave nothing on it—mark my words, he'll leave nothing on it." [Pg 35]

"He *has* left nothing," I replied; "I doubt if the stock will fetch very little more than the £500 my father spent when he took Elmwater Barton from my Grandfather Quethiock."

Lawyer Trefry shook his head and grunted again; but he made no remark, and so I left, thinking that I knew the worst. I imagined that when the stock was sold I should be worth several hundred pounds, and with this as a nucleus, I should have something to give me a fair start.

And so the day of the sale of the stock on the Barton was fixed, but before that day came another letter was brought by a messenger of Lawyer Nicholas Tresidder from Falmouth. This letter stated that as no rent had been paid since the death of Margaret Pennington, the heirs of the late Peter Quethiock claimed six years' rent, as they were entitled to do by the law of the land.

I knew now what Lawyer Trefry meant when he said that Lawyer Tresidder would pick the bone clean. He had seen this coming, while I, young and ignorant of the law, had never dreamed of it. Old Betsey Fraddam had said that Richard Tresidder would pay me out, and he had done so now. Six years' rent would swallow up the value of the stock, and would take every penny I possessed. Thus at twenty I, who, but for the fraud and deceit of the Tresidders, would be the owner of Pennington, would be absolutely homeless and penniless. Then for the first time a great feeling of hate came into my heart, and then, too, I swore that I would be revenged for the injury that was done to me.

Again I went to Lawyer Trefry, and again he grunted.

"I expected this," he said; "I knew it would come. Nick Tresidder is a clever dog; I was sure he would pick the bone clean." [Pg 36]

"And there is no hope for me?" I asked, anxiously.

"You will have your youth, your health and strength, and your liberty," he replied. "I do not see how they can rob you of that; no, even Nick Tresidder can't rob you of that!"

"But the rest?"

"It will have to go, it must all go; there is no hope for it—none at all," and the lawyer grunted again.

I will not describe what took place during the next few weeks—there is no need; enough to say that all I had was taken, that I was stripped of all I possessed, and was left a homeless beggar.

As Lawyer Trefry told me, they had done their worst now, at least for that time. Richard Tresidder had been undoubtedly working in the dark for years to accomplish this, and in his kinsman the lawyer he had found a willing helper. It was plain to see, too, that it would be to Peter and Paul Quethiock's advantage to try and take the Barton from me. It was a valuable piece of land, and would enrich them considerably. There was no difficulty, either, in seeing Richard Tresidder's motives. He had wronged me, and, as I said, it seems a law of life that a man shall feel bitterly toward one he has wronged; and besides all that, his safety lay in keeping me poor, and to this end he brought all his energies to bear.

When it was all over I think I became mad. While there was a straw to which I could hold I managed to restrain myself, but when the last was broken I think I gave myself over to the devil. I behaved in a way that frightened people, until even those who were inclined to be friendly avoided me. By and bye only one house was open to me, and that was old Betsey Fraddam's. It was true I visited the taverns and beershops in the neighbourhood, and formed companionships with men who years before I despised; but Betsey Fraddam's house was the only one open to me which I could regard as anything like a home. Even Betsey grew angry with me, and would, I think, have bidden me leave her doors but for her son Eli, who seemed to love me in a dumb, dog-like sort of way.

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"Why doan't 'ee roust yezelf up, Jasper?" she would say. "Spoase you be put upon, spoase Squire Trezidder 'ave chaited 'ee—that ed'n to zay you shall maake a maazed noodle of yezelf. Roust yezelf up, an' begin to pay un back."

"How can I do it, Betsey?"

"'Ow? Better do a bit a smugglin' than do nothin'."

"Yes; and isn't that what Tresidder wants? If he can get me in the clutches of the law that way it will just please him. Mad I am, I know, but not mad enough for that."

"Then go to Plymouth, or go to Falmouth, my dear cheeld. Git on board a shep there, an' go off to some furrin country and make a fortin."

"There are no fortunes to be made that I know of, Betsey; besides, I don't want to get away from St. Eve. I want to stay here and keep my eye upon Tresidder."

"And what good will that do? You ca'ant 'urt 'ee by stayin' 'ere. 'E's too clever for you; he c'n allays bait 'ee while you stay 'ere, especially when you do behave like a maazed noodle."

"Very well, Betsey. I will leave your house," I said after she had been talking to me in this fashion one day; "I can manage to live somewhere."

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"Jasper mus'n't go 'way," said Eli; "Jasper stay with me. Ef Jasper go 'way, I go 'way. I help Jasper. I knaw! I knaw!" and then the poor gnome caught my hands and laughed in a strange way which was half a cry.

And so, because Betsey loved Eli with a strange love, and because Eli clung to me with a dog-like devotion, I made Betsey's cottage my home. Plan after plan did I make whereby I might be able to make Richard Tresidder and all his family suffer for their behaviour to me, but I saw no means. What could I do? I had no friends, for when I left Elmwater Barton William Dawe and his family left the parish. For a long time I could not make up my mind to ask for work as a common labourer in a parish where I had been regarded as the owner of a barton. It seemed beneath me, and my foolish pride, while it did not forbid me to idle away my days and live in anything but a manly way, forbade me to do honest manual work. But it would have made no difference even if I had been less foolish, for when I on one occasion became wiser, and sought work among the farmers, I was refused on every hand. The fact was, every one was afraid to offend Richard Tresidder, and as every tenant farmer in the parish was in his power, perhaps their conduct was reasonable.

And thus it came about that my manhood slipped away from me, and I became a loafing outcast. I would have left the parish but for a seemingly unreasonable desire to be near Richard Tresidder, who day by day I hated more and more. I know I was mad, and forgot what was due to my name in my madness.

When a year had gone, and I was nearly twenty-one years of age, there were few more degraded sights in the parish than I. My clothes had become worn out, and my whole appearance was more that of a savage than of anything else. People said, too, that the look of a devil shone from my eyes, and I saw that people avoided me. And as I brooded over this, and remembered that I owed it all to the Tresidders, I vowed again and again that I would be revenged, and that all the Tresidder brood should suffer a worse hell than that through which I passed.

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Nothing cheered me but the strange love of Eli Fraddam, who would follow me just as a dog follows its master. When I could get a few pence I would go to the alehouse and try and forget my sorrow, but I nursed my anger all the time, and never once did I give up my dreams of harming

the Tresidders. I write all this because I want to tell my story faithfully, and because I will give no man the chance to say that I tried to hide the truth about my feelings toward my enemies.

The day before my twenty-first birthday I was loafing around the lanes when I saw Richard Tresidder and his son Nick drive past me. They took the Falmouth road, and, divining their destination, I followed them in a blind, unreasoning sort of way. As I trudged along plans for injuring them formed themselves in my mind, one of which I presently determined I would carry into effect. It was the plan of a savage, and perhaps a natural one. My idea was to wait outside the town of Falmouth, to waylay them, and then to thrash them both within an inch of their lives. I remember that I argued with myself that this would be fair to them. They would be two to one, and I would use nothing but my fists.

When I got into Falmouth I spent the few pence I possessed in food, and then I made inquiries about the time they would return. I discovered that they intended to leave the George Inn about five o'clock in the evening, so I spent the time loafing around the town, and repeating to myself what I would do with them both that night.

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About three o'clock in the afternoon, however, my plans became altered. As I stood at a street corner, I saw Richard Tresidder, with his son Nick, besides several other gentlemen, coming down the street. Scarcely realising what I did, for the very sight of him made me mad, I went toward them, and as Richard Tresidder came up I spat in his face.

"Who's a thief? Who's a cheat? Who got Pennington by cheaterly and lying?" I shouted.

"Get out of the way, you blackguard," cried Nick Tresidder, the lawyer.

"I'll not get out of the way," I cried; "I'll tell what's the truth. He killed my grandfather; he hounded him into making a false will, and he and you have robbed me. Ah, you lying cowards, you know that what I say is true!"

Then Richard Tresidder lifted his heavy stick and struck me, and before the bystanders knew what had happened there was a street brawl; for I struck Richard Tresidder a heavy blow on the chin which sent him reeling backward, and when his son Nick sprang upon me I threw him from me with great force, so that he fell to the ground, and I saw the blood gush from his nose. After that I remember nothing distinctly. I have a dim recollection of fighting madly, and that I was presently overpowered and taken to the lock-up.

I remained in the lock-up till the next morning, when I was taken before the magistrates. I don't know what was said, and at the time I did not care. I was angry with myself for not biding my time and flogging the Tresidders in the way I had planned, and yet I was pleased because I had disgraced Tresidder—at least, I thought I had—before the whole town. I have an idea that questions were asked about me, and that one of the magistrates who knew my grandfather said it was a pity that a Pennington should come to such a pass. Richard Tresidder and his friends tried to get an extreme sentence passed upon me, but the end of it all was that I was sentenced to be pilloried for six hours, and then to be publicly flogged.

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Soon after I was taken to the market-place, where the pillory was set up, and I, in face of the jeering crowd, was tied to a pole. Then on the top of this pole, about six feet from the platform on which I stood, a stout piece of board was placed, which had three hollow places cut out. My neck was pressed into one socket and my wrists in the two others. Then another stout piece of board, with hollow places cut out to correspond with the other, was placed on the top of it. This pressed my neck very hardly, and strained it so that I could hardly breathe; it also fastened my hands, and hurt my wrists badly. I know of nothing nearer crucifixion than to be pilloried, for the thing was made something like a cross, and my head and arms were crushed into the piece of board which corresponds with the arms of a cross in such a way that to live was agony.

And there I stood while the jeering crowd stood around me, some howling, some throwing rotten eggs at me, and others pelting me with cabbage stumps and turnips. After I had stood there about three hours some one came and made the thing easier, or I should not have lived through the six hours, and after that time, the mob having got tired of pelting me, I was left a little time in peace.

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When the six hours were nearly up, I saw Nick Tresidder come to the market-place with two maidens. One I saw was his sister, the other was a stranger to me. I knew they had come to add to my shame, and the sight of them made me mad again. I tried to speak, but the socket was too small, and I could not get enough breath to utter a word. Still, anger, I am sure, glared from my eyes as I looked at Nick and his sister; but when I looked at the other maiden, a feeling which I cannot describe came over me. She was young—not, I should think, quite eighteen—and her face was more beautiful than anything I have ever seen. Her eyes were large and brown, while her hair was also brown, and hung in curls down her back. Her face, thank God! was not like that of the Tresidders; it was kind and gentle, and she looked at me in a pitying way.

"What has he done?" she asked, in a voice which, to me, was as sweet as the sound of a brook purling its way through a dell in a wood.

"Done!" said Nick Tresidder. "He is a blackguard; he nearly killed both me and my father."

She looked at me steadfastly, and as she did so my heart throbbed with a new feeling, and tears came into my eyes in spite of myself.

"Surely no," she replied; "he has a kind, handsome face, and he looks as though he might be a gentleman."

"Gentleman!" cried Nick. "He will be flogged presently, then you will see what a cur he is."

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"Flogged! Surely no."

"But he will be, and I wish that I were allowed to use the whip. Why, he belongs to the scum of the earth."

By this time I felt my degradation as I had never felt it before, for I felt that I would give worlds, did I possess them, to tell her the whole truth. I wondered who she was, and I writhed at the thought of Nick poisoning her mind against me.

Seeing them there others came up, and I heard one ask who this beautiful maiden was.

"Don't you know?" was the reply. "She is Mistress Naomi Penryn."

"What is his name?" asked this maiden, presently.

"Can't you see?" replied Nick. "Ah! the eggs have almost blotted out the name. It is Jasper Pennington, street brawler and vagabond."

And this was the way I first met Naomi Penryn.

CHAPTER IV

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I ESCAPE FROM THE WHIPPING-POST, AND FIND MY WAY TO GRANFER FRADDAM'S CAVE

No words can describe the shame I felt at the time. Before Naomi Penryn came there and looked upon me I was mad with rage and desire for vengeance. I longed to get to a place where I could meet the whole Tresidder brood face to face. But now a new feeling came to me. Had I not after all been a brute, and had I not acted like a maniac? For the look on her face made me love goodness and beauty. I could do nothing, however; my hands were numb, and my tongue was dry and parched. All I was capable of at this moment was to listen and to look into the fair maid's face, and feel a great longing that she might not despise me as Nick Tresidder evidently intended that she should.

The crowd did not pelt me while she stood there; I think it was because there was something in her presence that hindered them. Every one could see at a glance that she was different from the host of laughing things that cared nothing for my disgrace.

I waited eagerly for her to speak again; her words seemed to ease my pain, and to make me feel that I, too, was a man in spite of all I had suffered.

"Jasper Pennington," she said, presently; "why, Pennington is the name of your house, Nick!"

"Yes," replied Nick, savagely.

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"He's young, too," she continued, looking at me curiously, and yet with a pitying look in her eyes.

Then I remembered I was twenty-one that day, and that my father had been dead barely two years. Thus, on my twenty-first birthday, I was pilloried as a vagabond and a street brawler, while this beautiful girl looked at me.

"Where does he live?" she asked again, as though she were interested in me.

"Up to a year ago he lived in St. Eve's parish," replied Nick. "He managed to stay by fraud on Elmwater Barton; he was a brute then, and tried to kill me. He would have succeeded, too, but for Jacob Buddle. I hope the man who flogs him will lay it on hard."

She gave me one more look, and in it I saw wonder and pity and fear. Then she said, "Let us go away, Nick. I do not care to stay longer."

"No, we will not go yet!" cried Nick; "let us see him get his lashes. He will be taken down in a few minutes. There, the constables are coming."

I saw the tears start to her eyes, while her lips trembled, and at that moment I did not feel the sting of the lies Nick had told.

The whipping-post was close to the place where the pillory had been set up, and I saw that the constable held the rope with which I was to be tied. Then two men came and unfastened the piece of wood which had confined my head and hands. At first I felt no strength either to hold up my head or to move my hands, but while they were untying my legs the blood began to flow more freely, and I knew that my strength was coming back. The ropes being removed I was allowed to stand a minute, so that my numbed body might become sensitive to the lash of the whip, but I thought not of it. I kept my eyes steadily on Naomi Penryn, and fed upon the look of pity on her face. I knew that she must think of me as a savage brute, and yet she felt kindly toward me. She

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did not ask to go away again; she seemed to be held by a strange fascination, and watched while the rope was fastened to the ring in the whipping-post. Then I saw Richard Tresidder come up. He had a scar on his cheek, and from his eyes flashed a look of anger, as though he gloated over the thought of my shame and suffering. No sooner did she see him than she came to him and asked that I might be spared the whipping, but Tresidder would not listen to her.

"He deserves to be hanged, my dear," he said; "if such low fellows as he are allowed to bully gentlemen in the streets, what is to become of us?"

Now this was hard to bear, for as all the world knows the Pennington family is one of the best in the county, but I saw that he wanted to embitter her mind against me.

Then I saw Lawyer Trefry come up, and two justices with him, and while my old friend did not speak to me, I knew that he thought of me kindly.

"The lad hath been much provoked," he said. "I have known him as a good lad for years, and but for unfair treatment, matters would be reversed."

At this two of the justices nodded their heads, while Richard Tresidder called out for the constables to do their work, for he saw that people began to sympathise with me.

Again I turned to Naomi Penryn, and as I saw the look on her face I determined that I would not bear the lash. Not that I feared the pain of body, but I could bear the degradation no longer. Then they lifted me from the platform on which I had been standing, and the people could see that my neck was cruelly discoloured, while my hands were blue.

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"He hath suffered much," I heard it whispered, "and Squire Tresidder hates him. He's a Pennington, and his father was robbed. Isn't he a fine, strapping fellow; no wonder they are afraid of him."

This and other things I heard, until I knew that Lawyer Trefry had been making the mob friendly; for I have noticed again and again that ignorant people are easily changed from one state of feeling to another.

Now when I came to the whipping-post I began to look around for a means of escape, and to think how I should deal with the two constables that held me.

"Fasten him tight!" cried Richard Tresidder; then, just as the constables released my hands in order to put the rope on me, I gave a desperate struggle, and feeling great strength at that moment, I threw the constables from me, and made a great leap through the crowd. Not a man laid hands on me in spite of Richard Tresidder's commands, for which I knew I had to thank Lawyer Trefry, who with others had changed the feelings of the people. So I quickly got away from the town, and ran as hard as I was able to the River Fal. I knew that I should be followed, for I had not undergone my full penalty, and the law was on Richard Tresidder's side, so I determined that I would get among the woods that slope up westward from the river, and hide as best I might.

I knew I should be safe for the night, for the woods there were very thick, and night would soon be upon me. My only fear was that my strength would not hold out, for having eaten nothing for many hours I was hungry and faint.

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After more than an hour's running I reached the woods, and, as far as I knew, little trouble had been taken to follow me, so having hidden myself among some very thick branches I laid down and rested. Could I have obtained some food I think I should have been fairly contented, for I felt neither so angry nor friendless as I had felt in the morning. Presently I heard a rustling among the bushes, and I fancied that my pursuers must be near me, so I lay very quiet and listened, but could hear no sound of human voices. So I became curious to know what made the noise, and to my delight I saw a cow that had evidently strayed away from its field, having probably got into the wood to be under the shade of the trees, and away from wasp-flies. At first she was frightened at me, but I had been used to cattle all my life, so I soon quieted her, and she let me approach her. I saw that it was time for her to be milked, so, making the palm of my hand into a cup, I got enough milk to refresh me considerably and to give me strength to carry out any plans I could make.

Scheme after scheme passed through my mind, but every one of them was driven away by the memory of Naomi Penryn's face and the kind words she had spoken. I knew that in going back to St. Eve I was going back to danger, and yet I determined I would go. I wanted to be close to the Pennington lands. I wanted to watch Richard Tresidder. Besides, I remembered that Naomi Penryn was probably a guest at Pennington. Then I began to ask myself why she should be with the Tresidders, and what relationship she bore to them. For I did not know her at all. The name of Penryn was well known in the county, but I did not know to what branch of the family she belonged. What connection had she with Nick Tresidder? Why should he bring her to see me that day? And what were the Tresidders' plans concerning her?

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It came to me suddenly. She was intended for Nick Tresidder. I remembered the conversation I had heard between Richard Tresidder and his mother, and I thought I understood its meaning. Then my heart gave a wild leap, while hot blood rushed madly into my head, for I knew then that a new life had entered mine. I felt that I loved Naomi Penryn with a great love, and that this love would never leave me while my heart continued to beat. For I had not been given to walking out with maidens; my life had been filled with other things, and so the love I felt was new to me—it

filled my whole life, and every breath I drew increased it.

For a long time I lay and dreamed of my love; I did not think of the way in which she must have regarded me, neither did I for a long while remember my degradation. I lived in happy forgetfulness of everything, save the love-joy that filled my life. The birds fluttered hither and thither on the twigs which grew so thickly around, and finally settled to rest, while the insects ceased to hum as the night descended, but I scarcely heeded them. I lay among the ferns, my head pillowed on a moss-covered stone, and thought of Naomi Penryn. I did not care who she was; I did not think. Why should I? For I believe that when God sends love into our hearts, it does not matter as to name and lineage. I had seen the flash of her eyes, and remembered the tear drops that glistened. I had seen the beautiful face, so full of tenderness and truth; I had heard her voice, sweeter than the sighing of the night wind as it played among the wild flowers, and I cared for nothing else. Hour after hour passed away, the woods became darker and darker, but I could still see Naomi's face. Then the eastern sky became streaked with golden light, and the birds sang to welcome the advent of day, but their songs were not so sweet as the memory of Naomi's voice. For my love was the gift of God, and I thought then only of what was beautiful and true.

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But with the dawn of day other memories came to me. I thought of my shame; I remembered that she had been told to regard me as a vagabond and a street brawler. I knew that Nick Tresidder would seek to poison her mind against me, and that even now I was being searched for that I might be degraded by the lash of a whip; and then a great pain and bitterness filled my heart, for I felt that my love was hopeless. While I had rejoiced in loving I thought not of this, but after a time my love became a desire, an overmastering desire to woo Naomi Penryn, to make her love me as I loved her.

And this was hopeless. Had she not seen me pilloried as a shameful vagrant? Had she not seen me persecuted, tormented—the byword, the laughing-stock for the offals of Falmouth town? Had I not been pelted by refuse? Was I not made hideous by disfigurement? How could I win her love? Then I hated the Tresidder tribe more than ever. They had robbed me of my home, my heritage, my all, and now through them I must be loathed by the one, the light of whose eyes burned into my heart like fire. But more than all this she would be with Nick Tresidder day by day. He would walk with her, ride with her, talk with her. They would roam among the woods and pluck the wild flowers that should be mine, while I—I was hiding from the men who held a whip to lash me.

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These thoughts kept me from lying still any longer, so I got up and walked along under the great trees until I came down to the river. Perhaps the world can show more beautiful sights than the river which runs between Truro and Falmouth, but I have my doubts. Nature here is at the height of her loveliness and spreads her riches with no niggard hand. For the clear water coils its way through a rich countryside, where green woods and rich meadows slope down to the river's bank. Here the flowers come early in the springtime, and scent the air through the summer; and here, too, winter is tardy in making its appearance, as if loth to shrivel the shining leaf, or to cause the gaily-painted flower to wither and die.

Even I, as I stood by the river's bank at early sunrise, torn as my mind and heart were with conflicting passions, was soothed by the blessedness of the scene, for my heart lost something of its bitterness and love became triumphant. But the feeling was not for long. As I stood by the still water I saw the reflection of myself, and the sight made me more hopeless than ever. I saw in the water a tall, wild-looking youth, with bare head, save for a mass of unkempt hair; a face all scratched and bruised, and made to look savage and repulsive by vindictiveness; the clothes were dirty, bedraggled and torn, while the riding boots were torn and muddy.

And Naomi Penryn had seen me thus—ay worse. I went to the river and washed, and then looked at myself again. My face was still scratched and bruised, but I had the Pennington features. After all, there was nothing mean and cunning about them. The eyes were wild, and perhaps fierce, but they were honest and frank still. The clothes were much worn and torn, but the body they covered was strong and shapely. There was nothing weak or shambling in those six feet three inches.

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Then I remembered what I had been a year before, and what I had become through injustice. Could I not make myself worthy? But how? I faced, or tried to face, facts truthfully. I was without home or friends, if I except the friendship of Eli Fraddam the gnome, who was at once despised and feared on every hand. I had no money, I had no clothes. Moreover, I had no means of getting any. I had no trade; I had no thorough knowledge of anything save farming, and no farmer dared to hire me. It was true I had some little experience of fishing, and could manage a boat fairly well, but not well enough to gain a livelihood by such work.

And yet a love had come into my life for one who was tenderly nurtured, one doubtless accustomed to abundant riches; I, who was an outcast, a beggar. And I owed my poverty, my disgrace, to the Tresidders. Let God who knows all hearts judge whether there was not an excuse for my hatred. And yet, although the Tresidders had made my very love a seeming madness, that same love made me see beauty, and led me to hope with a great hope.

I turned my face toward Pennington, wondering all the while if I should see Naomi again. For I called her Naomi in my own heart, and to me it was the sweetest name on earth. I repeated it over to myself again and again, and the birds, who sang to me overhead, sang to me songs about her. And as I trudged along, I tried to think again how I should buy back Pennington, not for

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revenge, but because of my love. But no ray of light shone to reveal to me the way. I could see nothing for it but that I, poor and friendless, must forever remain poor and friendless still. And yet all the while birds sang love songs and told me of Naomi Penryn.

When I at length saw Elmwater Barton, I began to think of the steps I must take for my immediate future. I had determined that I would live within sight of Pennington, but how? Even Betsey Fraddam would be afraid to give me shelter when she had heard the truth, for Betsey knew Richard Tresidder's power. For let me tell here that while Betsey was much sought after, she was hated by many. Betsey admitted to being a witch, but claimed only to be a white witch. Now as all Cornish folks know, there is a difference between a white witch and a black witch. A white witch is one who is endowed by nature to cure by means of charms, and passes and strange signs. She can also read the future, and find out secrets about those who do evil. Thus a white witch is looked up to, and her calling is regarded as lawful, even by the parsons, save of a very few who are narrow in their notions. A black witch, on the other hand, is said to have dealings with the evil one, and her power is only gained by a signed compact with the king of darkness.

Now if Betsey were suspected of the evil eye, and of being a black witch, her life might be in danger, and if Richard Tresidder as the chief man in the parish were to turn against her, 'twould go hard with her. Thus I knew that while Betsey did not love Tresidder she would do nothing to offend him. Only her love for Eli caused her to give me a home during the past months, and I knew that now she would not dare to have me in her house.

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Thus I made many plans as to what I should do, and presently I had made up my mind. My plan was to go into a cave which I knew of, and spend my days there, and by night I would go to Betsey's house and get food. I should thus have shelter and food, and I should be near Pennington. I should also have means of finding out whether Naomi Penryn stayed at Pennington, as well as other matters which lay near to my heart. What I should do when winter came on I knew not, neither could I tell how I could make myself worthy of my love. I felt sure that Richard Tresidder's great desire was to drive me from Cornwall, and thus be freed from the sight of one who must always remind him of his fraud. As for my getting back the home of my fathers, it was out of all question.

So I made my way to the cave. It was called Granfer Fraddam's Cave, because he died there. Granfer Fraddam had been a smuggler, and it was believed that he used it to store the things he had been able to obtain through unlawful means. He was Betsey Fraddam's father, and was reported to be a very bad man. Rumours had been afloat that at one time he had sailed under a black flag, and had ordered men to walk a plank blindfolded. But this was while he was a young man, and no one dared to reproach him with it even when he grew old. When Granfer was alive the cave was a secret one, and none of the revenue officers knew of its existence. Only a few of Granfer's chosen friends knew how to find it. It was said, too, that he died there while hiding from the Preventive officers, and that ever since he had haunted the place, and that his voice might be heard at night calling for food and water, and praying for vengeance on the King's servants. Rumour also reported that he died a terrible death, because no clergyman or man of God could get near to help him from the clutches of the Evil One. As far as I was aware, its whereabouts was a secret when I was young, although it was generally supposed to be in what was known as Granfer's Cove, although some said it fell in at Granfer's death. Anyhow, no one visited it—indeed, such was my belief at the time, neither was it a pleasant place to reach. When the tide was up it was difficult to reach by water because of the great rocks which abounded; besides, you might be within six feet of it and not see it, because its mouth was so curiously covered.

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Eli Fraddam, who seemed to know everything, took me to it by the upper way; by that I mean the way of the cliff. He also showed me how I might know it from the beach, and by what rocks I could distinguish it. I did not enter the cave at the time, at least very far; but I remember that it was large, and that my voice echoed strangely when I spoke. I remember, too, that a strange fear was upon me, especially as in the dim light I saw Eli's strange form and face, and caught the gleams of his wild cross eyes.

It was to this spot that I determined to go now, and for the time, at least, rest free from Richard Tresidder's persecutions. I think I should have gone away altogether at this time, and perchance have tried to obtain a post as a common sailor, but I remembered Naomi Penryn; and the yearning that was in my heart to see her again and, if possible, to speak to her, was so strong, that I was willing to brave anything to be near her.

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Granfer Fraddam's Cave was very lonely. There was not a house within a long distance of it, and, with the exception of two cottages, Pennington was the nearest dwelling. I was, therefore, able to get there unmolested. No one had seen me on my journey, because I had kept to the woods and fields. I took with me some swede turnips to eat, and when I had eaten, not thinking of the strange stories told about Granfer's Cave, I lay down on the shingle and fell asleep and dreamt that I was the owner of Pennington, and that I went to an old house on the cliffs to woo Naomi Penryn.

When I awoke I knew not where I was. My mind was strangely confused, and there was a sound like unto many thunders roaring in my ears. I had a choking sensation, too, and felt it hard to breathe. Then I felt myself to be covered with water, while pebbles pelted my face. I struggled to my feet, and my senses coming to me, I understood the reason. I had not thought of the tide, which was now rushing into the cave with terrific force. A great fear got hold of me, and, as fast as I was able, I fled into the interior of the cavern. It was very dark, but in the darkness I fancied

I saw strange, moving creatures; and at that moment all the stories told about Granfer Fraddam's evil spirit were true to me. A mad desire to escape possessed me, but how to do so I did not know. I heard the waves thundering up the cave, while a terrible wind blew, which drove me further into the darkness. I dared not venture to go seaward, so, keeping my hand against the side of the cavern, I allowed myself to follow the strong current of air. Presently the cave began to get smaller; indeed, so narrow was it that I could feel both sides at the same time by stretching out my hands. All the while the wind blew tremendously. At this I wondered much, for it seemed strange to me that I should feel the wind when I was so far away from the mouth of the cave. As I became calmer, I began to understand this. I knew that the waves as they rushed into the aperture must carry with them a great force of wind, and that naturally they would force the air inward. Thus the strong current which blew me further from the sea would indicate that there was an outlet somewhere. So, unmindful of danger, I followed the wind-current, and shortly I found myself ascending. The road was slimy and hard to climb; but I struggled on, and ere long found myself in a coppice. I looked around me, and remembered the place well. On one side of the coppice was a meadow which belonged to a fisherman named Ikey Trethewy—a strange, silent man who spoke but little, and who possessed a fast-trotting horse. On the other side the coppice sloped up to the spongy headland, where a curious kind of grass grew, and where rabbits dug their holes, and frolicked on summer nights.

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I had passed by the place often, and had never thought much of it. The little patch of trees and thick undergrowth which grew in a kind of sheltered gully seemed of no importance; but now the place possessed a strong interest for me.

The coppice was much sheltered, but the wind, as it came up the hole through which I had passed, made a wild, moaning sound, which explained many of the stories I had heard. It was very dark by this time, and, although it was summer, the sky was covered with black clouds, and I heard the wind and sea roaring furiously. By the time I got to the headland I knew that a storm of great violence was raging. For some time a feeling of indecision possessed me; then I made my way toward Betsey Fraddam's cottage.

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CHAPTER V

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I SEE NAOMI PENRYN ON ROCK CALLED THE SPANISH CAVALIER, AND RESCUE HER—WE ESCAPE FROM THE TRESIDDERS

When I entered Betsey's cottage, she was sitting with her son beside the open fireplace, watching a crock which steamed over a wood fire, and from which came a strange smell.

"'Twas cowld and wet at Granfer's caave, I spoase?" was her first greeting, after looking at me very carefully.

Now how she knew I had been in the cave I know not, neither will I pretend to explain; at the same time, I felt rather fearful at the thought that she should have been aware of the place where I had spent the day, when no one had told her.

"How do you know where I have been?" I asked.

"How do I knaw?" sneered Betsey; "how do I knaw everything?"

So I said no more, but looked toward a loaf of bread which lay on the table.

"Iss, you've 'ad nothin' but a swede turmut, and that ed'n rastlin' mait," said Betsey. "You do look vine and faint, too. 'Ere's summin that'll do 'ee good, my dear," and going to a cupboard, she took a two-gallon jar, and poured out a tumbler full of liquor. "There, drink that," she said, putting it before me.

It was raw spirits, and when I had swallowed one mouthful I could take no more, it was too strong for me.

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"Aw, aw!" laughed Betsey; "'tes nearly as strong as the broth I do make, ed'n et, then? Here, Eli, put some milk in the pan, and het it for 'un. He was in the pillory yesterday, and he seed Richard Trezidder and Neck Trezidder and Emily Trezidder, and another maid, a very purty one. Then 'ee runned away, and after that he got to Granfer Fraddam's Cave. Make a good quart of eggiot for 'un, Eli. That'll be better'n sperrits. He's too waik for that."

Then Eli got the milk, and began to beat up eggs in a basin, grunting strangely, while he watched me with his strange, wild-looking eyes. But I did not speak, for Betsey made me afraid; besides, I felt cold and ill.

"I knaw what you be thinking," said Betsey; "you be wonderin' how I got so much sperrits. Well, p'raps I shall tell 'ee zoon. We sh'll zee, Jasper, we sh'll zee." And with that the old crone chuckled.

Then Eli came to me, and felt me, and fondled me. He smoothed my wrists where they had been bruised the day before, and got some ointment which he rubbed around my neck. Then, when the milk and egg was ready, he poured it in a huge basin, and put it before me.

"I'd 'a killed 'un ef you wos dead," he repeated many times, until I wondered at his apparent love for me.

When I had drunk what Eli had prepared I felt better. My head began to get clear again, and my strength came back to me.

"Naow," wheedled Betsey, when I had finished, "tell me oal about et. Tell me, Jasper, my dear."

"You know everything," I replied.

"No, not everything; tell me, for ould Betsey'll ave to 'elp 'ee, my dear."

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So I told her everything, save my love for Naomi Penryn; of that I could not speak to her, it was a secret for my own heart, and I vowed that I would never tell of it until I poured the words in the sweet maid's own ears. At that time I felt sure that the story of my love would remain forever untold.

"Do 'ee knaw what this do main, Jasper?" said Betsey, when I had finished.

"He bait 'em boath, boath!" laughed Eli, gleefully.

"Now, Eli," said Betsey, "hark to Jasper, and hark to me. Now tell me, Jasper."

"I think I know," I said.

"He mustn't knaw that you've come back to St. Eve," said Betsey. "I tell 'ee, you musn't show yer faace. 'Ee'll never rest till you'm out ov the way. You'll jist be found dead some day, tha's wot'll 'appen. Ef 'ee caan't do et with the law 'ee'll do et wi'out."

"Yes," I said.

"Well, wot be 'ee goin' to do?"

"I'll go back to Granfer Fraddam's Cave. No one can find me there."

"Tha's true, but what 'bout yer mait?"

"I'll bring 'un mait," said Eli. "I'll bring 'un mait. I knaw, I knaw!" And the poor gnome laughed joyfully.

"But that caan't last," said Betsey. "Two months more an' winter'll be 'ere. Besides, you caan't git back Pennington by stayin' in a cave. You knaw what you promised your vather, Jasper; you zaid you wudden rest night nor day 'till you got back Pennington."

"I remember," I said.

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"Besides," cried Betsey—then she stopped, and looked at me steadily. She had keen, whitey-gray eyes, which shone very brightly. "Do'ee knaw who thicky maid wos that you zeed in Fa'muth 'esterday?"

I shook my head.

"Purty, ed'n she?" sniggered Betsey. "She's for Nick Trezidder, my dear, tha's wot she's for. Her vather an' mawther's dead, my dear, and she've got piles o' money, an' Richard Trezidder es 'er guardian, an' they main 'er to marry Nick. Her vather was Squire Penryn, my dear, an' 'ee was killed, an' 'er mawther died a bit agone, so the Trezidders 'ev got 'er body and soul."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"'Ow do I knaw!" sneered Betsey. "'Ow do I knaw everything?" and this was the way she always answered when I asked her such a question.

"Where is her home?" I asked.

"Where? Up the country somewhere on the north coast. A big 'ous cloas to the say, my dear."

"But Penryn is close to Falmouth."

"'Nother branch ov the fam'ly, my dear; but ther', she nothin' to you. She's good, she's purty, an' she's rich, but she's for Nick Trezidder. Thews Trezidders do bait the Penningtons, don't 'em?" And Betsey laughed again.

But I held my tongue. I determined that I would not tell the secret of my heart, although Betsey's words hurt me like knife-stabs.

"Well, an' when winter do come, what be 'ee goin' to do then, Jasper, an' 'ow be 'ee goin' to git 'nough to buy back Pennington?"

"I must think, Betsey," I said. "I must think. But I'll do it—I'll do it!"

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"Aisy spok, but not so aisy done. How?"

"I'll help 'un," said Eli.

"You! 'Ow can you 'elp 'un?"

But Eli only hugged himself and laughed, as though he were tickled. After that but little was said

that I can remember.

Before daylight came I went back to the cave. I was sure that neither Betsey nor Eli would tell of my hiding-place. I was glad for this, because I knew that if Dick Tresidder knew where I was I should be taken back to the whipping-post, and perhaps imprisoned. Besides, I was sure that he feared me, and that he would do everything in his power to make me suffer. So I determined to stay in Granfer Fraddam's Cave as long as I could, and I knew that Eli would find out everything about what went on at Pennington and tell me. Looking back now, my conduct seems foolish in the extreme. I could do no good by staying in the cave, I could not get an inch nearer my purpose. It would have been far more sensible to have sailed to some distant land and sought for fortune. And I will admit that I was tempted to do this, and should have left St. Eve, but for a strange longing to stay near Pennington, knowing as I did that Naomi Penryn was there, and that, although I had never spoken to her, I loved the dear maid every hour of my life more and more.

One day, I think it was about a week after I had taken up my abode in the cave, I was sitting at its mouth and looking across the narrow bay, and watching the tide come up, when I was strangely startled. I remember that in dreaming of Naomi Penryn a feeling of despair had come into my heart, for I saw no chance whatever of ever seeing her again, much less speaking to her. Besides, even if it were possible for me to win her love I had no right to do so. Pennington seemed further from my grasp than ever, while Richard Tresidder's hold on it grew stronger day by day. I was thinking of these things when I saw, two or three hundred yards out at sea, standing on a rock, a woman's form. The rock was a large one, and went by the name of "The Spanish Cavalier." It rose from the beach to the height of fifteen feet, and was never covered save at high tides. There was, moreover, a curious place in the rock, not unlike an arm-chair, in which one might sit and watch the shining waves. All around it was grouped a number of smaller rocks, which boatmen always avoided, because driving on them was dangerous.

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As I said, I saw on "The Spanish Cavalier" a woman's form, and above the sound of the breakers I heard a cry for help. I did not hurry to the rescue, for the delay of a few seconds could make no difference, the rock was now several feet under water; besides, I was not sure what it meant. At first I could not discern who the woman was, and fancied it might be one of the Misses Archer, or perhaps Richard Tresidder's daughter. But then, I thought, they would know the coast, and would not allow themselves to be caught by the tide in such a way. On looking again, however, my heart gave a great leap—the woman on the rock was Naomi Penryn. A feeling of joy surged through me. At last I had my chance, I should be able to speak to her without let or hindrance. As I have before stated, the cave had but few houses near. Ikey Trethewy's cottage stood at some little distance away from the coppice where the land entrance to the cave had been made, but it was not visible from "The Spanish Cavalier;" another cottage stood further along the coast, but that was more than a mile away; while the other house was Pennington, which was nearly two miles off. Seemingly, there was no other help than my own near, and I rejoiced that it was so. There was no real danger, but she needed my help, and that was all I cared for. So I plunged into the water and was able to wade nearly all the way to the rock. She saw me coming toward her, and I think my presence gave her confidence.

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"Do not be afraid," I said, as I came up; "there is no danger. I can easily take you to the shore."

By this time, only my head was visible above the water, but she recognised me. I saw that she shrank from me, too, as though she were afraid. At this a coldness crept into my heart, for I remembered where I stood at the only time she had seen me before.

"I will not hurt you," I said; "I know my way among the rocks, and I can take you easily."

She looked at me again, doubtfully. Most likely she remembered what the Tresidders had said about me.

"I will be very careful," I went on; "and you had better come quickly, for the tide is rising every minute. I know you distrust me, for the Tresidders hate me; but if I did not desire to help you I should not have let you see me, for when they know where I am I shall be in danger."

She lifted her head proudly as though I had angered her, then she looked at me again steadily, and came toward me.

"Is the water very deep?" she asked.

"It is over five feet here," I replied, "but it is shallower a few yards nearer the shore."

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"You are sure you can swim with me to shore?" she said.

"I shall not try," I said. "If you will let me, I will hold you above my head. You are not heavy and I—" Then I hesitated, for I did not want to boast.

"Yes, I know you are very strong," she laughed, half fearfully I thought; "but how can you do this?"

"Look," I said; "if you will stand on my shoulders so"—and I placed my back against the rock. "I am afraid your feet will have to be wet, just a little, for my shoulders are in the water. There, that is it; now hold my hands," and I lifted my hands as high above my head as I could.

She did as I bade her; thus we both stood with our faces toward the shore, she standing on my

shoulders and stooping a little in order to hold my hands tightly.

It was joy unspeakable to feel the little fingers in mine, for this was the first time that my flesh touched hers, and with the touch a thrill of gladness, the like of which I had never felt before, passed through my whole being.

I carried her safely. At that time rocks and roaring breakers were nothing to me, the buffeting of the waves against my body I felt not one whit! I think she must have felt my great strength, for when I had carried her a few yards she laughed, and the laugh had no fear.

"You feel quite safe?" I asked presently, when I had got away from the rocks.

"Quite safe," she said, and so I carried her on until I stood on the smooth yellow sands, and although the waves still broke, I felt their force not at all, for the thought of her trusting me made my sinews like willow thongs.

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Right sorry was I when the water no longer touched my feet, and I must confess that I lingered over the last part of the journey, so pleasant was my burden, and so glad a thing was it to feel her fingers fastening themselves around mine. Perhaps she regarded me as she might regard a fisherman who might have rendered her a similar service, but it did not matter. I, whom she had seen pilloried as a vagrant and a street brawler, held her fast, and my love grew stronger minute by minute.

When I put her on the sands, only her feet were wet, and no one could tell of the position in which she had been.

I shook myself after I had put her down, and I was almost sorry I had done so immediately afterward, for I could see that my condition made her sorry for me, and I did not want to be pitied.

"You must get dry clothes at once," she said.

"I have none," I said, unthinkingly, "save my jacket and waistcoat, which lie on yon rock."

"But you will be very cold."

I laughed gaily. "It is nothing," I said, "the sun will not go down for three hours yet, and before that time my rags will be dry."

"I am very thankful to you," she said; "I cannot swim, and but for you I should have been drowned."

"Oh, no," I replied; "you could have climbed to the top of the rock, and waited till the tide went out again."

"No, I should have been afraid. You have been very kind and very good to me. I was very foolish to get there, but it was very tempting to climb on the rock and sit and watch the sea. I must have fallen asleep in the sun, for I remembered nothing until I felt the cold water beat on me."

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"I was not kind or good," I said, roughly. "I thought first it was Emily Tresidder. Had it been, I should not have gone."

"Yes, you would," she said; "you have a kind face. Besides, you should not hate the Tresidders. Mr. Tresidder is my guardian."

"I am sorry for you," I said.

She looked at me steadily, but did not speak.

"I know what you are thinking about," I said. "I was pilloried at Falmouth when you saw me before, and I just escaped being flogged before the crowd. Even now, I suppose, I am being searched for."

"Indeed you are. Do you think you are safe in staying here?"

"It doesn't matter, I suppose; I shall soon be taken."

"Why do you think so?"

"You will, of course, tell Tresidder where I am, and then my liberty must soon come to an end."

I hated myself for speaking so, for I saw her lips tremble, as though I had pained her.

"Is not that unkind?" she said, presently, "and do you not judge the Tresidders wrongly? Have you not provoked them to anger?"

"They have told you about me, then; they have told you that I am a thief, a vagabond, a bully?"

She did not reply, but I knew from the look on her face that I had spoken the truth.

For a second there was a silence between us, then she said, "I thank you very much, and now I must go back to Pennington."

"Not until you hear my story," I said, eagerly.

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"Why should you tell me?" she asked.

"Because I do not wish you to judge me wrongly," I said; "because you have known me only as one who is evil and revengeful. Let me tell you the truth."

She did not speak, but she looked at me as if expecting me to go on. So I told her my story eagerly, told it truly, as I have tried to tell it here, only in fewer words.

"And this is true?" she asked, eagerly. "That is," she said, correcting herself, "you are sure you are not mistaken?"

"As God lives, it is true," I replied. "Is it any wonder, then, that I hate the Tresidders, is it any wonder that I should thrash them as I would thrash a yelping, biting cur?"

"Is it brave for a strong man to pounce upon a weaker one?" she asked.

"They were two to one," I replied; "besides, the street was full of people, and he has everything on his side, and I am alone, an outcast, a beggar in my own parish."

"But he has the law on his side."

"Yes; and he has twisted the law to serve his own ends. He and his mother have used vile tools to cheat me."

"And if you could save up half the worth of Pennington you could buy it back."

"I could demand to buy it back. Lawyer Trefry has the copy of the will. I have seen it. That is why they have tried to ruin me."

"And do you say that Nick tried to stab you?" she asked, anxiously.

"I have the knife yet," I replied. "His name is on it. I trusted him to wrestle fair, even though he sought to ruin me. Perhaps I was wrong to hurt him, but I was mad with pain. The mark of the wound is on my chest now. Look," and I showed her the scar.

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She shuddered, then she said, "Hate always brings misery, and love always brings joy. You should love your enemies."

"Yes; if a man will fight openly and fairly, I will not hate him. If I wanted to touch an adder with my hand I would not catch him by the tail so that it could curl around and sting my hand; I would catch it just behind the head. It might writhe and wriggle, but I should know that it could not bite me. That is how I want to treat the Tresidders. You despise me," I went on; "you see me now a thing that has to hide like a rabbit in burrow. Well, perhaps it is natural—you live with the Tresidders."

"No, I do not despise you," she said. "I feel for you; I am an orphan just as you are. Of course, Mr. Tresidder is very kind to me, but Pennington is not like home—that is—" Then she stopped as though she had said more than she had intended. "I felt sorry for you when I saw you in Falmouth. Did—did you see me?"

"I saw you—I—I—look, there is Nick Tresidder and his father coming now. I must away!"

We were only partially hidden by the rock, at the side of which we stood. I could see them with sufficient clearness for me to recognise them. They could see us, but I did not think it would be possible for them to tell who we were.

"They are searching for me," she cried. "I have been away from the house a long time."

"Well, go to them," I said.

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"But they have seen that there are two of us. Do you think they know us from this distance?"

"No, we have been partly hidden."

"But if I go, they will ask who has been with me."

"Do you not wish to tell them?"

"If I do you will be in danger. If they know you are near you will be hunted down. They think you have left the country."

"You can save me if you will," I cried, eagerly.

"I will do what I can!"

"Come, then—there, keep behind these rocks until we get to the cliffs. Go quickly."

She obeyed me eagerly, and a few seconds later we stood behind a great jagged promontory.

"Did they see us, do you think?"

"Yes, they saw us, but they could not have recognised us; or I fancy not," I added, for I had my fears; "but come, walk on the shingle so that they cannot trace your footsteps. That is it."

We came close to the cave where my clothes lay. These I picked up with a feeling of relief.

"We are safe now," I said.

"No," she cried; "they will soon come up, and can easily find us."

For she had not seen the mouth of Granfer Fraddam's Cave, although it was close to her. I was glad of this, for it told me how safe my hiding-place was, and showed that the opening was so curiously hidden that a stranger might pass it a hundred times and not see it. So I helped her to climb up the cliff until I got to a small platform, and afterward passed along the fissure between the rocks and drew her after me, and then, when she had followed me a few steps, she saw how cunningly Nature had concealed the place, and fearful as she was, she uttered a low exclamation of pleased surprise. For from this place we could see without being seen, even although we were not inside the cave itself.

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Excited as I was, for my heart was beating fast and my head throbbed at the same rate, I wondered at my good fortune in making her my friend. For her willingness to come with me, rather than to expose me to the Tresidders, showed that she was my friend, and my gladness at the thought was beyond all words. At the same time I could not help fearing for her. If either Nick Tresidder or his father had recognised her, she would be exposed to many awkward questionings, which would be hard for her to answer; neither did I desire that she should have to suffer for me. I marvelled greatly, too, that she should have understood the situation so easily, and that, in spite of all my enemies must have said, she seemed to trust me so implicitly. I remembered, however, that she would, perhaps, feel grateful to me for rescuing her from her awkward position on "The Spanish Cavalier," and that she would be anxious that my action should not bring any harm to me. And while this thought did not bring me so much pleasure as it ought, it showed me that the Tresidders had not altogether poisoned her mind against me.

Although it has taken me some minutes to write down these thoughts, they passed through my mind very rapidly.

"They cannot see us here," she said, questioningly, "neither can they find us?"

"Not unless they know the cave," I replied.

"Oh, I hope not," was her response, and although Tresidder was her guardian and Pennington was her home, it did not feel strange at that moment that she should be hiding with me, who was being sought for by the minions of the law.

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The sea was by this time getting nearer the foot of the cliff, and there was now only twenty feet of shingle between water and land. So I stood and watched, but I could not as yet see them, for the promontory, behind which we had first hidden, stood between us and them.

"Do you see them?"

"Not yet," I replied, "they have had scarcely time to get here yet, but I think they will soon be here."

As I spoke I looked on her face, the most beautiful I had ever seen, and when I remembered what she had done to shield me my love grew more fervent. For I had no claim on her, who was a stranger, save that I had carried her to the shore, which of course was nothing. By that I mean to say it was nothing for which she should serve me; rather it was I who owed gratitude to her, for my joy at serving her made my heart leap in my bosom, until I could even then have sung aloud for gladness.

"Are they coming?" she asked again, presently.

"Yes, they are close to us," I replied, for at that moment they had passed the rock by which we had at first stood.

CHAPTER VI

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I DISCOVER ANOTHER CAVE, AND HEAR A CONVERSATION BETWEEN RICHARD TRESIDDER AND HIS SON

"I am sure I saw a man and woman," I heard Nick Tresidder say.

"I thought I did, too," replied his father; "but we must have been mistaken, I suppose. Of course, they could have got behind Great Bear and then kept along under the cliff."

"Then they must have gone past, for they are nowhere to be seen."

"Perhaps they wanted to hurry to be before the tide."

"Yes; I suppose that must be it," replied Nick, doubtfully.

"Still, I don't know that it matters. We should not have troubled at all if we hadn't thought it might be Naomi."

"No; where can she be, I wonder?"

"She's a strange girl, Nick. She doesn't seem to feel happy at Pennington, neither does she make

friends with Emily. She's always roaming among the woods or along the beach. I shouldn't wonder at all if she hasn't lost herself among the woods. You must be careful, my lad."

"Oh, it's all right, there's no danger. I say, do you know that Jacob Buddie told me he believed he saw Jasper Pennington in the lane outside Betsey Fraddam's house last night?"

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"I don't believe it; we've got rid of him effectually. But we must hurry on, Nick, we've just time to get to Granfer Fraddam's path before the tide gets in."

"Yes, it's a good way on. Isn't Granfer Fraddam's Cave here somewhere?"

"I've my doubts whether there is such a place. There may have been such a cave in the old man's time, but lots of ground has fallen in during the past fifty years. Anyhow, I've often searched along the coast and could never find it."

"But it's around here that the noises have been heard. You know people say it's haunted by the old man's ghost."

"Well, I've never been able to find it."

They hurried on, and I gave a sigh of relief.

"Are they gone?" asked Naomi.

"Yes, they are gone; they don't know anything. It will take them a long while to get home. It's a long way to Pennington by Granfer Fraddam's path. The cliff is steep, too."

"But I must go now," she said, anxiously.

"You shall get home before they can," I said, eagerly.

"I will take you through another opening. You will know another secret of this cave then. You see, I trust you wholly, and you will know my hiding-place almost as well as I know it myself."

"But do you live here?"

Then I told her what I had to do, and how Eli Fraddam brought food to me, and how when winter came I should have to make other plans.

She listened quietly, and said no word, but allowed me to lead her up the cave until we reached the copse of which I have spoken. We were still hidden from sight, for the bushes grew thick, and the trees were large and had abundant foliage. She held out her hand to say good-bye.

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"I shall remember your kindness," she said.

"And do not think too hardly about me," I pleaded, "remember what I have had to suffer."

"I shall think of you very kindly," was her response; "not that it matters to you," she added. "We are strangers, most probably we shall never meet again, and the opinion of a stranger cannot help you."

"It is more than you can think," I answered, eagerly. "When I saw that look of sympathy on your face when I stood in the pillory at Falmouth it made everything easier to bear. Besides, you say you will stay at Pennington, and I look upon Pennington as my home."

"Yes; but surely you will not stay here. It cannot be right for a man to idle away his time as you are idling it; besides, you can never win back Pennington thus. If I were you I would find work, and I would honourably make my way back to fortune."

"But the Tresidders will not allow me," I replied, stung into shame by her words, "they have always put obstacles in my path."

"Then I would go where the Tresidders could not harm me," she cried, and then she went away, as though I were the merest commonplace stranger, as indeed I was.

I mused afterward that she did not even tell me her name, although she had no means of knowing that I had found it out, neither did she tell me that she would keep the secret of my hiding-place from my enemies. And more than all this, she bade me leave St. Eve, where I should be away from her, although my longings grew stronger to stay by her side. All this made me very weary of life, and I went back to the mouth of the cave and sat watching the sea as it rose higher and higher around "The Spanish Cavalier," and wondered with a weary heart what I should do.

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When night came on Eli Fraddam brought me food, and sat by me while I ate it, looking all the while up into my face with his strange wild eyes.

"Jasper missible," he grunted, presently.

"Yes, Eli," I said, "everything and everybody is against me."

"I know! I know!" cried Eli, as though a new thought had struck him, "I'll 'elp 'ee, Jasper; I'll vind out!"

"Find out what, Eli?"

But he would not answer. He hugged himself as though he were vastly pleased, and laughed, in

his low guttural way, and after a time took his departure.

When I was left alone, I tried to think of my plans for the future, for Naomi's words kept ringing in my ears, "If I were you I would find work, and I would honourably make my way back to fortune." I saw now that for a year I had acted like a madman. Instead of meeting my reverses bravely, I had acted like a coward. I had sunk in the estimation of others as well as in my own. I had loafed around the lanes, and had made friends with the idle and the dissolute. Even my plans for vengeance were those of a savage. I, Jasper Pennington, could think of no other way of punishing my enemies than by mastering them with sheer brute force. Besides, all the time I had made no step toward winning back my home, and thus obeying my father's wishes. I felt this, too; I had deservedly lost the esteem of the people. I had become what the Tresidders said I was. I saw myself a vagrant and a savage, and although my fate had been hard, I deserved the punishment I was then suffering. I had forgotten that I was a Pennington, forgotten that I was a gentleman.

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But what could I do? Houseless, homeless, friendless, except for the friendship of Eli Fraddam and his mother, and practically outlawed, what was there that I, Jasper Pennington, could put my hand to? I could not tell. The possibility of honourably making my way back to fortune seemed a dream impossible to be fulfilled.

For a long time I sat brooding, while the candle which Eli had brought burnt lower and lower, and finally went out. The darkness stirred new thoughts within me. Hitherto I had not troubled about Granfer Fraddam's ghost haunting the cave. The wind which wailed its way up through the cave till it found vent in the copse above explained the sounds which had been heard. But now all the stories which I had heard came back to me. Did Granfer Fraddam die there? and did his ghost haunt this dreary cavern? Even then I might be sitting on the very spot where he had died.

I started up and lit another candle. I looked around me, and shuddered at the black, forbidding sides of the cavern, then leaving the candle to cast its ghostly light around I crept toward the entrance. I saw the sea lapping the black rocks around, and heard its dismal surge. Then I heard a rushing noise whir past me, and it seemed as though a ghostly hand had struck my face. Directly afterward I heard a cry which made the blood run cold in my veins. Most likely it was only a seagull which I had frightened from its resting-place among the rocks, but to me it was the shriek of a lost soul.

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Trembling, I found my way back to the cave again, where the candle still burnt, and cast its flickering light around. I was afraid to stay there any longer, and determined to get out by way of the copse. I had gone but a few steps in this direction, when I saw what had hitherto escaped my notice. It was a hole in the side of the cave, large enough for anybody to pass easily. For a moment curiosity overcame my fears, and I made my way toward it. Holding my candle close to the hole, I found that I was out of the current of air, and I saw that this was the entrance to another cave. But it was different from the one in which I had been hiding. It looked as though it had been hollowed out by the hands of man rather than by nature. This fact lessened my ghostly fears, and I entered it, and in doing so thought I detected a strange smell. A minute later, and my astonishment knew no bounds. Lying at my feet in this inner cave were casks of spirits and wines. There were, I afterward discovered, many other things there too. There were great packages of tobacco, and bales of stuff which at that time I did not understand. It was evident that Granfer Fraddam's trade was not abandoned, although it was thought that smuggling was not carried on to any extent in the neighbourhood of St. Eve. It is true that many things were obtained in the neighbourhood which the Preventive officers could not account for, but that was understood to be owing to Jack Truscott's gang, who defied the law, and did many wild deeds down by the Lizard and at Kynance. At Polventor the Preventive men were very keen, so keen were they that the dozen or two fishermen who lived there were not, as far as I knew, in any way suspected of unlawful deeds. And Polventor was the only fishing village within three miles of our parish where it seemed possible for smuggling to be carried on.

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Not that we thought hardly of the smugglers, even of Jack Truscott and his men. We all regarded the law as very unjust, and owing to the fact that many things were obtained in the parish very cheaply by them, we winked at their doings, and looked sourly on the Preventive men and their doings. At the same time, as far as I knew, no one dreamed of smuggling being carried on near the coast of St. Eve. Thus it was that Granfer Fraddam's Cave was a mere tradition, and many people thought that the King's officers ought to be removed to some other part of the coast, where there would be some necessity for their existence.

I thought long of these things, and presently came to the conclusion that this cave was used as a kind of storage-place by some smuggler's gang. Probably this was one of Jack Truscott's many hiding-places, and would be used by him when the Government spies were busy watching elsewhere.

Anyhow, my discovery made me think of the cave more as the home of the living than the dead, and thus fears were dispelled. It is true my solitude might at any time be broken by a gang of desperate men, but that did not trouble me. So I fetched the blanket which old Betsey had lent me and took it into this inner cave, and after a while went to sleep.

Eli Fraddam brought some food to me again in the morning, but I did not tell him what I had discovered through the night, neither did I encourage him to stay. Usually he had sat with me for hours, and had talked with me in his strange disconnected way, but this morning he saw that I wanted to be alone, so, after patting and fondling my hands lovingly, he left me. All through the

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day I tried to make up my mind what to do, but no feasible plan came into my mind. I did not fear any difficulty in getting food and clothes, but how to raise money to buy back Pennington I knew not.

Toward evening I left the cave and clambered down the rocks until I got to the beach. I had scarcely done so when a package lying by a rock caught my eye. I tore off the wrapper, wondering what it was, and soon discovered that it contained food. I eagerly examined it, and presently saw a scrap of clean white paper. On it was written these words:

"To stay where you are must be useless. Search has not been abandoned, for you have been seen. There can be no hope of success while you remain in St. Eve. You saved me, and I would help you. Good-bye."

Now this comforted me greatly, for it told me that Naomi Penryn had not forgotten me, and that she felt friendly toward me. The food, delicate as it was compared with what I had been eating, I cared not for, except only because she had brought it. My excitement took away all desire to eat, and again I went back to the cave to think of what I should do. For this thought came constantly into my mind, the Tresidders intended her for Nick, and my determination was that she should never marry a Tresidder. Moreover, I fancied, from her own words, and from what I had heard Richard Tresidder say to his son, she was not happy at Pennington. If I went away I should be powerless to help her if she needed help. She was but a girl of eighteen, and she was wholly under the control of the Tresidders. Yet how could I help her by remaining where I was; nay, rather, it was impossible for me to do this.

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After some time I settled on a plan; I would leave my cave before it was light, and would walk to Fowey. When there, I would try and get a place as a sailor. I thought I knew enough of a sailor's duties to satisfy the captain of a trading ship. Then, by the time the first voyage was over, I should no longer be sought by the Tresidders, and the affair at Falmouth would be forgotten. I would then come back and see if Naomi Penryn needed help. I should not be away more than a few months, and I did not think that Nick Tresidder or his father would seek to carry out their plans concerning her for at least a year.

I had scarcely settled this in my mind when I heard voices outside the cave. Wondering what it might mean I crept to the opening, and, looking out, saw Richard Tresidder and his son, Nick, standing and talking with two Preventive men. A great rock hid me from their sight, besides which I was at least twelve feet above them.

"You say you've searched all around here for a cave?" asked Richard Tresidder.

"All round, sur," replied one of the officers. "Ther's smugglin' done 'long 'ere right 'nough, but I've my doubts 'bout Granfer Fraddam's Caave as et es called. Ther's not an inch 'long the coast here that we 'ain't a-seed; we've found lots of caaves, but nothin' like people do talk about. As for this cove, where people say et es, why look for yerself, sur, ther's no sign of it. We can see every yard of the little bay here, but as fer Granfer Fraddam's Caave, well, that's all wind, I'm a-thinkin'."

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"I'm of the same opinion myself. Still, I thought we'd better come and make sure, that was why I asked you to come."

"That's oal right, sur, glad are we to do anything to 'elp 'ee. But ther's plaaces funder down, sur, and they must be watched."

"Do you not think you are mistaken?" I heard Richard Tresidder say; "there has been no smuggling done here since Granfer Fraddam's days. There is plenty of it done at the Lizard, and at Kynance, and right down to St. Michael's Mount to Penzance Harbour, but there is none here."

"But there es, Maaster Tresidder. Not a week agone a boat-load of sperits was landed at Polventor."

"At Polventor! Why, I thought you kept a sharp look-out there. Besides, only fisher folk live there."

"'Iss, but tes they fishermen that do do et. Ye see, they go out so they zay to catch fish, and then afore mornin' they do come across the big smugglers' boats, and taake the things to the coves they do know 'bout. They be all of a piece, Maaster Tresidder."

"Well, keep a sharp look-out, Grose, and bring them before me, and I'll see that they don't do any more smuggling for a few months."

"I'm glad we've 'ad this 'ere talk, sur, you bein' a majistraate. But we must be off, sur."

"Good-afternoon. By the way, if you call at Pennington to-night about ten I shall be glad to see you. You will perhaps be able to report progress by that time."

"Thank 'ee kindly, sur. Good afternoon."

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Richard Tresidder and his son Nick then sat down on a rock near, and both began to smoke, and then, when the Preventive officers were out of sight, they laughed merrily.

"I wonder if they know that the grog they have drunk at Pennington was made of smuggled brandy?" asked the father.

"Not they. Why, you are noted for your hardness on law-breakers."

"Just so. By the way, you have heard no more about Jasper, I suppose? I heard last night he was hiding in Granfer Fraddam's Cave, that was why I got those fellows to search for the place."

"Nothing definite. It's believed that he's around here somewhere, but where I don't know. The fellow is mad, I think. It would be better for him to clear off altogether. The sentence is a flogging and then another trial, isn't it?"

"Yes; but nothing is being done. I believe if he were caught he would be allowed to go free. I don't believe they want to catch him."

"You see, the people think he's been badly treated, and Lawyer Trefry has blabbed about old Pennington's will. Everybody says now that you've done your utmost to keep him poor. Why in the world didn't grandmother get him to give it you out and out? If the beggar should have a stroke of luck he might get it for a few thousands."

"But where can he get them now? His last chance is gone. What can a lad, without money, home, or friends, do? That's settled all right."

"I don't know about that. He's clever and he's determined. Why did he continue to stay around here? He must have something in his mind." [Pg 85]

"He's a fool, that's all. He has a savage sort of idea that by watching me he's taking care of his own interests. That shows what a short-sighted fellow he is. If he'd brains he'd have acted otherwise. You will see, he'll get himself in the clutches of the law again, and then—I'll manage him."

"But if we can't find him? I tell you Jasper isn't a fool, and he knows our purposes by this time."

"Well, Nick, you've got your chance. A rich wife and three years to win her in, my boy. I'm her guardian till she's twenty-one, and I'll take care no one else gets her. A pretty girl is Naomi, too; rather awkward to manage, and a bit fiery, but all the better to suit you."

"And she doesn't like me," replied Nick.

"Make her like you, my boy. Be a bit diplomatic, and play to win. Besides, you must win!"

"Did you notice how funny she was last night? I asked her where she had been, and she seemed to regard my question as a liberty. And did you see how eager she was when we were talking about Jasper afterward?"

"But she knows nothing about him. She never saw him."

"Yes, she saw him pilloried in Falmouth. She thinks him treated badly. She has all sorts of funny ideas about justice."

"Of course, all silly girls have; that's nothing. At the same time, Nick, this shows you must play carefully. I don't want any complications in getting her money, and mind you, that money I must have, or we are all in deep water."

"What do you mean?" [Pg 86]

"This. We can't raise sixpence, that is legally, on Pennington. There are simply the rents. Well, this split up into several parts is very little. So—" he hesitated.

"So what?" asked Nick, eagerly.

"I've speculated."

"On what?"

"On mines. So far, they've turned out badly. I'm involved in a heavy outlay. At first the affair seemed certain. It may turn out all right now, I don't know, but I tell you I'm neck deep—neck deep. I can hold on for a year or so, and you must get Naomi's money, or I'm done for."

"But you've got her money?"

"Yes, and, as her guardian, I'll have to give an account of it."

"Look here, father, tell me all about it. I don't like acting in the dark. How and why did Naomi come to Pennington, and what is the true condition of affairs? I want to know."

"Another time, Nick."

"No, now."

"Very well, I may as well tell you now."

CHAPTER VII

I HEAR RICHARD TRESSIDER TELL NAOMI PENRYN'S HISTORY, AND AM IN DANGER OF BEING KILLED BY SMUGGLERS

Richard Tressider slowly filled his pipe again, and seemed to be collecting his thoughts before telling his son what was in his mind.

"Her home, as you know, is at Trevoze, not far from Trevoze Head," he said, presently. "The house is a funny old place—as lonely as a churchyard and as bleak as a mountain peak. It seems a strange idea to build a big house like that on a rocky eminence, but the Penryns have always been a strange people. However, it is said that the Penryn who built the house back in Oliver Cromwell's days kept ships for strange purposes, and that he had curious dealings with 'gentlemen of fortune.'"

"Pirates do you mean?"

"Better let them be unnamed. Anyhow, from the tower of the house you can see many miles up and down the coast—as far as Bude Harbour on the one hand, and Gurnard's Head on the other. There is some very good land belonging to the estate, too."

"Much?" asked Nick.

"More than belongs to Pennington by a long way, my boy. The rents are handsome, I can assure you."

"Well, go on."

"The Penryns have always been a hot-tempered, impatient race, and Naomi's father was no exception to the rule. He was the only child, too, and from what I can gather spoiled. Well, he waited until he was over thirty before he got married; indeed, both his parents were dead before he saw Naomi's mother. By the time a man is thirty his habits are settled, and he's generally unfit for marriage; people should marry at twenty-five at latest."

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"And who was Naomi's mother?"

"She was a widow of a cousin of mine, George Tressider of Lelant."

"Well?"

"Well, she had what most women possess, a nasty, rasping, irritating tongue, and a temper that would have done credit to Beelzebub's wife, if there is such a lady. I know that, because I've had several interviews with her. I've managed a good many women in my day, but never one who was so difficult as she. Anyhow, John Penryn and she lived a cat-and-dog life. John, I suppose, was a fine fellow in his way, but imperious, impatient, and at times unreasonable. He couldn't bear being crossed, and she was everlastingly crossing him. He was the soul of generosity, and directly after his marriage made a most generous will. He left everything unconditionally to his wife."

"Go on, you are awfully slow," cried Nick.

"They had been married about seven months when a terrible thing happened. You were very young at the time, and would, of course, know nothing about it. Penryn had a fearful quarrel with his wife. It was simply terrible, and the servants were very much frightened, especially as John's wife was expected to become a mother. Anyhow, she taunted him with being unfaithful to her, and irritated him so with invective and abuse that, forgetting everything, he tried to crush her by brute force. Of course, in her state this was a mad thing to do, especially as she was very weak and delicate; anyhow, she fell like one dead on the floor. A doctor was sent for, and he declared that life was extinct. I suppose the poor fellow's anguish was terrible; anyhow, when he heard of the doctor's words, he seemed to lose his senses altogether. That night he committed suicide."

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"Suicide! Whew!" cried Nick.

"Yes; he threw himself over the cliffs at Trevoze Head. When his body was discovered it was much bruised and battered. Of course the affair was hushed up, and it was made out to be an accident, but no one was deceived."

"But about the woman?"

"Well, I suppose she lay like one in a trance for some considerable time, and it is said that all arrangements were made for her funeral. Presently, however, she gave signs of life, and in course of time Naomi was born."

"And the mother lived?"

"My dear Nick, you'll find that it'll take a great deal to kill a woman. Yes, she lived and enjoyed a fair amount of health. I suppose, too, that her conduct improved, at least I was told so; still, as I said, I found her difficult to manage."

"But you did manage her?"

"When I set my mind on a thing I generally do get my own way; but I think it would have been impossible in this case but for mother."

"What, granny?"

"Yes, she took the matter in hand, and together we got on fairly well."

"Yes, but by what means did you establish a claim on her sympathies? She had other relations!"

"It would take a long time to tell. Indeed, it has been a work of years. I've had to visit Trevoze many times, and have suffered more abuse than I care to tell about. However, before she died the will was made all right."

"How?" asked Nick, eagerly.

"Well, in this way. Everything is given to Naomi, and I am constituted her sole guardian. She cannot marry until she's twenty-one without my consent."

"I see."

"If she dies everything comes to me."

"What!"

"Yes, mother worked that. I despaired of reaching that point; but you know what your granny is. She pleaded that I was a cousin, and a hundred other things. Besides, mother has a strange power over people."

"Then it seems to me everything is safe."

"Yes, if matters go right. She is now eighteen; if you marry her before she's twenty-one all's well, but if not, then when she arrives at that age the lawyer who has to do with the estates will naturally want everything accounted for. Naomi's a sharp girl, and I shall have to give an account of my stewardship."

"Her mother was a Catholic, I suppose?"

"Yes, that was a difficult point. Still we promised that Naomi's religious views should not be interfered with, and also that a priest shall visit the house occasionally."

"He will want her to marry a Catholic."

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"Undoubtedly; but, honestly, I don't believe Naomi troubles about the fine distinction in religious beliefs. The priest wanted to persuade her mother that the child ought to be placed in Mawgan Convent, and her property given to the Church. I thought once the wily rascal would have succeeded, but fortunately mother was in the house at the time."

They sat for some little time without speaking; then Richard Tresidder spoke again.

"You are a bit in love with her, aren't you, Nick?"

"More than a little bit, and she knows it, too."

"Well, be careful, my boy, be very careful. If we can get Trevoze—well, it's a nice thing, isn't it? But we must be careful. You are no fool, Nick; Naomi has her little weaknesses like other folks; find 'em out and humour 'em. Now you know how things are, and we must be going or we shall be caught by the tide. There'll be a high tide to-night, too."

Then they went away, leaving me to think over what they had said, and I must confess that my mind was much disturbed by their words. I do not pretend to have the lawyer-like power of seeing where many things lead to, but I did see, or rather I fancied I saw, the meaning of the conversation I had heard, and which, according to the best of my ability, I have faithfully described. I saw that Naomi was brought to this house because of her money. I saw, too, that every sort of pressure would be brought to bear upon her to make her marry Nick Tresidder, and I felt assured that did not fair means succeed, foul ones would be used. And what troubled me most was that I could do nothing. Evidently the Tresidders were still searching for me, and, if I were caught, they would, in spite of the friends I still possessed, try to render me more helpless than ever.

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Besides, how would the poor, helpless maid be able to resist the pleadings of Nick Tresidder, backed up as they would be by the cunning and stratagem of the woman who had caused my grandfather to disinherit his own son? These questions, as may be imagined, greatly exercised my mind, so much so that I forgot all about my plans to travel through the night to Fowey and to try and get a berth as a sailor on a trading vessel.

Presently night came on, and I felt faint and weak. Then I remembered that I had eaten nothing for many hours, and so I turned with great gladness of heart to the food which I believe Naomi had brought with her own hands to the rocks which stood at the foot of the cliff under the mouth of my hiding-place. When I had eaten I went into the inner cave, and lay a-thinking again and again of what I must do. I recalled to mind the words that had passed between Naomi and me, of the joy I had felt when she was by my side, and especially of the time when I held her hands in mine; and then I thought of what I had heard spoken between Tresidder and his son, and not being, as I have said, quick at thinking, my mind presently became a blank, and I fell asleep.

How long I slept I know not, but I was awake by the sound of voices, and of footsteps near me, but the first thing of which I have a clear recollection was a kick on the shin, and a voice saying,

"Bless my soul 'n body, what es this?"

I jumped to my feet and saw two men before me in rough seamen's clothes, and with high jack-boots. I did not know them at all, and so I concluded that they were strangers to our part of the county. They were not altogether ill-favoured men, although I could not help feeling that there was a kind of reckless expression on their faces which was not common among Cornish fisherfolk.

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"And who might you be?" asked one presently, after staring at me for some time as if in blank astonishment.

By this time I had mastered the amazement which for the moment had overcome me, and had surmised who they were. Undoubtedly they were the smugglers who infested the coast, and who knew the secret of Granfer Fraddam's Cave. Probably they belonged to Jack Truscott's famous gang, and had brought a cargo of goods that very night. I heard the swish of the waves rushing up the cave, so I knew the tide was high.

I measured the men, too, from a wrestler's standpoint, and calculated their strength from the size of their bare arms, and the breadth of their chests. All the fear that had come into my heart left me. Living men did not frighten me.

"I might as well ask who you are," I replied coolly.

"Oh, tha's yer soarts, es et? Well, I think we may, so we'll tell 'ee, es you'll never go out of this 'ere place a livin' man."

"Never go out a living man. Why, pray?"

"Well, 'cos you do know too much, tha's why. This caave es wot you call convainient. See, matey? Well, ef other people wos to know 'bout et, twudden be convainient."

"I quite understand. You are smugglers, and wreckers most likely. Perhaps even worse than that. Perhaps you belong to Jack Truscott's gang. Ah, I see you do. Well, your idea is to kill me because I have found your hiding-place."

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"That's ev et. Generally we be'ant cruel men, we be'ant. But some things must be done. You zee, dead men kip their saicrets well; livin' ones do'ant. You be a curyus-looking cove, ragged 'nough for a vuss cutter, but you be'ant ovr soart."

"No," I said, coolly, "I'm not your sort."

"And you'd splet on us the fust fair chance you got, I spect?"

"Probably."

"Well, that settles et, and so—" He drew his finger across his throat significantly.

I must confess that a curious sensation came into my heart; but I did not betray any fear, and after a few seconds I was able to speak steadily.

"You've done that kind of thing before, I expect?" I said, watching the spokesman's face closely.

"Sam have done et a vew times," he said, looking significantly at his companion, "I do'ant do et oftener than I can 'elp."

The man called Sam grinned, as though he was proud of his distinction.

"In cold blood?" I queried. I kept on asking these questions, because I wanted to gain time. I had heard of many bloody deeds being done off the Lizard, but, as I said, the coast of St. Eve had been regarded as quiet and free from violent men and violent deeds ever since Granfer Fraddam died.

"We'd ruther do et in hot fight," said the man, with a curious twitch of his lips, "a good bit ruther. Et *do* come aisier that way; but there, we ca'ant allays pick and choose."

I have not inserted the epithets with which they garnished their words, neither can I describe the careless way in which they spoke of murder. But in my heart came a great loathing for them, and a desire to be even with them.

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Both of them stood between me and the outer cave, one of them holding a smuggler's lantern in his hand, and the man called Sam whispered something in the other's ear.

"Do you know what Sam's bin sayin'?" said the smuggler to me presently.

"No."

"He ses, 'Bill Lurgy,' ses 'ee, 'tha's a daicent fella, an' we do'ant want to cut hes windpipe. Git 'im to jine us.'"

"To join you!" I said with a sneer, for I thought of Naomi just then.

"Oh, I zee. I thot zo. Well, then, that settles et."

"Settles what?"

"This business. You zee, we mus' be olf. I spoase you know oal 'bout this caave?"

"Yes."

"Saicret way out?"

I nodded.

Sam took a huge knife which hung in a sheath by his side.

"I'm right sorry for this, matey," said Bill Lurgy. "If you'd a promist to jine us, we cud a kipt 'ee ere till the Cap'n comed, an' then 'ee might 'ave tooked 'ee on. Besides, ther's a special cargo comin' in d'reckly, defferent to this," he added, looking at the ankers of spirits in the cave; "in fact, it's a fortin to we pore chaps."

"And I'm to be killed?" I said.

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"You mus' be. Sam Liddicoat 'll 'ave to do et," he said, as coolly as though I were a chicken he intended to kill for a dinner.

"Then I tell you, I'm not," I said, quietly.

"How be 'ee goin' to git away, my sonny? It's 'bout wawn o'clock in the mornin' now. Nobody 'll come 'ere but chaps like we."

I made a leap at Sam Liddicoat suddenly, and struck him a stunning blow, which sent him with great force against the side of the cave. Then I turned to Bill Lurgy. My idea was to master him before Sam should recover, and then escape up the secret way to the copse. Bill leapt on me like a mad bull. "Oa, tha's yer soarts, es et?" he cried. "Well, I zed I'd ruther do et in 'ot fight."

I had not been struggling with Bill Lurgy more than a few seconds before I had mastered him. As I said, the Penningtons are a large race, and Bill Lurgy, strong man as he was, became but a child in my hands. He went on the floor of the cave with a thud, and then I fastened my hands around his throat. I felt mad at the moment, and, remembering that time, I can quite understand how men, when driven to extremities, can forget the sacredness of human life. But in mastering Bill I had forgotten Sam Liddicoat, whom I had struck down before he was aware of my intentions.

Hearing a sound behind me, I turned, and saw Sam with his knife uplifted. Whether I should have been able to save myself or no, I know not; I have sometimes thought it would have been impossible. Anyhow, Sam did not strike. He was startled, as I was, by a voice in the cave.

"No, Sam, no!"

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We both turned and saw a man about fifty years of age. He was below the medium height, and although hardy and agile, apparently possessed no physical strength above the average. He had a large head, well shaped, while his features were clearly cut and, I thought, pleasing. His face, too, was cleanly shaved, and he was dressed with some amount of care. The only thing that was strange about him was the curious colour of his eyes. They were light gray, so light that sometimes they looked white.

He entered the inner cave as though he knew it well, and spoke very quietly.

"What, Sam," he said, in a honeyed voice, "wud you 'ave done a thing like that? Strick un down in a moment wethout givin' ev'n a chance to say hes prayers and to make hes paice, so to spaik? No, Sam; that wud never do!"

"He nearly killed me, cap'n," grunted Sam.

"Iss, an' what ef a did? Remember the Scripters, an' turn the other cheek, so to spaik."

By this time Bill Lurgy had got up, and, seeming to understand the situation, slunk to the entrance of the inner cave.

"An' wad'n you to blaame, too?" he said, turning to me. "Never be rash, young man, an' remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath."

I must confess that I was at a loss to understand this mild-spoken man, and had not Sam called him "Cap'n," I should have thought him one of those foolish people converted by the Methodists.

"Are you Cap'n Jack Truscott?" I asked.

"Well, and what if I be, sonny? Law, I bean't pertikler, ye know. Spoase some people do call me Cap'n Jack Truscott, or spoase others do call me Jack Fraddam, what do I care? I'm a man as es friends weth everybody, my dear—tha's what I be. An' you, you be Jasper Pennington, who've been robbed of yer rights, my dear."

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"How do you know?"

"How do I know? Oa, I pick up things goin' about. I do—lots ov things. I knawed 'ee as soon as I zee'd 'ee tackle they two chaps. Why, 'twud 'a gone to my 'art for Sam to 'ave knifed 'ee, my dear. You was born to live a good ould age, and die in bed at Pennington, in the best room, my dear, with yer cheldern and grancheldern cal around 'ee, ould an' well stricken in eres. Tha's your lot, Maaster Jasper. Besides, I'm a man of paice, I be: I love paice 'n' quietness; I like love an' brotherly 'fection, I do!"

I looked at him again in amazement, for I had heard of deeds which Captain Jack Truscott had done that were terrible enough to make one's blood run cold. It was reported that he had a house in a gully which runs up from Kynance Cove, which was the meeting-place for the wildest outlaws of the county. Folks said, moreover, that he owned a vessel which hoisted a black flag.

"Ah, I zee, my deear," said Captain Jack, pathetically; "people 'ave bin 'busin' me. I allays 'ave bin 'bused, my deear, but I do comfort myself, I do, for what do the Scripters say?—'Blessed are they that are abused.' I ain't a-got the words zackly, but the mainin', my deear, the mainin' es right, and that's the chief thing, ed'n et, then?"

In spite of myself the man fascinated me. There was a mixture of mockery and sincerity in his voice, as though he half believed in his pious sayings; moreover, he was very cool and collected. His white eyes wandered all over the cave, and exchanged meaning glances with the two men with whom I had been struggling, but I knew that he was watching me all the time. He must have known that he was in danger of being taken by the Preventive men, but he spoke with the calm assurance of an innocent man.

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"Well," I said, "what do you intend doing with me? You are three to one, and I am unarmed."

"There you be spaikin' vexed now. Wha's the use of that?"

"No wonder, when your men were trying to kill me, and would, perhaps, if you hadn't come just then."

"No; they wouldn't, my deear. I was watching; I zeed the man they'd got to dail weth—fresh as paint, my deear, and shinin' like a maker's back. Plenty of rail good fight; and I like that, though I be a man of paice, Jasper Pennington, my deear."

I waited for him to go on, and although I was much excited, and scarcely expected to live until morning, I managed to meet his white eyes without shrinking.

"Spoasing you go out, Bill and Sam, my sonnies," said Cap'n Jack. "Don't go fur away, my deears; we cudden bear that, could us, Jasper? Do 'ee smok' then, Jasper? I zee you do. Lots of baccy 'ere, an' pipes too. Well, this es oncommon lucky. Well, lev us load up, I zay."

Thinking it well to agree with him, I filled a pipe with tobacco and lit it while Cap'n Jack, with evident satisfaction, smoked peacefully. He sat opposite me, and I waited for him to speak.

CHAPTER VIII

[Pg 100]

I GO TO KYNANCE COVE WITH CAP'N JACK TRUSCOTT'S GANG, AND MEET HIS DAUGHTER TAMSIN

"This ed'n bad bacca, es it, then?" remarked Cap'n Jack, after he had smoked peacefully for a few seconds.

"No," I replied; "as far as I'm a judge, it's very good." I spoke as coolly as I could, although to be truthful I might as well have been smoking dried oak leaves. I could not help realising that my case might be desperate. I had heard that Cap'n Jack's gang were governed by no laws, legal or moral, save those which this man himself made. If I failed, therefore, to fall in with his plans, in all probability Sam Liddicoat and Bill Lurgy would be called in to complete the work which they had attempted a little while before. I could not understand a smuggler, a wrecker, and probably a pirate with pious words upon his lips; the idea of a man whose hands were red with crime talking about peace, mercy, and loving-kindness was, to say the least, strange, and I could not repress a shudder.

After his remark about the quality of the tobacco Cap'n Jack continued puffing away in silence, occasionally casting furtive glances at me. The place was very silent, save for the swish of the waves, as they poured into the outer cave, and rolled the pebbles as they came. It was now past midnight, but the month being September, there would be no light for several hours.

At length Cap'n Jack looked at a huge silver watch, which he had taken from his pocket, and seemed to be making some mental calculations.

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"Fine and loanly, ed'n et, Jasper?" he remarked.

"Very."

"This es a very loanly caave. I thot nobody knawed anything 'bout et, 'ciptin' our chaps and Betsey and Eli."

"Betsey?"

"Iss, aw Betsey do knaw everything. Besides, Granfer Fraddam was—you zee et do run in the family!"

I said nothing, but I called to mind many things I had heard Betsey say.

"Anything might be done 'ere, an' nobody the wiser," he said with a leer.

"Yes."

"But I'm a man of paice, I be. A stiddy, thinkin' sort ov man as you may zay. I shudden like for nothin' to 'appen to you, Jasper. Tha's wy I stopped 'em jist now. 'ow be 'ee thinkin' to git the money to buy back Pennington, Jasper? 'T'll be a stiff job, I tell 'ee."

I did not reply.

"I've 'eerd oal 'bout et, Jasper. Ah, I've knowd they Tresidders for a good long while. Deep, deep, sonny, you ca'an't git 'em nohow. Besides, 'twas 'ard that you shud zee thicky purty maid for the fust time when you was covered with mud, and egg yuks, and fastened on to that gashly thing, wad'n et then?"

I gave a start, and I felt my face crimson.

"I shud like to be a friend to 'ee, Jasper, I shud. Betsey 'ave told me 'bout 'ee, and I like 'ee, Jasper. Besides, I'm allays a friend to the oppressed I be, allays. I shud like to put 'ee in the way of spitin' they Tresidders, and buyin' back the 'ome that es rightfully yours, that I shud. Now, Jasper, my sonny, I could put 'ee in the way of gittin' 'nough in a year or two to get yer oan. A clain off chap like you, with schullership, one as can read ritin' an' knows figures like, why, you could, with a bit of tittivatin', git on anywhere, that is, with the blessin' of Providence, so to spaik."

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"How?" I asked.

"Put yerself in my 'ands, Jasper."

"You mean become a smuggler, a wrecker, and a general law-breaker."

"Law?" cried Cap'n Jack. "Now what's law, Jasper? Es et fair now? The law 'ave put you in a nice pickle, and tho' Pennington ought to be yours, an' the Barton ought to be yours, an' shud be yours ef I, a fair an' honest man, cud 'ave the arrangin' ov things, they've been tooked from 'ee by law. An' you might wait till you was black an' blue, and the law wudden give et back. What 'ave you got to do with law? Well, dodgin' the Preventive men is 'ginst the law, I know et, but what ov that? You c'n make a bit ov money that way—a good bit, Jasper. In three year or so, with me to 'elp 'ee, you cud git 'nough to buy back Pennington, there now."

"And what do you offer?" I asked.

"I'll take 'ee on, tha's what I'll do. I'll taich 'ee a vew things. I'll make a man ov 'ee, Jasper. You are a vine big man, sonny, a match for two ord'nary men, with schullership, an' a knowledge of figgers thraved in. You'd zoon be my 'ead man, an' do a big traade."

"If smuggling were all," I stammered.

"Tha's oal I ask ov 'ee, Jasper. A bit ov smugglin'. But spoase you doan't. Well, look at that now. Spoase you doan't now. Nick Tresidder 'll git that maid es sure as eggs—while you—"

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"I shall be murdered, I suppose."

"Jasper, I never like violence on a eldest son. It do main bad luck, my dear, es a rule; still we've got to go 'ginst bad luck, sometimes. But for the fact of your bein' the third of the family of the same naame—"

"More than the third," I interrupted.

"More than the third ef you like, my dear, but you be the third, an' oal the world do know it's a bad thing to kill a man who's the third of the same naame. But for that I mightn't 'ave come in time. You zee, Jasper, I'm a religious man, do send a present to the passon every year for tithes, I do."

At that time I did not believe in Cap'n Jack's words, but afterward I found that all his gang were afraid to do that which was considered unlucky. All Cornish people, I suppose, have heard the rhyme about killing an eldest son who is the third in succession to bear the same christened name. I know, too, that Cap'n Jack believed implicitly in the legend, and I have heard him repeat it very solemnly, as though he were repeating a prayer at a funeral, while his gang became as solemn as judges. And I have little doubt now that the jargon which I will write down—for I who have had a fair lot of schooling do call it jargon—had a great deal to do with saving me from Sam Liddicoat's knife.

"For if a man shall strike him dead,
His blood shall be on the striker's head,
And while ever he draws his breath,
His days shall be a fearful death;
And after death to hell he'll go,
With pain and everlasting woe."

"An' so, you zee," said Cap'n Jack, "I do'ant want no violence weth 'ee, being a merciful and religious man."

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Now I must confess that I was in sore straits what to do; for he remembered all my plans seemed poor and almost worthless, and at the same time I loathed the thought of accepting Cap'n Jack's offer. Had I been sure I should have to do nothing but help in the smuggling I would not have minded so much, for it is well known that smuggling is not regarded by many as wrong, even the parsons at St. Mawes, and Tresillian, and Mopus having bought smuggled goods. Besides, I knew that many had gained wealth in this way, and were thought none the worse of for doing it. But Cap'n Jack was known to be worse than a smuggler, and almost desperate as I was this hindered me. For I remembered that in spite of everything I was still a Pennington, and I thought of what Naomi Penryn would think of me.

"Besides," went on Cap'n Jack, "you needn't 'ave nothin' to do with this part of the country. I do a biggish traade down the coast, Jasper, my dear. Ther's Kynance, now, or a cove over by Logan Rock, and another by Gurnard's Head. Nobody 'ere need to know where you be."

"Let me have time!" I stammered.

"To be sure, Jasper, my dear," wheedled Cap'n Jack; "then it's settled. You shall come to my plaace at Kynance this very night, you shall. The boys 'll soon be 'ere now. A special cargo, Jasper, 'nough to make yer lips water. Things I bot from a Injun marchant, my dear—cheap. And this es a clain off plaace to put et for a vew days."

"Are you sure it's safe here, Cap'n Jack?" I said, for already I began to be interested in the smuggler's plans. [Pg 105]

"Saafe, who do know about this plaace?"

"Betsey Fraddam and Eli."

"Iss, for sure—I know they do, else *you* wudden a knowed. But who besides?"

"Do you think Ikey Trethewy hasn't found out, living where he has lived all these years?"

"Ikey! Iss, Ikey do know. Aw, aw!"

I saw his meaning, and suspected then what I afterward found to be true. Cap'n Jack's business was very extensive, and he employed people up and down the coast on both sides of the county. Moreover, several pedlars who carried jewelry, laces, and fine silks, obtained their supplies from Cap'n Jack.

"The Preventive men are busy watching you," I said.

"The Preventive men, aw, my dear. Iss, they be watchin', but how do you know?"

I told him what I had heard between them and Richard Tresidder.

"Iss, iss," said Cap'n Jack, with a grunt of satisfaction; "tha's all right, and they'll never vind out, no, they'll never vind out, and now you've zaid oal, my booy?"

"No, I haven't; there's another who knows."

"Who?"

He looked at me in such a way, that before I had time to think his white eyes seemed to drag the words from me.

"Miss Naomi Penryn," I said.

Never did I see such a change in any one. He no longer had the appearance of a mild and inoffensive man. The look of harmless indecision was gone, and all his pious sentiments were flung to the wind. He burst out with a string of oaths such as I had never heard before, and which made my flesh creep. [Pg 106]

"Tell me all you know of this, Jasper Pennington," he said, presently, "everything."

I could not disobey him at that time, and I told him what I have written here, save but for the story of my love—that I kept in my own heart.

"She came in here to keep you from bein' found, did she?"

"Yes."

Then he became a little mild-mannered man again. He had grasped the situation in a minute, and he had seen more than had come into my mind. He commenced smoking again and continued for a few minutes, then he started up suddenly.

"Sam, Bill, sonnies, come in there."

Instantly the two men entered.

"They're comin', be'ant 'em?"

"Iss, Cap'n."

A few seconds later I heard the sound of voices, and presently I knew that several men were entering the cave.

"All safe, sonnies?" asked Cap'n Jack.

"Iss, Cap'n."

"Ah, Providence es very good. It's a vallyable cargo ef I did buy et cheap."

The men laughed.

A number of bales of goods were brought into the inner cave, but I could not discover what they were. I could see that the men were eyeing me keenly, and I thought unpleasantly; but no word was spoken until the cargo was unloaded, and safely stowed away.

"Nobody seed, I spoase."

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"A dark night, Cap'n. No moon, no stars."

"Ah, Providence es very good, sonnies," repeated Cap'n Jack, then, turning to me, he said, "You'll be wantin' to know who this es?"

There was an expression of assent.

"Some ov 'ee do knaw un, I reckon. Ah, Ikey Trethewy, I see you do, and so do you, Zacky Bunny. This, sonnies, is Maaster Jasper Pennington. You've 'eerd me spaik about un. Well, 'ee's a-goin' to jine us, laistways, 'ee's a-goin' to Kynance to-night jist to zee, ya knaw. There, you'd better be off, 'cipt Ikey Trethewy. He's near 'ome, 'ee is. Wait outside a minnit, my deears, we'll be out in a minnit."

All left the inner cave except Ikey Trethewy, who stood watching us as if in wonder.

Cap'n Jack hunted around the cave for a few seconds until he found an inkhorn and a pen. "I do like to kip things handy," he said; "nobody do knaw what'll 'appen." Then, turning to Ikey Trethewy, he said, "You do knaw of a young woman who do live up to Pennington—a young woman jist come there, called Penryn, I speck, Ikey, my dear?"

Ikey nodded.

"Have 'ee got a bit ov paper, sonny?"

"No, Cap'n."

"Ah, tha's awkward. This 'll do, I 'spect—a bit of the prayer-book. I allays like to carry a prayer-book weth me, 'tes oncommon lucky. There, Jasper Pennington, write."

I dipped the pen into the inkhorn, and put the paper which he had torn from the prayer-book on a flat, smooth piece of slatestone. "What?" I asked.

"Write what I shall tell 'ee, now then:

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"To Miss Naomi Penryn. If you breathe one word about, or come near Granfer Fraddam's Cave, I am a dead man!"

I wrote the words as he spoke them. "Is that all?" I asked.

"Sign yer naame, sonny."

I did as he told me.

He took the paper from me and spelt out the words carefully. "Ah, 'tes a grand thing to be a schullard," he said, admiringly. Then he turned to Ikey Trethewy. "This must be put in that young woman's hands at once, an' nobody must knaw 'bout et. Mind!"

"Iss, Cap'n," responded Ikey.

"Now we'll go," said Cap'n Jack. "Good-night, Ikey. Ah, 'tes a good thing to be a man of paice, and full of love for one's fella cretters. Now then, Jasper."

Two men waited for us in the outer cave, and a few seconds later I was in a boat bound for Kynance Cove.

Morning was breaking as we passed the Lizard, and, strangely circumstanced as I was, I could not help feeling awed as I looked upon the great headland. Little wind blew, but the long lines of white breakers thundered on the hard yellow sands, while the low-lying rocks churned the sea into foam.

"Purty, ed'n et, Jasper?" remarked Cap'n Jack. "'Ave 'ee ever zeed the Lizard afore, Jasper?"

"Never, Cap'n Jack."

"Ah, I'll make a man ov 'ee. I've a cutter ov my oan, sonny; not sa big, but a purty thing. She do want a cap'n, Jasper; one as knaws figgers, an' can larn navigation. I do want a gen'lman by birth, an' a great lashin' chap like you, Jasper—wawn as can taake a couple ov andy-sized men and knock their heads together. Oa, ther's providence in things, Jasper."

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I said nothing, but my heart felt sad. I felt as if I were drifting away from Naomi, and that in spite of myself I was cutting the rope that held me to her.

Meanwhile the boats skirted the headland, and I saw the rocky coves of Kynance in the near distance.

"Well, we be near 'ome, sonnies," said the captain, "after a safe journey. Spoasin' somebody stricks up a bit of song now. Fishermen agoin' 'ome ov a mornin', we be. We've toiled oal night an' caught nothin', as the scripters say. Strik up now, 'Lijah Lowry, you've a fine and purty voice. Now, then, sweet and stiddy, my booy."

So Elijah Lowry started a song, and the rest joined in the chorus.

"Zing, Jasper," cried Cap'n Jack, when one verse was completed. "Jine in the cheerful song; let the people zee wot a contented, 'appy, law-abidin' lot we fishermen be. Now, then, chorus:

"Thrice the thunderin' seas did roar,
Thrice the thunderin' winds did blow,
While the brave sailors were rockin' on the top,
And the landlubbers layin' down below.
Below, below, below, below, bel—o—o—o—w!
And the landlubbers layin' down below!"

"Now, then, peart and stiddy oal," cried Cap'n Jack. "An' seein' as 'ow Providence 'ave bin sa kind, I do want 'ee to come up to my 'ouse to-night for supper. Ya know wot a good cook my maid Tamsin es. Well, she'll do 'er best fur to-night. Hake an' conger pie, roast beef and curney puddin', heave to an' come again, jist like kurl singers at Crismas time, my deears. Now, then, Jasper, you come long wi' me."

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I walked with Cap'n Jack up a deep gully. On either hand the sides of the chasm shot up, steeper than the roof of a house, while in some places they were perpendicular.

"Nice'n lew 'ere, Jasper, my dear. Zee 'ow the things do grow. See the 'sparagus twigs, my dear. Like little fir-trees, be'ant 'em then. Aw, 'tes a keenly plaace, this es. Do 'ee zee thicky 'ouse up there, Jasper. Tha's mine—an' Tamsin 'll be waitin' for me. Providence took away 'er mawther, but left Tamsin; an' Providence was kind, Jasper, for her mawther 'ad a tongue, my dear. Jaw! ah, but Tamsin's mawther 'ad a speshul gift for jawin'! I caan't zay as 'ow I liked et, but I caan't deny that she was a gifted woman."

I could not but admit that Cap'n Jack spoke the truth about his house. It was situated on the side of the gorge, well sheltered from the winds, yet so placed that from the gable windows a broad expanse of sea could be seen. It was a well-built house, too, substantial and roomy. In the front was a garden, well stocked with flowers and vegetables. In this garden were two figureheads, supposed to represent Admiral Blake and Sir Walter Raleigh.

"Godly men, both of 'em," remarked Cap'n Jack; "an' both of 'em down on Popery. I be oal for a sound, solid religion, I be. Sir Walter brought baccy, and the Admiral, well 'ee polished off the Spaniards and took a lot of treasure from the Spanish ships. Some would call 'im a pirate, Jasper, my dear, but I be'ant that kind of a man. No, no, thews furrin chaps ca'ant 'spect we to laive 'em go without payin' toll. 'Ere we be, Tamsin, my dear!"

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The latter remark was addressed to a stout, buxom girl of twenty, who greeted her father warmly, looking at me curiously all the while.

"Now, Tamsin, my dear, we waant some breakfast. Wot'll 'ee 'ave, Jasper? 'Am rasher, my dear, or a few pilchers? Or p'raps Tamsin 'ave got some vowl pie? This es my maid, Tamsin, this es, by the blessin' of Providence—my one yaw lamb, tha's wot she es. As spruce a maid as there es in the country, my dear. An' I forgot, you dunnaw Jasper, do 'ee, Tamsin? This es Jasper Pennington, a godly young man who, like Esau of ould, 'ave bin rubbed of his birthright an' hes blessin'. He's a-goin' to jine us, Tamsin, 'n' then 'ee'll git back the birthright, an' laive Nick Trezidder 'ave the blessin'. Aw! Aw! Now, then, Jasper, haive too, my dear."

We sat down to breakfast, and I must confess to eating with a good appetite. When I lifted my eyes from my plate I saw that Tamsin was watching me curiously, as though she could not quite make me out. Certainly I was not very presentable. My clothes were stained and torn, and my appearance altogether unkempt. I felt ill at ease, too, and did not care to talk much. Besides, in spite of my strange position, I was tired and sleepy. This Cap'n Jack presently noted.

"You'll want to slaip, Jasper. Well, Tamsin shall give 'ee a bed, oal down, my dear—make 'ee sleep when you do'ant want to. I do veel like that, too. After we've 'ad a slaip, Jasper, we'll talk a bit avore the booy do come up to supper. A slap-bang supper now, Tamsin, mind that!"

Tamsin left the room to prepare a bed for me, while Cap'n Jack pulled off his boots.

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"A clain off maid, Jasper, clain off. Spruce as a new pin, an' fresh as a new painted boat. Temper like a lamb, Jasper. Ah! she'll be a grand wife fur somebody, an' not short of a fortin neither. I've been a savin' man, sonny, an' 'ave bin oncommon lucky in traade. I spoase Israel Barnicoat do want 'er, an' Israel's a braavish booy, but Tamsin doan't take to 'im. No, she doan't. Ah, there she es. Es Jasper's bed ready? That's yer soarts."

He gave his daughter a sounding kiss, and went upstairs singing:

"Her eyes be as blue as the sea,

Her 'air like goulden grain,
An' she'll stick to me, and only me
Till I come back again.
Again, again, again,
Till I come back again."

"There, Jasper, thicky's the room, and tha's the bed, oal clain an' purty, my deear."

How long I slept I do not know, but it was a long time, for I was very tired. It was a long time since I had slept in a soft clean bed, and I did not fail to appreciate the one Tamsin had prepared. I awoke at length, however, and heard a tap at the door.

"Your new clothes are at the door." It was Tamsin who spoke.

On getting up and opening the door, I found a pile of clothes lying, and on examining them I found them to be well made, and of good material. They fitted me, too, and I must confess that I looked at myself with considerable satisfaction when I had dressed myself. I saw, too, on entering the kitchen that Tamsin approved of my changed appearance. [Pg 113]

"Father's gone down to the cove," she said.

She spoke correctly, and her voice was low and musical.

"He'll not be back for half an hour," she continued; "when he comes I expect he'll bring the men back to supper. I want us to have a talk now. I want you to tell me why you are here. I want to know if you realise what you are doing. Father will tell me nothing; but I cannot believe you know what joining his gang means."

CHAPTER IX

[Pg 114]

WHAT HAPPENED AT CAP'N JACK'S HOUSE—TAMSIN'S CONFESSION, AND THE SMUGGLERS' PLANS

As I looked into Tamsin Truscott's eyes, I could not help thinking what a good-looking maid she was. I was sure she spoke earnestly, too. Evidently she regarded me as different from the gang of men of which her father was captain, and wanted to know the reason of my coming among them.

Now I have before said I have never regarded myself as a clever man—none of my race have ever been. Honest men the Penningtons have always been; brave men, too, although I, perhaps, am not the man to say it, but not men who understand things quickly. Often after I have had dealings with people, it has come to my mind what I might have said and done, how I might have left some questions unanswered while others I could have answered differently. Lawyer Trefry once told me I should never get a living with my brains; I had too much body, he said. I am not ashamed to say this. Nay, I have no faith in men who are clever enough to give lying answers instead of true ones. Give me a man who speaks out straight, and who knows nothing of crooked ways. The men that the country wants are not clever, scheming men, who wriggle out of difficulties by underhanded ways, but those who see only the truth, and speak it, and fight for it if needs be. I am glad I had a fair amount of schooling, as becomes one who ought to have been the squire of a parish, but I am more thankful because I stand six feet four inches in my stockings, and measured forty-six inches around the naked chest even at twenty-one, and that I know next to nothing of sickness or bodily pain. But more than everything, I am proud that although I have been badly treated I have told no lies in order that truth may prevail, neither do I remember striking an unfair blow. No doubt, I shall have many things to answer for on the Judgment Day, but I believe God will reckon to my account the fact that I tried to fight fairly when sorely tempted to do otherwise. [Pg 115]

I say this, because it may seem to many that I was foolish in telling Tamsin Truscott the truth about myself. But as I said just now, I am not clever at answering people, neither could I frame answers to her questions which would hide the truth from her. Before we had been talking ten minutes I had told her all about myself, except my love for Naomi. I dared not speak about that, for I felt I was not worthy to speak of her, whose life was far removed from unlawful men and their ways. Moreover I could not bear that the secret of my heart should be known. It should be first told to the one who only had a right to hear it, even although she should refuse that which I offered her.

"And so," said Tamsin, "my father has promised that you shall win enough money to buy Pennington if you will work with him."

"That he has," was my reply.

"And do you know the kind of life he lives?"

"I have heard," I replied.

"And would you feel happy, Jasper Pennington, if you bought back your home, got by such means?" [Pg 116]

"As for that," I replied, for I did not feel comfortable under her words, "what harm is there in smuggling? I know of several parsons who buy smuggled goods."

"If smuggling were all!" she said, significantly.

"But is it not all?" I queried. "Your father told me that this was all he required."

"Do you think you could gain enough by smuggling? Bill Lurgy has been with my father for years; does he look like one who could buy back Pennington?"

"He is but a paid man," I replied. "Your father has promised that I shall have shares in his profits."

A look of scorn flashed from her eyes, which I could not understand, and she seemed to be about to say some words which caused her much feeling, when her eyes looked straight into mine, and I saw the blood course up into her face, until her very brow became crimson. Her hands trembled, too, while her lips twitched so that she was unable to speak.

Now, I could not understand this, especially as a few seconds before she had been so eager to talk.

"Would you advise me to ask your father to release me of my promise, then?" I asked. "I cannot go at once without his consent, for I have given my word I will stay with him for one month."

For answer she caught my hands eagerly. "No, no, stay!" she said. "I will see to it that you are fairly treated. You must not go away!"

This puzzled me much, but I had no time to ask her what she meant, for just then her father and several of his men came into the room.

There was great carousing that night at Cap'n Jack's house. A great deal of grog was drunk, and many strange things said, and yet I could not help feeling that a kind of reserve was upon the party. I noticed that when some story was being told Cap'n Jack coughed, whereupon the eyes of the story-teller were turned upon me, and the yarn remained unfinished. I could see, too, that many of the men did not like me, and I grew uneasy at the ugly looks they gave me. Moreover, I could not help remembering that in spite of all I was a Pennington, and was no fit company for such as they. And yet I could not escape, for I was hemmed in on every side.

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At the end of a month I began to feel more at home among my surroundings, and up to that time was not asked to do anything particularly objectionable. It is true I helped to bring several cargoes of smuggled goods ashore, but that did not trouble me. Moreover, I learnt many things about the coast of which I had hitherto been ignorant. At the end of two months I knew the coast from Gurnard's Head to Kynance Cove, and had also spent a good deal of time in learning navigation, which Cap'n Jack assured me would be essential to my getting back Pennington. I had no rupture with any of the men, and yet I saw they did not like me. Especially did Israel Barnicoat regard me with a great deal of disfavour. I thought at the time that he was jealous of the favour which Cap'n Jack showed me, for I knew no other reason why he should dislike me. It was true that until I came he was regarded as the strongest man in Cap'n Jack's gang, and was angry when he heard some one say that I could play with two such as he.

"I would like to try a hitch with you, Squire," he said one day, when Cap'n Jack had been chaffing him.

We were standing on the little green outside the Cap'n's house, and several of us were together. I did not want to wrestle with him, for it is ill playing a game of strength with a man who cannot keep his temper. So I told him I would rather let him be regarded as the strongest man that Cap'n Jack had. Whereupon he swore loudly and called me a coward, so that I was obliged to accept his challenge. I had no sooner thrown off my coat than Tamsin came to the door, and when Israel saw her his arms became hard, and a strange light shone from his eyes.

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"Throw off your shoes, Israel," I said. "We won't go in for kicking like the up-country fellows, let's play like true Cornish lads."

Then I took off my heavy boots, and he did likewise, although I could see he was not pleased. After that I waited quietly and let him get his hitch on me first. But he was no match for me; try as he would, he could not throw me, although he could see I did not put forth my strength. Then, when I had let him do his utmost, I slipped from his grasp, put my loins under his body, and threw him on the sward.

"Bravo!" cried Tamsin. "Ah, Israel, you are but a baby in his hands," and she laughed gleefully.

"It was a coward's throw," shouted Israel. "He struck me in the wind with his knee—a coward's kick!"

"Coward!" I cried. "Nay, Israel Barnicoat, I could play with two such as you. Let your brother come with you, and I'll throw you both."

With that Micah Barnicoat came up, and both together they leaped upon me; but I caught them like I have seen the schoolmaster at Tregornny catch two boys, and knocked their heads together; then with a little trick I laid them both on the sward.

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I do not write this boastingly, because I had nothing to do but to use the strength which God gave

me. I could not help it that I came of a large-boned, strong race. My forefathers had been mighty men, and although I am told I am far smaller and weaker than they, Israel Barnicoat and his brother seemed like children in my hands. Neither would I have written this save that it has to do with the story of my life, which I am trying to tell truthfully, although, I am afraid, with but little skill.

Israel looked at me more evilly than ever as he rose to his feet, but he said no word, even though the men laughed loudly, and Tamsin rejoiced at my success. I liked it not, however, when that same evening I saw Israel eagerly talking with a group of men, each of whom held their peace as I came up. This set me thinking, and finally a conviction laid hold of me that Israel was my enemy, and that he would do me evil if he had the chance.

After I had gone to bed that night I heard the sound of voices in the garden, and presently, as if by arrangement, Cap'n Jack went to them.

"Where's the Squire?" I heard Israel Barnicoat say—they had called me Squire from the first.

"Been in bed more'n an hour," was the reply.

"Look 'ere, Cap'n Jack," said Israel; "we want to spaik plain. Why is he to be put afore we? Here 'ee es, livin' at your 'ouse as ef 'ee was yer son. He ain't got to do no dirty work. Oal we want es fair play. Laive 'ee do loustrin' jobs same as we do."

"Anything else?" asked Cap'n Jack.

"I do'ant bleeve in makin' fish o' waun and flesh of t'other. All alike, I zay."

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"Be I cap'n?" asked Cap'n Jack.

"Iss, you be; but we chaps 'ave got our rights, tha's wot I zay. Wot's ee more'n we?"

"Be I a fool, Israel Barnicoat?" asked Cap'n Jack. "Caan't I zee wot's good fur us oal? He's larnin' navigation—wot fur? Ain't us got a ship that 'll need navigation? We want a man as knaws figgers an's got schoolin'; 'ave you got et? We want somebody as can play the genleman; can you do et? Billy Coad es too ould to taake command ov the *Flyin' Swan* much longer; well, wot then? Who's to do et? You know we caan't 'ford to 'ave outsiders. 'Sides, ef 'ee once gits in weth we—well, we've got un, ain't us?"

"Well, wot then?"

"He'll buy back Pennington."

"Wot's the use o' that to we?"

"Be 'ee a fool, Israel Barnicoat? Caan't 'ee zee that eff he's one o' we, and he gits back his rights, that we'm as safe as eggs, an' shell allays have a squire an' a magistrate on our side? Tha's wot I be humourin' 'im for. I do'ant want to drive un away fust thing."

A good deal of murmuring followed this, some of the men evidently agreeing with their captain, others feeling with Israel that I had had too many favours shown me. Then they talked too low for me to hear, except now and then fragments of sentences about the "queer-coloured flag on the *Flying Swan*," and "Billy Coad makin' many a man walk the plank."

All this opened my eyes to many things which had not hitherto been plain to me, and I listened more eagerly than ever, in order to understand their plans concerning me; but I could make nothing out of the orders which Cap'n Jack was giving. At last, just before they left him, one asked a question in a low voice: "When is the *Flying Swan* expected?"

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"A couple ov months, sonny. We must humour un a bit, and git un in our ways. We ca'ant 'ford to be fullish jist now."

Presently they all left with the exception of Israel Barnicoat, who spoke to Cap'n Jack eagerly.

"'Tes oal very well to talk, Cap'n," he said, "but 'ee's stailin' away Tamsin from me."

"Did you ever 'ave Tamsin to stail, sonny?" asked the Cap'n.

"Well, I 'ad a chance at wawn time, but now she's tooked on weth he. Mind, Cap'n, ef he do git Tamsin ther'll be somebody missin'!"

"Doan't be a fool, Israel," replied Cap'n Jack. "Go away 'ome, sonny, and be ready for yer work in the mornin'."

"But mind, Cap'n, the Squire must obey oarders saame as we, else ther'll be mutiny."

"Well, 'ee shell, ther' now. Good-night, Israel; good-night, sonny, and by the blessing of Providence you'll be a rich man yet."

I turned over all this many times in my mind, and, as may be imagined, I was sore driven what to think. Up till now I had not been asked, beyond smuggling, to do anything unlawful, but now I saw that I was intended for wild work. Moreover, I knew not how to get out of it, for Cap'n Jack had, in a way, got me in his power. I had heard of several who had once belonged to his gang, and who had come to an untimely end, and this not by means of the law, but by unknown ways. I also called to mind one of his stories concerning one Moses Rowse, who, because he wanted to

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"turn religious," was found on the beach one day with his head broken, while another went away from home and never came back again.

All this, I say, wrought upon me strangely—so much so that I did not sleep that night, and I formed many plans as to how I might escape, until my brain was weary.

The next day I noticed that Cap'n Jack was eagerly looking at the sea, as though he saw something of interest, although I, who looked in the direction toward which his eyes were turned, could see nothing.

"I reckon ther'll be some work to-night, Jasper, my sonny," he remarked, after looking steadily a long time. "It do come dark early thaise November days, an' it'll be a baisy muggy night to-night, tha's wot 't'll be. I must go down to the cove and zee the booy's."

When he was gone Tamsin came to me.

"What are you so stand-offish for?" she asked.

I did not reply, for my heart was sad.

"And what did you think of the talk between father and the men last night?" she asked.

"What do you know about it?" I asked.

"I know you were listening," she replied; "but never mind, it's all safe with me; and, Jasper, you mustn't think that I care about Israel Barnicoat, I don't like un a bit."

"He's the strongest man in your father's gang," I said.

"No, Jasper, he's no man at all when you are near. How could I look on Israel Barnicoat now I've seen you?" She said this with a sob, and then I knew that Tamsin Truscott loved me. She caught my great brown hand and kissed it. "Jasper," she cried, "I know where father keeps his money, love me, and I will get it for you; more than enough to buy back Pennington. No one knows how rich father is. I know, I know!"

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The maid spoke like one demented, and, for the moment, I knew not how to answer her. Not that I despised her for saying what always ought to be said by the man, for I believe that her heart was as clean as a wind-swept sky. For a moment, too, wild, unnatural thoughts came into my mind which I will not here set down. But even as they came the picture of Naomi's face came before me, and they departed with the swiftness of lightning. For I have found this to be true: a true love ever destroys baser and poorer loves. Let a man love truly a true, pure woman, and all womanhood is sacred to him. And because I loved Naomi truly no other love could come into my life.

So I did not reply to Tamsin's words, but walked away toward the cove instead. Still her words had their effect—they determined me to leave Cap'n Jack's gang as soon as possible. I saw now that it would be wrong to stay at Kynance Cove, wrong to Tamsin, wrong to myself. It would be unworthy of my love for Naomi. For two months I had not realised what lay before me, now I understood. How could I go to her with words of love upon my lips, when I sought to win back the home of my fathers by such means as Cap'n Jack hinted in his talk with his followers the night before? And so again and again I planned how I might get away.

Early in the afternoon Cap'n Jack came to me. "I want us to crake a bit, sonny," he said. I did not reply, but I sat down near him in the open chimney.

"It's time we come to bisness," he said. "You've bin loppin' 'bout for two months, doin' nothin' much. Well, the booy's be jillus, Jasper, and they want things clear."

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"I've done all you've asked me," I replied.

"Iss, so you 'ave, sonny, but I want to maake a man ov 'ee. I've got a purty boat, Jasper, called *The Flying Swan*. She'll be 'ome soon from what I 'ope will be a prosperous voyage. I want you to go on 'er as a soart of maate, to taake command laater on."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "What is this *Flying Swan* of which you are the owner? Is she a trading vessel? What does she carry? Besides, why choose me? I know nothing about sea life."

"I'll tell 'ee," he said. "The *Flyin' Swan* is used for smugglin' on a biggish scale. She's manned by as braave a lot of chaps as ever claimed the seams of a deck. Her cap'n es Billy Coad, a man you may 'ave 'eer'd on, and wawn you would like to know. A man of rare piety, Jasper. He and me be the main owners, by the blessin' of Providence. Ah, it would do yer 'art good to hear 'im give his Christian experience."

"Smuggling on a biggish scale. What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Well, dailin' direct weth the furrin' poarts, and at times, when Billy do see a vessel in the open say, wot do carry the flag of a Papist country, say the Spanish, well, I doan't deny—but there."

"You mean that the *Flying Swan* is but little better than a pirate ship."

"Never call things by ugly naames," replied Cap'n Jack; "besides, I do look upon this as your main chance of buyin' back Pennington."

"Suppose I refuse?" I suggested.

"You wa'ant refuse, sonny."

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"Why not?"

"Well, twudden pay 'ee. We doan't never have that sort wi' we. I'm a man of paice, I be; but thaise be loanely paarts, my sonny. Nearer than Lezard Town ther's 'ardly a 'ouse. You wudden be missed much."

"But suppose I were to leave you?"

"Laive us; no, sonny, you ca'ant do that now. You know too much."

"How can you keep me? Suppose I were to leave the house now, ay, leave the county, who could stop me?"

"I could, sonny. Do you think I'm a cheeld? I've got the county ringed—I've got men everywhere. Cap'n Jack Truscott's gang is a big affair, my son, an' I telly this, ef you tried to git away to-night you'd be a dead man afore to-morrow, for oal I'm a man of paice, and send presents to the passon in place of tithes; I doan't stand no nonsense, mind that, my son."

His white eyes shone with a strange light, and I knew he had his fears about my loyalty.

"The truth es, Jasper," went on Cap'n Jack, "you've come wi' we, and wi' we you must stay; that es, till you git 'nough to buy back Pennington. Aw, aw!"

"And if I do?"

"I shell 'ave a squire for my friend, and—well, you'll still be one o' we. You see, my sonny, we've got many ways o' doin' things, an' when I once gits 'old ov a chap, well, I sticks. But theer, sonny, wot's the use ov angry words. I'm a paicable man, and wen you know us better, you'll know 'ow we stick to aich other through thick and thin. I like 'ee, Jasper, an' I've got need ov 'ee. A strong fella you be—Israel Barnicoat and his brother Micah was just like little babbies to 'ee. A schullard, too, and know figgers. Iss, a year on the *Flyin' Swan* on an expedishan I'm a thinkin' on will buy back Pennington, and then, well, we shall see, Jasper. Why shudden I be the squire's father-in-law, eh, sonny? An' Tamsin es a grand maid, ed'n she then?"

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Slowly my mind grasped his meaning, but I did not speak.

"Still, tho' you be a fav'rite ov mine, Jasper, the booy's be jillus, that ev it. An' ther's a bit of work on to-night, sonny. There's a craft a few miles out, an' to-night will be baisly and black. Well, the booy's insist on your takin' our ould mare, an' tyin' a lantern on to her neck, an' leadin' 'er on the cliff toward the Lizard. It'll do thou'll mare good, and be a light to the vessel."

"Such a light would lure her on to the rocks!" I cried.

"Wud et, Jasper? Well, some wud blaame Providence for these things. But it must be done."

"And suppose the Preventive men see me?"

"Wot be a couple of sich chaps to you? You could knock their 'eads together like you ded by Micah and Israel."

"And if I refuse?"

He looked at me steadily for a minute with his white eyes gleaming strangely in the firelight; then he said, slowly, "Ef you refuse this time, my sonny, you'll never refuse no more in this world."

All the same I made up my mind that I would escape from Cap'n Jack's gang that very night, and that I would take no part in luring a vessel on to destruction.

CHAPTER X

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WHAT BECAME OF THE WRECKERS' LIGHT—HOW I ESCAPED AND ENTERED PENNINGTON

An hour later a number of men were in the kitchen of Cap'n Jack's house, and from the way they talked I knew they meant that the vessel which they had been watching should that night be destroyed. Never until then did I realise the utter heartlessness of the gang. They seemed to care nothing for the lives of those on the ship which they had decided to wreck. In their lust for gain nothing was sacred to them. As far as I could gather, their plan was that I should lead Cap'n Jack's horse along the edge of the cliffs with a lantern fastened to its neck. This to a ship at sea would seem like the light of another ship. The false light would thus lead the captain to steer his vessel straight upon the rocks. Outside was a wild, high sea, the clouds overhead were black as ink, and not a star appeared, thus the doomed vessel would be at the mercy of the wreckers. It was Cap'n Jack's plan to have his men in readiness to seize upon all the valuables of the ship, and that the crew should be drowned. They had made out that the vessel was bound for Falmouth,

but that in the blackness of the night the crew would lose their whereabouts, and would eagerly steer toward what they would believe to be the light of another vessel.

Why I had been chosen to show the false light I knew not, except that such a deed, by exposing me to the vigilance of the Preventive men, would bind me more securely. They did not seem to think that I should fail in doing this. As Cap'n Jack had said, to fail to obey the commands of the gang meant an untimely death, while to try and escape would bring upon me the same punishment.

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Every man was well primed with brandy, and Cap'n Jack saw that while each one had enough to excite him to wild deeds, no man was allowed to drink to such a degree that he became in any way incapacitated for the work before him.

During the conversation, however, I noticed that Israel Barnicoat spoke no word. Instead, he kept his eyes upon me. When the conference was ended, however, and all their plans, which I have barely hinted at, because in my ignorance and excitement I could only dimly understand them, Israel spoke aloud.

"Cap'n," he said; "the Squire have never done a job like this afore, he'll need somebody weth un."

"We ca'ant spare more'n one man for sich a job," was the response.

"It'll need another, I tell 'ee," replied Israel.

"Then thee c'n kip un company," was Cap'n Jack's reply.

"Oal right," cried Israel, but he kept his eyes away from me as he spoke.

"Tell 'ee where we'll begin," continued Israel, still looking away from me. "We'll take old Smiler right to the Lizard, jist off Carligga Rocks, we'll kip on cloase by Polpeor, an' on to Bumble. I reckon by that time she'll be on the rocks. You c'n board 'er there, ef needs be, and we'll mit you in the saicret caave in Honsel Cove."

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"Iss, that'll do very well, sonny," was Cap'n Jack's reply. "By coose we mayn't git 'er afore she do git to the Devil's Fryin' Pan or Cadwith, and ef you fail theer, you must git to Black Head as fast as yer legs can car'ee. But kip away from Ruan Minor, Israel, my sonny. The Preventive men be strong there."

"Trust me," laughed Israel.

Cap'n Jack went out and looked seaward, anxiously. "You must start in a 'our or a 'our and haalf, Israel, my sonny, and the rest of us must git down to the Cove to once," he said, when he came back.

"Oal right, Cap'n," replied Israel, "I jist want to go and spaik to mauther, while the Squire do git the oull mare ready."

I went out as he spoke, and then acting on sudden impulse, determined to follow him. A minute later I was glad I had done so, for I saw that he was going away from his mother's house. He hurried rapidly along the Helston road until he came to a little beer-house, or as the folks called it a kiddleywink, which he entered. When I had arrived at the door of this kiddleywink, I was at a loss what to do, neither could I make out why he had come here. I had barely time to think, however, before Israel came out again, and I saw that he was accompanied by a Preventive man.

"I've got a job for 'ee," said Israel.

"What?"

"A chap showin' a false light to-night."

"But I'd arranged weth the Cap'n to kip away, an' to kip our chaps away."

"Never mind that. I c'n maake et wuth yer while."

"Well, what es et?"

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"Be jist off The Stags at twelve o'clock to-night. A young fella will be laidin' an ould gray mare."

"But wot about the Cap'n?"

"I tell 'ee 't'll be for your good. You do as I tell 'ee, Ellic, or, well, you'll know what!"

"But et'll spoil yer plans!"

"Never mind. Look 'ere—" Then he talked earnestly in low tones so that I could not hear. Evidently, however, he satisfied the officer, for I heard him say, "Clain off. A reglar feather in my cap, and the Cap'n wa'ant know."

When Israel returned to Cap'n Jack's house I had the mare all ready.

"We'll go stright to Carn Barrow," he said, shortly.

"That wasn't Cap'n Jack's plan," was my reply.

"Look 'ere, Squire, I'm to work this. You'm new to this work. I tell 'ee we must git to the Devil's

Fryin' Pan by ten o'clock, and then git back to The Stags 'bout twelve."

"Very well," I replied, "I'm ready."

"'Tes a good two mile by road to the Fryin' Pan," he remarked. "And 'tes oppen downs nearly oal the way to The Stags." He seemed to think a minute, then he said, "No, we wa'ant go so far as that, we'll jist go to Bumble Rock, and then kip on the top by Poltream Cove. That'll taake us oal our time."

He led the horse and I carried the lantern, which he said should not be lit until we came to Bumble Rock, which stands by a gully in the headland, where the seas roar with a terrible noise as they break upon the coast.

Not a word was spoken as we went along in the darkness. As well as I could I kept watch on him, for I knew he hated me. He was jealous of me for several reasons. For one thing, since I had come, Tamsin Truscott had ceased to notice him, and for another, he was no longer regarded as the strongest man in the gang. For years he had been proud of this, and now the men laughed at him because I was able to play with both him and his brother. Perhaps the wrestling match at which I had mastered him so easily had more to do with his enmity than the fact that Tamsin no longer smiled on him. For his pride in his strength was greater than his love.

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As I have said, it was a wild dark night. A great sea hurled itself on the coast, although ordinarily it could not be called dangerous. As we drew near the rocks, however, we could hear the waves roaring like a thousand angry beasts. Bumble Rock rose up like a great giant, and seemed to laugh at the black waves which it churned into foam. The rocks which we could dimly see, for our eyes had become used to the darkness, seemed like the teeth of a hideous monster, which would cruelly tear any ship that the waves should dash upon them. The thought of the vessel, evidently bound for Falmouth Harbour, being lured to destruction, with all hands on board, was horrible to me, and at that moment a great anger rose in my heart toward the gang among whom I had lived for two months. Hitherto, however, my hands had been unstained by crime, and I determined that for the future, even although I should be hunted down by the men into whose hands I had fallen, I would escape from them that night.

"I've got the tinder and the flint and steel," remarked Israel, "we must git to a lew plaace an' light the candle. Come over 'ere. Ther's a 'ollow behind the rocks, it'll do zackly."

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I followed him without a word until we reached a spot that was sheltered from the sea, although we could still hear the waves surging and moaning, while flecks of foam often beat upon our faces.

Perhaps there is no more lonely place on God's earth than this. That night the genius of desolation seemed to reign, while the roaring sea told me of mad spirits playing with the angry waters. In the dim light I could see the long line of foam, while above the dark cliffs loomed; landward nothing was visible, save a suggestion of the outline of the hills.

"'Tes a gashly night and this es a gashly job to be done," said Israel. "By agor, 'ow the waaves do roar," he continued, after a minute.

"Yes, 'tis a wild night," I responded, and as if in confirmation of my words, a great wave broke on Bumble Rock with a mighty roar, while a shower of spray and flecks of foam fell upon us.

"Well, 'tes as lew 'ere as we can git it anywhere," he said; "ther now, you hould the lantern while I strick the light."

"No," I replied.

"Wot do 'ee main?" he queried.

"Simply this," I answered; "no false light shall shine on this cliff to-night." As I spoke I took the lantern and threw it over the cliffs. Then I sprang upon him and caught his hands in mine.

"Look you, Israel Barnicoat," I said, "I know what your plans are. I followed you as you went to the Preventive man to-night; but it is no use. The wreckers' light will not shine to-night, neither will I be off The Stags at twelve o'clock."

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He struggled to be free, but I held him tight.

"You'll suffer for this," he screamed; "when Cap'n Jack knaws you'll die."

"I must take chance of that," I said. Then I threw him heavily on the sward. Taking some cord from my pocket, with which I had provided myself before starting, I bound his hands securely behind him. Then I bound his legs.

"Wot be 'ee goin' to do weth me now?" he shrieked.

"Nothing more."

"But you bean't goin' to laive me lie 'ere oal night, be 'ee? Why, I sh'll die ov the cowl."

"No, you won't," I said; "as you mentioned, this is a lew place, and you are not one who will die so easily. You may be a bit cramped by the morning, and perhaps you may get a twinge of rheumatics, but that'll be all. Besides, it's far better for you to suffer a bit than that yon vessel shall be wrecked. Now I'll leave you to your sins; I'm off."

"Off where?"

"Off where you'll never see me again. You'll have company to-night, perhaps. It's said that Peter Crowle's ghost comes here on windy nights. I wish you pleasant company."

"Oh, doan't 'ee go," he screamed; "I'm 'fraid of sperrits, I be. Let me free, Squire, 'n I'll never tell where you'm gone; I'll zay you'm drowned, or tumbled over the cleffs or anything, onnly do cut the ropes, and lev me be free."

"No," I said; "while you are here Cap'n Jack will think the false lights are showing, and perhaps the vessel will be safe. As for the spirits, you are the strongest, bravest man in the gang, and, of course, you are not afraid of spirits."

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"But you bean't agoin' to take th'oull mare?"

"Yes; Smiler will come with me. Good luck to you, Israel Barnicoat."

I sprang upon Smiler's back and rode away, leaving him in the sheltered hollow. The night was cold and threatened rain, but I was sure that, hardy and used to exposure as he was, he would not be hurt. When morning came he would be searched for and found. Of course he would tell his story to Cap'n Jack, but by that time I hoped to be out of harm's way.

At first I rode slowly, especially until I got to Ruan Major. Arrived there, however, and having struck into the road over Goonhilly Downs, I went faster. I felt strangely happy, for it seemed as though a weight were rolled from my shoulders. Once more I was a free man, and I imagined that for some hours I should not be pursued. Besides, all the time I had been with Cap'n Jack's gang I felt that I was doing what was unworthy of a Pennington, and worse still, what was unworthy of my love for Naomi. But more than all, a wild scheme had come into my mind; I would that night go to Pennington and try to see Naomi. The thought acted upon me like some strange elixir; to hear Naomi's voice, to feel her hand in mine, were a joy beyond all words. How I was to do this I did not know; what difficulties I should meet I did not consider. The thought that I should see her was enough for me, and I shouted for very joy. The hour was not yet late, and I calculated that by hard riding I could get to Pennington by midnight. Thus at the very hour when Israel Barnicoat had planned for me to be taken by the Preventive men, I hoped to be speaking to my love.

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In looking back I can see that my hopes were very unreasonable. How could I get Naomi to speak to me? At best she could only regard me as a landless outcast, whom she had once seen pilloried in Falmouth town and pelted by hooting boys. It is true I had told her my story in Granfer Fraddam's Cave, and she had shown a desire to shield me from Richard Tresidder, but she must probably have forgotten all about it. Besides, if she had not forgotten me, she would think me either dead or far away. The letter which I had written at Cap'n Jack's dictation would tell her that I was in his power. During my two months' stay at Kynance Cove, I had asked Cap'n Jack concerning Granfer Fraddam's Cave, but he always evaded my questions, and I did not know whether she had received the letter I had written.

At the same time my heart beat high with hope, and I was happy. For a true love, even although difficulties beset it, is always beautiful and joyous. As I rode along through the night, even the wild winds sang love songs to me, while I could see the light of Naomi's eyes shining in the darkness, revealing her face to me, pure and beautiful.

I am told that my days of romance are over, that I have reached that stage in life when the foolishness of young lovers is impossible to me. And yet even now I cannot see a boy and a maid together without my heart beating faster; for there is nothing more beautiful on God's green earth than the love of lovers, and I know that when a lad feels a girl's first kisses on his lips, he lives in heaven, if he loves her as I loved Naomi. There are those, even in this parish, who sneer at the bliss of boy and girl sweethearts, but I, who remember the night when I rode from Bumble Rock to Pennington, cannot sneer; nay, rather, the tears start to my eyes, and I find myself fighting my battles again and dreaming of love, even as I dreamed then.

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Smiler was a better steed than I had hoped. Saddle I had none, nor bridle, but the halter which had been placed on her head was sufficient for me to guide her. Moreover, I had been used to horses all my life, and felt as much at ease on a horse's back as on my feet. Thus it came about that before midnight I had reached the parish of St. Eve, and was making my way toward Pennington. When within sight of the house, however, I was in a dilemma, and never until then did I realise how difficult was the task I had set myself. The whole family was a-bed, at least I imagined so, neither did I know the part of the house where Naomi Penryn was. Most likely, too, dogs would be prowling around, and I did not wish to place myself in the power of Richard Tresidder or his son Nick. At the same time I vowed that I would see Naomi, even though I waited there until morning.

So, tying Smiler to a tree, I crept quietly up to the house and looked anxiously around. At first all seemed to be in darkness, but presently I saw a light shining from one of the windows in the back part of the house. Wondering what it might mean, I went toward it and looked through the window. A blind had been drawn, but it did not fit the window well, and there was an inch of glass between the window-frame and the blind that was not covered. At first I could only see the room in a blurred sort of way, for the leaded panes of glass were small, but presently I saw more clearly. The room into which I looked was the kitchen, and by the table sat a man and a woman. The man was Ikey Trethewy, whom I had last seen in Granfer Fraddam's Cave, and who had promised to take my letter to Naomi; the woman was the Pennington cook. The latter was a sour

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and rather hard-featured woman of forty years of age. It had been a joke of the parish that Tryphena Rowse never had a sweetheart in her life, that she was too ugly, too cross-tempered. It was also rumoured, however, that this was not Tryphena's fault, and that her great desire was to get married and settle down. I soon saw that Ikey Trethewy was there as Tryphena's sweetheart. The table was covered with tempting eatables, of which Ikey partook freely, stopping between sups of ale and mouthfuls of chicken pie to salute the object of his affections. I saw, too, that these attentions were by no means disagreeable to the cook, although she gave Ikey several admonitory taps. It was evident, too, that Ikey's visit was clandestine. I knew that, except on special occasions, it was the rule for Pennington doors to be closed at ten o'clock, while it was now past midnight. Probably Ikey, who had the reputation of being a woman-hater, did not care for his courtship to be known, for I knew that he did not like being laughed at or joked in any way.

I had not waited long when Ikey began to make preparations for his departure, while Tryphena seemed to be trying to persuade him to stay a little longer. No sound reached me, however, and I imagined that all their conversation was carried on in whispers for fear the noise thereof might reach the master or mistress of the establishment. He succeeded at length, however, in breaking away from the embraces of the fair cook, while two huge dogs which lay by the kitchen fire watched them solemnly. Presently the door opened, and Ikey and Tryphena stood together outside. They were quite close to me, so that I could hear their every word.

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"You wa'ant be long afore you come again, Ikey?" asked Tryphena.

"Not long, my buty. P'raps you c'n git a bit a pigin pie next time."

"That I will, Ikey. But doan't 'ee think, Ikey, 'tes time for 'ee to be puttin' in th' baans? We've bin a-courtin' like this now for more'n vive yer."

"Well, tha's nothin', Tryphena. Jim Jory ded court Mary Hicks thirteen yer afore they wur spliced."

"Iss; but I ca'ant kip comp'ny weth 'ee like other maids. An' ted'n vitty fur we to be mittin' every week like this 'ere."

"Well, Tryphena, my buty, you do know I do love 'ee deerly. An' you be a clain off cook, too. I niver taasted sich a vowl pie in my life, ther now. An' yer zay 't shell be a pigin pie next week."

"Iss, Ikey; but 'twud be purty to 'ave a 'ome of our oan."

"Mawther wa'ant 'eer of et it, nor Cap'n Jack nuther. 'Nother yer or two, Tryphena, and then I'll go to the passen. Ther, I mus' be goin'."

Another sounding kiss, and Ikey crept away very quietly, while Tryphena began to put away the supper things. In a minute my mind was made up. I had heard enough to settle me on my plan of action. I thought I saw the means whereby I could see Naomi.

I waited until Tryphena had cleared away the remains of Ikey's repast, and was evidently preparing to go to her room, and then I gave the kitchen door a slight knock, and, imitating Ikey's voice as well as I could, I said, "Tryphena, my buty, laive me in a minait."

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She came and opened the door quickly.

"Ave 'ee forgot summin', Ikey, dear?" she said; and then before she recognised me I slipped in.

The dogs rose up with a low, suppressed growl, as though they were in doubt what to do; but Tryphena, who was as anxious as I that the household might not be disturbed, quieted them.

"Maaster Jasper Pennington!" she gasped as she looked into my face.

"That's right, Tryphena," I said. "Sit down, I want to talk with you, and I want you to do something for me."

"No, I mustn't, I daren't. They do oal hate 'ee 'ere, Maaster Jasper. Ef they wos to know you was 'ere, I dunnaw wot wud 'appen."

For a moment a great bitterness came into my heart, for I remembered that this was the first time I had ever entered the home of my fathers. And it galled me beyond measure that I should have to enter at midnight at the kitchen door like a servant who came courting the servant maids. I quickly realised my position, however, and acted accordingly.

"Yes, you must do what I ask you, Tryphena," I said.

"I tell 'ee I ca'ant."

"Then Ikey Trethewy will be in the hands of the Preventive men by to-morrow," I replied, "and Richard Tresidder will know that a man has come to his house for years at midnight on the sly."

I did not want to frighten the poor woman, but it had to be done. I saw, too, that I had said sufficient to make Tryphena afraid to thwart me.

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"What do 'ee want me to do?" she asked.

"I suppose no one can hear us?" I said.

"No, oal the family, 'ciptin' Miss Naomi, do slaip in another paart ov the 'ouse."

I listened intently, but could hear no sound; evidently all the family was asleep.

"You remember about two months ago that Ikey brought a letter to Miss Naomi Penryn?" I said.

"Iss."

"Well, I wrote that letter."

"I know; Ikey tould me."

"Well, I want to see Miss Naomi."

"When?"

"To-night. I want you to go to her room now, and tell her that I want to see her."

CHAPTER XI

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I SEE NAOMI PENRYN, AND AM GREATLY ENCOURAGED, BUT SOON AFTER AM TAKEN PRISONER

Tryphena looked at me like one dazed. "No, Maaster Jasper," she replied, "it caan't be done."

"It must be done."

"And what if I do?"

"I will leave the house in an hour," I replied, "and no one shall know of what you have done, not even Ikey."

"No, Ikey musn't know you've been 'ere."

"Why?"

"Why, e'ed be jillus as cud be. E'ed be afraid you'd come to try and cut un out. You zee, you be a 'andsome young man, Master Jasper."

"Well, you must do as I ask you, or Ikey will know," I said, for I saw that Tryphena needed a good deal of pressure. At the same time I could not help smiling at the thought of Ikey being jealous, for surely one look at her face were enough to dispel such a thought. "You see," I went on, "a fine-looking woman like you must be careful, if you wish to keep such a man as Ikey. However, you do as I ask you, and some day you'll be glad."

I believe my flattery had more to do with making Tryphena my friend than any threats I might offer, for a smile of satisfaction came on her lips, and she asked me how she was to do what I asked her.

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"What I want," I said, "is for you to go quietly to Miss Naomi, and tell her that Jasper Pennington is in great danger, and that he must see her before he leaves this part of the world."

"Wot, be 'ee goin' away, then?" cried Tryphena.

"I must," I said; "now go quickly."

When she had gone I saw how unreasonable my request was. Would not Naomi be justified in arousing the house, and would she not at the least refuse to come and see me? And yet all the while I waited with a great hope in my heart, for love gives hope, and I loved Naomi like my own life. For all this, I worried myself by thinking that I did not tell Tryphena anything whereby she could induce Naomi to come to me. For what should she care about my danger, save as she might care about the danger of a thousand more for whom she could do nothing?

And so I waited with an anxious heart, and when at length I heard footsteps my bosom seemed too small for the mighty beating of my heart. But it was not my love's footsteps that I heard, but Tryphena's. Perhaps fellow-feeling had made her kind, for she told me in a kind, sympathetic way that "Miss Naomi would be down d'reckly."

Now this was more than I had seriously dared to hope. No sooner did I hear her telling me this joyful news than I felt amazed that I had ever dreamed of asking for such a thing, while my heart grew heavy at the thought that I had no sufficient reason for asking to see Naomi.

In less than five minutes later Naomi came into the kitchen. She looked pale, and thin, I thought, but she was beauteous beyond all words. I am not going to try and describe her. I am not gifted in writing fine things, for the pen was nearly a stranger to my hands until I began to write this history, besides I doubt if any man, great as he may be, could do justice to Naomi's beauty. I think my heart ceased to beat for a while, and I know that I stood looking at her stupidly, my tongue refusing to move.

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As for Tryphena, I am sure she understood my feelings, for she went into the dairy, for the which

I determined even then that I would some day reward her.

"You said you were in danger," said Naomi, speaking first, "and that you wanted to see me. You have asked a hard thing, but I have come."

"Miss Naomi," I said, in a low, hoarse voice, "forgive my forwardness, for truly I am unworthy this honour, yet believe me I could not help it. Will you sit down, so that I may try and tell you what is in my heart?"

She sat down on the old kitchen settle, and I could not help noticing how beautifully her dark dress fitted her graceful form. At the same time I knew not what to say. I had come because my heart hungered for her, and because love knows no laws. Yet no words came to me, except to say, "Naomi Penryn, I love you more than life," and those I dared not utter, so much was I afraid of her as she sat there.

"Are you in great danger?" she asked. "I have breathed no word about that cave, no word to any one. What did it mean?"

This gave me an opening, and then I rapidly told her what I have written in these pages.

"And will they try and find you?" she asked when I had told my story.

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"They will hunt me like dogs hunt a fox!" I replied, "so I must find my way to Falmouth, and try and get to sea."

Her face was full of sympathy, and my heart rejoiced because she did not seem to think it strange that I should come to her.

"And will you have to go soon?"

"I must go now," I replied, and then my sorrow and despair, at the thought, dragged my confession from my tongue.

"But before I go," I said, "I must tell you that I love you, Naomi Penryn. It is madness, I know; but I loved you when I was in the pillory at Falmouth, and I have loved you ever since, and my love has been growing stronger each day. That is why I have come here, to-night. My heart is hungry for you, and my eyes have been aching for a sight of your face, and I felt I could not go away without telling you, even though I shall never see you again."

Her face seemed to grow paler than ever as I spoke, but her eyes grew soft.

"I know I am wrong, I ought not to have come in this way," I went on, for my tongue was unloosed now, "but I could not help it; and I am glad I have come, for your eyes will nerve me, and the thought that you do not scorn me will be a help to me in the unknown paths which I have to tread. For you do not scorn me, do you?"

"Scorn you?" she asked. "Why should I scorn you?"

And then a great hope came into my heart, greater than I had ever dared to dream of before, the hope that she might care for me! Wild I know it was, but my own love filled me with the hope. If I loved her, might she not, even although I were unworthy, love me? Yet I dared not ask her if it was so; only I longed with a longing which cannot be uttered that she should tell me, by word or look.

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"And must you go soon, go now to Falmouth?" she said like one dazed.

"Yes; I must e'en go now," I said. "It is like heaven to be near you, better than any heaven preached about by parsons, but I must go. Can you give me no word of encouragement before I leave?"

But she made no reply, and then my heart became heavy again, so I held out my hand, trying to appear brave.

Without hesitation, she put her hand in mine, and I felt it tremble, just as I have felt little chicks not a week old tremble when I have caught them. I fancied that she was afraid of me, so I said, "Thank you for speaking to me. This meeting will help me for many a long day, and I am afraid I have a dreary future before me."

"I hope you will come to no harm," she said, "and I hope you will obtain what is justly yours."

"Can you say nothing else?" I cried, "not just one word?"

But just then Tryphena came in from the dairy. "There's a noise in Maaster Nick's bedroom," she cried. "Git out, Maaster Jasper. Miss Naomi, we must go up by the back stairs. Maake 'aaste, Maaster Jasper!" And then she blew out the light, leaving us in darkness.

And then I could contain my feelings no longer, and I caught Naomi's fingers to my mouth, and kissed them. She drew her hand away, but not as I thought then, angrily.

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"You'll be careful to let no one hurt you, will you?" she said, and I heard a tremor in her voice, and then, before I could answer, she had gone.

And that was all we said to each other at Pennington, and although I hungered to keep her near me longer, and although the night into which I went was black and stormy, my heart thumped

aloud for joy. Her words rung in my ears as I found my way among the trees, and they were sweeter to me than the singing of birds on a summer morning. The winds blew wildly, while in the near distance I heard the roar of the waves. The rain fell heavily, too, but I did not care. What heeded I wind and weather! Neither did I fear danger. I knew that I could play with men even as others play with children, for hope stirred in my heart, hope made the black sky as beautiful as a rainbow.

There be many joys that come into a man's life, the joy of possession, the joy of fame, the joy of victory in battle; but I know of no joy as great as that which comes because of the hope that his love loves him, unless it be that which never comes to us but once, the joy of the first kiss of love. And this to me seems the will of God, and thus love should always be regarded as sacred, and never be spoken of save with reverence. For I know that, although Naomi had spoken but few words to me, and that I had only a hope of her loving me in some far-off time, yet the thought that she cared for me ever so little made me rich in spite of my poverty, and caused the wailing winds to sing glad songs to me. No man is poor while his love loves him, and even a hope of that love is the life of God surging in the heart of a man. [Pg 147]

And so I came up to the spot where I had fastened my horse, glad at heart, although I knew not where to go or what to do. I rode a mile or two, and then I remembered that if I were discovered with Cap'n Jack's mare I should be in danger of being hanged for horse stealing. So I jumped from her back, tied the halter around her neck, and told her to go home. She sniffed around for two or three minutes, and then started to trot steadily along the road toward Kynance, and over which I had rode her hours before.

This done, I started to walk to Falmouth; as I trudged along I had to pass close to Elmwater Barton, but my heart felt no bitterness, for it was filled with love. When I came to Betsey Fraddam's cottage I stopped, intending to go in; but thinking better of it I made no sound, and a few minutes later was on the main road to Falmouth Town.

I did not walk rapidly, for a great peace was in my heart. I did not fear Cap'n Jack's gang, although I felt sure they would follow me, and I knew that Israel Barnicoat would do all in his power to embitter Cap'n Jack against me. I felt strong enough to overcome everything, so great is the power of hope.

So slowly did I walk that I did not get near Falmouth Harbour until the gray morning began to dawn. I looked eagerly among the vessels, thinking of the fate of the craft Cap'n Jack's gang had intended to wreck. I wondered, too, whether Israel Barnicoat had been discovered, and if Cap'n Jack knew of what I had done. As I drew nearer I determined that I would speak to the first person I should meet, and ask what vessels had arrived, but scarcely had the thought formed itself in my mind when I felt my arms pinioned. [Pg 148]

I struggled like a mad man for my liberty, because I saw that two Preventive men had attacked me, and I believe I should have freed myself from them had not a third come to the help of the other two.

"What is the meaning of this?" I said, when they had tied my hands.

"Hanging," was the reply.

"What for?"

"Showing a false light by the Lizard."

"It's a lie."

"Why have we got you, then?"

I was almost dazed by astonishment. Presently, however, I saw that one of the men was the officer to whom Israel Barnicoat had spoken in the kiddleywink. This set me thinking. These men would be the tools of Cap'n Jack. This was the step he had taken to accomplish his purposes concerning me. If I were convicted of showing a false light on the headland, I should be punished by death; at least, I imagined so.

"Anyhow," continued the man, "you must go along wi' me."

"Where?"

"To the lockup."

Now, if there was anything I desired it was to keep clear of the magistrates. I knew that Richard Tresidder would be among my judges, and that I should receive no mercy. But more than all this, while smuggling was lightly regarded, there was a strong feeling against the wrecker. It is true people were glad of a wreck along the coast, and many a valuable thing had been obtained thereby, but the whole countryside cried out against those who sought to lure a vessel on to destruction, even while they did not object to share in the wreckage. [Pg 149]

"But why must I go?"

"Because we seed you carr'in' a false light along the coast."

"When?"

"Laast night."

There were three to one, and I could do nothing. So I let them lead me to the lockup, where I had to wait until the magistrates were ready to try me.

What happened while I was there I know not. I was too dazed, too bewildered to tell. While I had been with Naomi Penryn I seemed to be lifted into heaven, and then within a few hours of our parting all my hopes were destroyed. I saw nothing before me but cruel imprisonment or possible death, for I knew that Richard Tresidder would do his worst.

When the time of my trial came on and I entered the court-house, I saw that several justices sat upon the bench, and among them was Richard Tresidder, who looked at me triumphantly, as though he rejoiced to see me there, which I have no doubt he did.

Old Admiral Trefry was the one who spoke to me, however. "It is not long since you were here, Jasper Pennington," he said, "and I am grieved to see you."

Then the Clerk read out the charge against me, which was a string of lies from beginning to end, for, as I have told in these pages, I threw the lantern over the cliff, and thus kept the light from being shown. I discovered afterward, too, that the vessel Cap'n Jack had intended to wreck had landed safe in Falmouth Harbour.

I cannot remember very distinctly what took place at the trial, or rather the first part of it is to me a very confused memory. I know, however, that things looked very black against me, for each of the Preventive men swore that he had seen me at eleven o'clock on the previous night showing the false light on the coast. [Pg 150]

I declared this to be a lie with very great vehemence, and swore that I had shown no false light.

Presently Richard Tresidder spoke, and his voice made my blood gallop through my veins, and my heart full of bitterness.

"Will the prisoner give an account of his actions since he escaped from the whipping-post more than two months ago?" he asked.

Now if I did this I should indeed criminate myself, for a confession that I had been with Cap'n Jack's gang would be to ally myself with the sturdiest set of rogues on the coast, and would enable Richard Tresidder to get me hanged at the next assizes.

"You hear the question, Jasper Pennington," said Admiral Trefry; "will you tell what you have been doing these last two months and more?"

But I held my peace, and seeing this the justices conversed one with another. Had they all been of Richard Tresidder's way of thinking I should have been sent to Bodmin Gaol to wait the next assizes without further ado; but Admiral Trefry, who was uncle to Lawyer Trefry, wanted to befriend me, and so I was allowed opportunities for befriending myself which would not have been given to me had my enemy been allowed his way.

Presently a thought struck me which at the time seemed very feasible, and I wondered that I had not thought of it in the earlier part of the trial.

"May I be allowed to ask the Preventive men a few questions?" I asked. [Pg 151]

"You may," replied the Admiral. "You can ask them questions as to their evidence by which you are accused of attempting to lure a vessel on to destruction."

"I would like to ask, first of all, what I should gain by doing this? What would it profit me to wreck a vessel?"

The Preventive man who had been the chief spokesman seemed a little confused, then he said, with a great deal of assurance, "I believe, your worship, that he is one of a gang of desperadoes and wreckers who live over by Kynance."

"May I ask," I said, "what reason he has for believing this?"

"Your worship," said the officer, "we know that there is a gang of men who infest the coast. For a long time we have tried to lay hands on them in vain. They are very cunning, and, although we have suspicions, we as yet have not been able to bring any positive evidence against them, and we believe that he is associated with them."

"But we cannot condemn Jasper Pennington without evidence," said Admiral Trefry.

"At the same time I submit," said the magistrate's clerk, after Richard Tresidder had spoken to him, "that the fact of his carrying a false light goes to prove that he is associated with some gang of wreckers."

"But there is no proof," remarked the Admiral.

On this there was a stir in the room, and I heard a voice with which I was familiar claiming to give evidence.

A minute later Israel Barnicoat was sworn.

"Do you know this man?" asked the Admiral of the Preventive men. [Pg 152]

"Very well," was the reply, "a most respectable, well-behaved fisherman."

Then Israel gave his evidence. He said that he had seen me in company with two men at Kynance who were well-known free-traders. These two men went by the name of "Brandy Bill" and "Fire the Poker." They had on several occasions been punished, but were still a terror to honest fishermen who wanted to get a living in a lawful way.

After this a great many questions were asked and answered, and I saw that my case looked blacker than ever. I could see that Cap'n Jack had used this means of getting rid of me, and that Israel Barnicoat had volunteered, for reasons that were apparent, to try and get me hanged.

Then I asked another question.

"What time do you say it was that you saw me showing the false light?" I asked.

"Half-past eleven," was the reply.

"I should say that it was nearer twelve," replied another. "It was a most desperate affair, your worship. He threw the lantern over the cliff and took to his heels. We followed a goodish bit afore we could catch un, and when we ded lay hould ov un he ded fight like a mazed dragon. It was as much as three ov us could do to maaster un."

Now this put another thought in my mind. I was in Pennington kitchen at the very time they said they were struggling with me, and I was about to say so, when I remembered what it would mean. If I told them where I was I should have most likely to mention Naomi Penryn's name, and that I did not like to do. Still I did not want to be sent to Bodmin Gaol without a struggle. [Pg 153]

"You say you followed me some distance?" I said.

"Yes; we ded."

"How far before you caught me?"

"Nigh pon an hour."

"It was very dark that night."

"Iss, it was."

"Did you ever lose sight of me?"

"Iss; once or twice."

"Then how can you be sure that I, the man you captured, was the same man you say you saw showing the light on the headland?"

At this the man looked confused, and then I wished that I had tried to get a lawyer to defend me, for I saw how much better he could have done it than I could defend myself. For my mind was in a very confused state all the while, so confused that my remembrance of it now is by no means clear. Indeed, I know I have described my trial with anything but clearness as to the order of events, although I have set down, truthfully, the general facts of the whole business.

I do remember, however, that Admiral Trefry asked the Preventive men some questions upon this very point which upset them very considerably; and I also remember, seeing that for the moment things looked a little brighter for me, I said to the Admiral that I was a good many miles from the Lizard at the very time these men had declared they were pursuing me.

"Where were you, then?" asked the Admiral.

"I was in St. Eve."

"Where there?"

"At Pennington." [Pg 154]

At this Richard Tresidder started up in astonishment.

"Did any one see you at Pennington?" asked the Admiral.

"Yes."

"Who saw you?"

At this I was silent, and I was wishing I had not said so much, when I heard a voice that thrilled me asking to give evidence.

CHAPTER XII

HOW MY LOVE SAVED ME—WHEN FREE I GO TO SEA, AND MONTHS LATER COME BACK TO BETSEY'S COTTAGE AND HEAR BAD NEWS

As I turned my heart seemed to stand still, for I saw Naomi Penryn, but when for a moment her eyes met mine it started thumping against my side as though it had been set at liberty from bondage. I saw, too, that Richard Tresidder was as surprised as I, and I was afraid lest my love should be taken to task for what she had done. For a few minutes everything seemed to swim before my eyes, and my head whirled so that I thought I was going to faint; but presently as I heard Naomi in sweet, steady tones answering questions my strength came back to me again.

"You say," said Admiral Trefry, "that Jasper Pennington was in Pennington kitchen at midnight last Wednesday?"

"He was," replied Naomi, clearly.

After that a lawyer asked her concerning many things. So impudent was he that I had a difficulty in keeping myself from jumping from the place where I stood and throttling him on the spot.

"Were you alone in the kitchen?" asked this lawyer.

"I was not."

"Who was with you?"

"Tryphena, the cook."

"How do you know it was midnight?"

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"I heard the kitchen clock strike."

"What did Jasper Pennington say to you?"

"You need not answer that question," remarked Admiral Trefry.

"Why did Jasper Pennington come into the house that night?" again queried the lawyer.

"Need I answer that?" asked Naomi.

"No," answered the Admiral, and I saw that he was anxious to save Naomi from awkward questions, for which I blessed him. "All we want to know is whether you are sure Jasper Pennington was at Pennington on the night in question at the time you state. We have nothing to do as to why he was there or what was said."

I saw, too, that Richard Tresidder did not wish the lawyer to ask any more questions, although I was sure the poor girl would suffer when she returned to Pennington, and I wondered then how I could save her from pain.

And so very few questions were asked after that, and a little later I was a free man; for it was clear that if I was at Pennington I could not be rushing along the headland by the Lizard, and so it must have been some other man that the Preventive men had chased, and I had been captured by mistake.

It all seemed so wonderful to me that I could hardly believe that my danger was past; at the same time I longed greatly to speak to Naomi and thank her for what she had done. But nowhere could I see her.

As I walked down Falmouth Street I seemed to be treading on air. If I had loved my love before, it seemed to have increased a thousandfold now; besides, I knew that she must care for me, or she would not have braved so much to save me from danger. I had difficulty in keeping from shouting aloud, so great was my joy. I felt that my strength had come back to me, and I cared no more for the threats of Cap'n Jack than for the anger of a puling child. I knew that Israel Barnicoat was somewhere lying in wait to do me harm, but I was not afraid. I saw this, too: Richard Tresidder would desire to have as little as possible said about my visit to Pennington, especially as he hoped that Naomi Penryn would be his son's wife. I was sure he would seek other means to harm me, but not in a public way; if I was struck it would be in the dark; but, as I said, I was not afraid, for had not my love come boldly to my aid, and saved me from the enmity of evil men?

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I had got nearly to the end of the crooked street which makes Falmouth town, when I felt a hand laid upon my shoulder.

"Well, Jasper," I heard a familiar voice say, and, turning, I saw Lawyer Trefry.

"If I were you, Jasper, I would get out of this part of the country. You have escaped this time, but, as I have told you, the Tresidders are hungry dogs. They will never leave a bone till it's clean picked."

I told him I knew this, but I did so with a laugh.

"I tell you they'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth, my lad. I know more than you think—more than I can tell you just now. Get out of Falmouth as soon as you can, my lad. Cap'n Jack Truscott hasn't done with you yet—yes, I know about him—neither has Nick Tresidder. I'll let you have a few pounds, my boy; a vessel will leave the harbour for Plymouth, and then on to London within twenty-four hours. Get on board now in the daylight and don't leave her. When once you land at London Bridge you'll be safe."

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Now I must confess that the thought of seeing London was very dear to me, but I remembered

Naomi, and as I thought of the way her eyes flashed upon me I could not make up my mind to go far away.

"Come and have some dinner with me for old acquaintance' sake, Jasper," he said, "and let's talk about things."

So I went with him, for I felt he was my true friend, although all the time I longed to be trying to find Naomi, longed to tell her how I thanked her for doing what she had done.

Lawyer Trefry asked me many questions when we were together, and when I had told him my story he persuaded me to take some money, which he told me he was sure I should repay, and I promised him that I would do as he had bidden me, and would go to Plymouth and, if possible, to London. I did this sorely against my will, for it grieved me exceedingly to be away from Cornwall at a time when hope filled my heart. Besides, I could not help thinking that Richard Tresidder would take steps to render Naomi's life miserable. She would be asked many questions as to my visit, while Tryphena would be severely catechised. At first I did not think of the sacrifice my love would have to make in order to serve me, but as I thought more and more of what I had escaped I realised that she would probably have to suffer much persecution. For she had no friends other than those who sought her wealth, and she was in their power until she was twenty-one. Besides, as I recalled to memory the conversation I had heard between Richard Tresidder and his son, I knew that no stone would be left unturned in order to make her comply with their wishes. All this made me long to stay near her; but I also realised that there was another side to the question. How could I help her by staying in the district? Moreover, was I not in great danger myself? Was not Cap'n Jack's gang on the look-out for me? They would know that I should be a danger to them, and would seek to serve me as they had served others who they had thought were unfaithful to them. In addition to this Richard Tresidder would do his utmost to harm me; especially was this apparent in the light of what Naomi had done. Moreover, I could do nothing to help her; indeed, she would probably suffer less persecution from the Tresidders if they knew I had left that part of the country.

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So I kept my promise to Lawyer Trefry, and went on board the *White Swan* which lay in Falmouth Harbour, and a few hours later was on my way to Plymouth.

While we were sailing along the coast I tried to think of my future, for never had it looked so black and hopeless as now. It is true I rejoiced at the thought of Naomi Penryn's kindness, and dreamed glad things of the days to come; but when I began to face facts, and saw my condition as it really was, my case looked hopeless indeed.

On our way to Plymouth I proved to Captain Maynard that I was not altogether ignorant of the duties of a sailor, and so pleased was he with me that he offered me a berth on the *White Swan*. Knowing of nothing better that I could do I accepted, and for the next few months worked as a common sailor. During that time we visited several ports on the coast. I saw Weymouth, Southampton, Portsmouth, Dover and London, but I will not write of my experiences at this time. Nothing of importance happened, neither does that time affect the history I am trying to write.

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Of course, I was greatly moved with what I saw in London; at the same time, even as I mingled with the throng of people who threaded London streets, I longed for the quiet of St. Eve, and thought much of the maid to whom I had given my heart. At the same time, I saw no means whereby I could get back to Pennington, although I thought long and earnestly of many plans.

I stayed with Captain Maynard seven months, and then made up my mind to go back to Cornwall again. I felt sure that Cap'n Jack and his gang must have practically forgotten me, and I could not help thinking that Naomi Penryn needed me. I dreamed often that she was persecuted by the Tresidders, and that they were using many cruel means to make her marry Nick. I was afraid, too, that she, friendless and alone as she was, would at length be forced to yield to their wishes. And so although I had not moved one inch forward in the direction of winning back what was rightly my own, and although I could seemingly do no good by so doing, I determined that I would go back to Pennington again, and if possible obtain another interview with Naomi. My heart was very sad, for every day my love seemed to grow more hopeless. I had told her the desire of my heart, but although she had been kind to me, and had sacrificed much, she had not told me with her own lips that she cared for me more than she might care for any man who she thought was unjustly treated.

And thus the old proverb that "actions speak louder than words" is not true. For actions may be misinterpreted and misunderstood. Often I tried to comfort myself with the thought that had she not cared for me more than she cared for any other, she would not have granted me an interview that night when I escaped from Cap'n Jack's gang. Again I told myself many hundreds of times that did her heart not beat for me she would never have braved her uncle's anger, braved the cruel questions at Falmouth, and bore what must be hard for a shrinking maiden to bear. But for all this I could not believe that her heart was mine. How could it be? Who was I that I should be so blessed? A landless wanderer, who had been pilloried as a vagabond, and hooted at by the scum of the earth. No, actions did not speak loud enough for me. Nothing but the words from her own dear lips, saying, "Jasper, I love you," could convince me, unworthy as I was, that I could be aught to her.

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All the same I determined to go to her, I determined to see her, for my heart ached in my hunger to be near her, and my eyes would not be satisfied until they again feasted on her beauty.

It was early in July when I landed in Falmouth Harbour. I think it was on the first of the month. It

was late in the afternoon when I set foot on solid earth, but I did not stay in the town. Like one possessed I hurried toward St. Eve, and about half past nine at night I stood in front of Betsey Fraddam's cottage.

"Come in, Maaster Jasper," said the old woman; "supper es zet fur three. I knawed you wos a-comin', and zo ded Eli."

So I entered the hut, and there surely I saw three plates placed on the little table.

The old woman seemed to regard my coming as a matter of course, and made no more ado than if I had left her cottage that morning. Eli, on the other hand, made much of me. He caught my hands and fondled them, he rubbed them against his poor distorted face, and looked up into my eyes as though he were overjoyed at my coming. [Pg 162]

"Jasper, I love 'ee—love 'ee!" he cried. "Eli zo glad you'm back. Eli do knaw, Eli got a lot to tell 'ee!"

"I think we'll shut the door," crooned Betsey as she looked anxiously around the cottage. "Nobody do knaw who's 'bout. Ah, Maaster Jasper, you ded a bad thing when you made an enemy of Jack Fraddam. But ther, you be 'ungry, and you aan't 'ad nothin' to ait for a long time. When I knawed you wos a-comin' I maade a conger pie. I knaw you like that. Conger, baaked in milk and parsley, Jasper, my dear. That ed'n bad fur a witches' supper, es et?"

"How did you know I was coming?" I asked. "I had not made up my mind to come here to-night until I landed in Falmouth. And no one knew I was coming to Falmouth. How did you know?"

"How ded I knaw?" asked Betsey, scornfully. "How do I knaw everything? Ef you'd a traited me vitty, Jasper, I'd a done more fur 'ee. You'd be in Pennington now ef you'd come and axed me; but you wudden. 'Ow ded 'ee git on at Jack Fraddam's then?"

"Who's Jack Fraddam?"

"Oa, Cap'n Jack Truscott, seein' you're so partikler. The Fraddam family es a big wawn, my dear."

"What relation is Cap'n Jack to the Fraddams and to you?" I asked.

"Ef I was to tell 'ee you'd knaw, wudden 'ee. But I bean't a-goin' to tell 'ee, cheeldrean. No, I bean't, but zet up to supper. Then I've got sum things to tell 'ee 'bout somebody at Penninton, and arterwards I'll tell yer fortin, my dear. I bean't a gipsy, but I c'n do that." [Pg 163]

As I sat at the table with Eli opposite me on the little window-seat, and Betsey near me, it seemed as though I had not been away at all. Neither did the old woman show any interest in what I had been doing.

"Why 'ave 'ee come back, Jasper?" she asked, presently, looking at me with her light, piercing eyes, while she kept on munching with her toothless gums, until the white stiff hairs which grew on the tip of her nose almost touched those on her chin.

I did not speak.

"No, you caan't tell," said she; "you dunnaw why yerzelf. You've cum 'cause you caan't 'elp et, my dear. Yer 'art kipt achin' and longin' so that you cudden stay away."

I continued silent, for I knew she told the truth.

"But 'tes no use, Jasper, my dear. You aa'nt a got the money to buy back Penninton, and besides the job's done."

"What job's done?" I asked, eagerly.

"Neck Trezidder, and thicky purty maid."

"How? What do you mean? Tell me?" I cried, starting from the seat.

"Ther' was no Penninton ever born that's a match for a Trezidder," chuckled Betsey.

"Tell me!"

"Th' baans (banns) 'll be cried in the church next Sunday," said Betsey.

"Whose?" I cried.

"Neck Trezidder's an' the young laady called Penryn," laughed the old dame.

"How do you know?" I asked, feeling my knees tremble and my heart grow cold. [Pg 164]

"It doan't need a white witch to know that," cried Betsey. "'T'es in everybody's mouth. Ef you stayed a month longer, they'd 'a bin married by now."

I did not stop to consider how Betsey knew of my love for Naomi Penryn. It was evident she did know as she seemed to know everything else. Besides, I was in a state of torment at the news she had told me.

"Have the banns been called in church?" I asked.

"Iss," cried Betsey.

"No," said Eli; "I went ther' laast Zunday to heer fur myzelf, but the passon ded'n zay nothin' 'bout et."

"Aw," grunted Betsey, angry that she had been discovered to have made a mistake, yet looking lovingly toward her son. "Then they'll be cried nex' Zunday."

"No they won't," I cried.

"Tell 'ee ther's no chance fur 'ee, Jasper. Ther'v bin oal soarts ov taales 'bout you. She's awful vexed now that she saaved 'ee from 'angin'."

By this time I had somewhat mastered my excitement, and I knew that the best way to learn all Betsey knew was to be silent.

"'Tes like this," said Betsey. "Tryphena, Penninton's cook, 'ev got the sack for laivin' you git into the kitchin."

"And what's become of her?"

"She's livin' in Fammuth. Where she do git 'er money I dunnaw. I aan't a took the trouble to vind out. As fur the purty maid she've 'ad a offul life. And she've promised to marry young Maaster Nick. Es fur you, Jasper, my deear, why Israel Barnicoat, who do live ovver to Kynance, do zay that 'ee zeed you in Plemmouth weth a maid that you wos a-goin' to marry. Others 'ave zeed 'ee, too. Anyhow, the purty maid es a-goin' to marry Nick."

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I tried to understand what this meant. And in spite of everything my heart grew light. Why should Israel Barnicoat concoct a story about my being married in Plymouth, and tell it at Pennington? Why should the story be used as a reason why Naomi should marry Nick?

"It shall never be," I cried, gladly.

"We sh'll zee," grunted Betsey, "we sh'll zee this very minnit. Ould Betsey 'll tell 'ee yer fortin, Jasper Penninton, and Eli sh'll git the broth. Ther, Eli, my deear, taake out the brandis."

Now a brandis, as all Cornish folk know, is a three-legged stand made of iron. It is generally placed on the ground over a fire, and supports crocks, frying-pans, boilers, or anything that may be used.

Eli put this brandis in the middle of the kitchen on the stone floor.

"Now bring the crock," crooned Betsey, and Eli brought the crock and placed it on the brandis.

"Put in the broth," commanded Betsey, and Eli obeyed her. I thought he grew smaller and uglier as he did her bidding, while his eyes grew larger and shone with a more unearthly light than ever.

"What time es et?" asked Betsey.

"Elev'n a'clock."

"In twenty minuits the moon 'll be vull," muttered the old dame.

Betsey made nine circles around the brandis, then she made nine passes over the crock, and all the time she munched and munched with her toothless jaws. Presently she began to repeat words, which to me had no meaning,

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"A first born son, a first born son,
Is this young Jasper Pennington,
And he is here on a moonlit night
To see the spirits of the light.
And I have made my potions fine,
And traced my circles nine times nine.
So mists depart, Tregeagle come
And show the lad his own true home.
Spirits black and spirits white,
Spirits bad and spirits bright,
Come to Betsey's house to-night,
And we shall see the things of light."

All this time she kept blowing on the liquid in the crock, while Eli set up the most unearthly cries as though he were in pain.

A great terror seized me, for to me Betsey's form seemed to dilate.

"No, Betsey," I cried, "I'll have nothing to do with this wickedness."

"Stop yer noise!" she snarled. "There they come:

"Join all hands
Might and main,
Weave the sands,

Form a chain.
Spirits black
And spirits white,
Let the first-born know the truth to-night."

Now whether I was carried away by superstitious fear or no I will not say. I simply put down in simple words that which I saw and heard. For a few seconds all was still, and then the room seemed full of strange, wailing sounds, while Betsey continued to blow the liquid in the crock and utter meaningless words. [Pg 167]

"Look in the crock, Jasper Pennington," she said.



"LOOK IN THE CROCK, JASPER PENNINGTON,' SHE SAID."

I looked on the dark liquid, but I could see nothing.

She blew again. "Now look," she repeated.

As I looked something dark and formless seemed to rise in the crock, but I saw nothing distinctly.

"Git away," she snarled; "I'll look."

"A rollin' say, Jasper. Waves like mountains; then a black hole, black as pitch, and great high walls. After that—I'll tell 'ee dreckly. As for the maid, laive me zee.

'Priests all shaved
Clothed in black.
Convent walls,
Screws and rack.

Women walkin' in procession,
Cravin' for a dead man's blessin'.
Weepin' eyes, wailing cries,
Lonely, lonely, oal alone,
A heart as cold as any stone
Cryin' for a hopeless love,
Helpless, harmless as a dove,
Others spend the damsel's gold,
And only half the taale is told."

Now, as I said when I commenced writing this history, there are many things which happened to me that I cannot understand. For my own part, I have tried to explain away what Betsey told me even in the light of after events, which I shall tell presently. I have tried again and again to show that her words were very vague, and could have no definite meaning. I maintained this to Mr. John Wesley when I told him the story, but he shook his head, and said something about dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Not that I attach any undue weight to Mr. Wesley's words. I have nothing against this man; but, for my own part, the old religion of the parish church and the Prayer-book is good enough for me. These Methodists, who have grown very mighty these last few years, who claim a sort of superior religion, and tell a man he's going to hell because he's fond of wrestling, are nothing in my way. The Penningtons have been wrestlers for generations, and never threw a man unfairly; besides, they always shook hands before and after the hitch as honest, kindly men should, and when I'm told that they were on the wrong road because of this I say the new religion does not suit me. At the same time, Mr. John Wesley, who is doubtless a good man, although some folks call him a Papist and others a madman, did believe Betsey Fraddam had powers which the common run of folks do not possess. Not that he believed that those powers were good; concerning that the great man was very reserved.

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But I am going away from my story, and that I must not do, for I have many things to tell, so many that it will not be well for me to stray away from the track of the tale.

I must confess that the words which I heard Betsey say impressed me very much, so much that they were engraved on my memory. Besides, I had become more and more interested in what she was doing, and was now eager to hear more.

"What is the half of the tale which is not told?" I asked, eagerly.

But she did not reply.

"Eli, Eli, you hear?" she cried.

"Iss, iss," grunted Eli. "'Tes the smugglin' gang."

"'Tes Jack! Jasper, you mus'n be seed. Git out in the gar'n."

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"He caan't," laughed Eli. "The spence, Jasper. Run to the spence."

I entered a door which opened into a small compartment, in the which Betsey's firewood, a box of tools, and many household utensils were hidden.

I had scarcely closed the door when I heard the voices of Cap'n Jack Truscott and others of his gang.

I kept very quiet, for I knew that if I were discovered my life would not be worth an hour's purchase. I was very anxious, too, for I was not quite sure of Betsey's feelings toward me. All the same I listened very intently.

CHAPTER XIII

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BETSEY FRADDAM AND CAP'N JACK MEET—I GO TO FALMOUTH AND MEET NAOMI—AFTERWARD I SEE MR. JOHN WESLEY

"Well, Betsey, my dear," I heard Cap'n Jack say, "still on yer ould gaame. I hop' we've brok' the spell, my dear. Ted'n vitty, I tell 'ee. A pious man like me do nat'rally grieve over the sins of the flesh. But 'ere's Cap'n Billy Coad; you ain't a spoke to 'ee 'et."

I wished that there had been a hole in the door, for I had a great desire to see Billy Coad, of whom I had heard Cap'n Jack speak so often. I heard his voice, however. It was softer even than Cap'n Jack's, and was of a wheedling tone, as though he wanted to get on comfortably with every one.

"Hope you be braave, Cap'n Billy," croaked Betsey. "Eli, put away this broth; thews booy's doan't want none of that soort."

"No, Betsey, it do grieve me, yer nearest blood relation, to zee 'ee follin' in such ways."

"You've bin glad ov me, though," retorted Betsey.

"Iss, you be a gifted woman. You got et from Granfer. He tould 'ee a lot ov things, ded'na then?"

"Mor'n I shell tell."

"Come now, Betsey, laive us be oal comfortable like. You've got your gifts, and I've got mine. I doan't care 'bout sperrits to-night, Betsey; but you've got some good wine—that I know. Ah! Cap'n Billy ded some good trade on his laast voyage."

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"Good traade," sneered Betsey. "What's your traade nowadays? Zee wot Granfer ded."

"Iss, I've wanted to talk to 'ee 'bout et, Betsey, my dear. I've bin very good to you."

I heard some clinking of glass, and I knew they were drinking. I had heard only two voices, but by the footsteps I judged that more than two might have entered the cottage. In this, however, I was mistaken, for the others who had come with him left at the door.

"Iss, I've bin very good to you and Eli," repeated Cap'n Jack. "You've never wanted summin' warm to drink."

"A fat lot I've 'ad from 'ee," retorted Betsey, "and I ain't a wanted nothin' nuther. I've got my 'ouse, and I've got summin' to ait, so've Eli."

"Iss. I sh'll make a man o' Eli."

I heard Eli laugh in his strange, gurgling way.

"I've made money, more'n Tamsin 'll want; well, and why sha'ant Eli 'ave some ov it?"

"What 'ee'll git from you'll be good for sore eyes," snarled the old woman. "Ugh, ef I wanted money—aw, aw!—well, I know!"

"You'm thinkin' 'bout the treasure. But you caan't git et, Betsey. Ef ould Granfer ded bury it some where out to say—well, you caan't git et. But ded a bury a treasure, Betsey, ef 'ee ded, why ded a die so poor?"

Betsey did not reply.

"Doan't you think 'tes oal lies, Betsey? Where's the paper weth the dreckshuns? I know 'ee sailed weth Cap'n Blackbeard, everybody do know that, and it's zed that the Cap'n was very rich—took oal soarts of things from the Spaniards and the Portugeese; but then where ded a put et? Zum zay on Lundy Island, others that he found a caave in Annette Island, and others that he found a place on the South Says; but ed'n et oal a taale, Betsey, my deear?"

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Betsey remained silent, while Eli grunted.

"Granfer zaid that he stailed the dreckshuns," continued Cap'n Jack; "ef a ded, where be um?"

"Spoase I was to tell 'ee?" sneered Betsey. "Well, you'd git et. As fur Eli, 'ee cud go a-beggin'."

"Eli shud 'ave aaf," said Cap'n Jack, with a most terrible oath, "and Billy and we'd 'ave the other aaf far our share. Tha's fair, Betsey."

"No, no, no!" cried Eli, "it's oal lies, oal lies!" And there was, I thought, a note of fear in his voice.

"Mind, Betsey," cried Cap'n Jack, "whether you tell me or no, we'll vind out. Ef you've eed away they dreckshuns, we'll vind um, mind that!"

"You've zaid zo afore," sneered Betsey.

"'Ave us? Zo we 'ave," replied Cap'n Jack, "but I be a religious man. I want to trait my relaashuns fair, I do; everybody that do know me, do know that, doan't 'em, Cap'n Billy? An' Billy is a religious man, too; hes religious experience es a powerful sermon. Well, I've talked oal soarts of ways 'bout that treasure, Betsey—I 'ave. I've zaid I doan't bleeve in et, zo I 'ave. But wot then? Well, I'm a-goin' to vind et!"

"Aw, aw!" chuckled Betsey.

"I'm a man to my word, zo's Billy. Whenever I've zaid a thing I've done it."

"Aw, tha's ev et es et. I've 'eerd you zay that any man who runned away from your gang you'd kill. I've 'eerd you zay you'd do fur Jasper Penninton. 'Ave 'ee, Jack Fraddam? Why, 'ee got off bootiful —jist through a maid—iss, and went to say, and no one stopped un!"

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"And why, Betsey, why? 'Cos I am a fond and lovin' vather, that's why. Tamsin made a vool ov me, tha's why. I maade a mistake in takin' Jasper to Kynance, 'cos Tamsin got to like un. Well, I lowed un to git away. I promist Tamsin that while he kipt his tongue 'atween hes teeth I'd laive un go. But laive un tell things, laive un tell anybody where our caaves be, laive un split 'bout other things he do know—well!" and Cap'n Jack grunted significantly.

"Aw, aw," sneered Betsey, "he strangled Israel Barnicoat, and thraved the lantern over the cliff. An' ther' was no wreck that night. Aw, aw! You be a man, you be!"

"A merciful, pious man, tha's wot I be. But doan't 'ee laugh, Betsey. Do 'ee think I dunnaw that Jasper landed in Fammuth to-day? He's watched, I tell 'ee."

At this the sweat streamed out over every part of my body, and I hardened my muscles to fight for dear life. I felt that Cap'n Jack's was no vain threat, and that I owed my life to Tamsin.

"Where es a now, then?" queried Betsey.

"He's lyin' luff in Fammuth town, my deear; but 'ee must be very careful."

At this I breathed more freely again.

"I'm a kind man," continued Cap'n Jack; "I've bin kind to you, Betsey. I know that ef you've got they dreckshuns you've kipt 'em for Eli. But, Betsey, my deear, 'ee caan't do nothin' by hisself. We'll share fair, Betsey; I'll give my Bible oath to that."

"I taake no noatice ov yur Bible oaths," snarled Betsey, "but I knaw you'd kipt to what yer promised. Ef you ded'n, I'd make yer flesh drop off yer boans bit by bit; I'd make yer joints twist wrong way 'bout; I'd make 'ee suffer pains wuss'n the fires ov the bottomless pit; I'd raise the sperrits of—"

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"Doan't 'ee, Betsey," cried Cap'n Jack, and his voice trembled with fear. "I knaw you be a gifted woman; I knaw you can do terrible things. Ef there's a treasure, Betsey, laive me vind et, and Eli sh'll live in the finest state o' land in this blessed county."

"I'll think 'bout it. I caan't raid, that you knaw—but, but come out 'ere in the gar'n, Jack."

With that, Billy Coad, Cap'n Jack, and Betsey went into the garden, while Eli sat by the chimney and chuckled as though a great joy had come into his heart.

They did not stay long, and I suspected that Betsey told them something she did not wish me to know. When they came back again I heard Betsey tell Eli to fetch the crock and brandis into the middle of the room.

After that Betsey blew on the pot again, as I had seen her blow, and she made the two men repeat things after her which I did not hear distinctly, and all the time I heard Eli chuckling and grunting as though he enjoyed himself vastly.

After this all the four went into the garden, and they stayed there a long while, leaving me to muse over the strange things I had heard. Not that it came altogether as a surprise to me, for I had often heard of Granfer Fraddam knowing something about a treasure. I do not think any one had taken much notice of it, for there were scores of meaningless stories about lost treasures that passed from lip to lip among the gossips in the days when I was young.

Now, however, that which I had heard caused me much food for thought, and I wondered whether there was any truth in the story. I determined, too, that I would ask Eli, for I believed that what Betsey knew he would know. I saw, too, that he loved me, and I was sure that he was anxious to serve me.

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When Betsey and Eli came back the two men had gone, and then I came from my hiding-place, and began to ply them with questions. But neither of them would give me answers. Betsey seemed very thoughtful, while Eli pulled some sacks from under the settle, so that I might have a bed.

Before Betsey climbed the creaky stairs which led to the room where she slept, she fixed her whitey, shining eyes upon me, and, holding up her hand, she bade me be silent about what I had seen and heard.

"Ef you tell, Jasper Penninton," she croaked, "ef you tell—you've eerd ov fallin' flesh a'ant 'ee? Well, think ov it."

"I shall say nothing," I replied.

"No," she said, continuing to look steadily on me, "no, you wa'ant. I c'n zee you wa'ant."

Then she left me, while I lay down on the sacks fearing nothing living, but fearing the dead terribly. For it seemed to me as though Betsey had been doing that which was unlawful, and that I was a party to her plans. And so I could not sleep for a long time; not, indeed, until the light of morning began to stream through the cottage window, and then I felt to laugh at it all. Betsey's signs and Betsey's words were so much foolery, while the conversation about the buried treasure was no more true than the stories which were believed in superstitious days. Besides, thoughts of Naomi drove away all else, although everything came back to me afterward. When my fears went, however, sleep came to my eyes, and I did not awake until I felt Eli fondling my hands, and heard him telling me that breakfast was ready.

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Then I arose, upbraiding myself for having slept so long, for I had intended finding my way to Pennington in the early morning. I know this seemed very foolish, for if the Tresidders found me on the land they called theirs all my purposes would be frustrated.

"Breakfas', breakfas', Jasper," said Eli.

"No, I'm going out," I replied.

"Ted'n no use, ted'n no use," grunted the poor dwarf, "she ed'n there."

"Where is she, then?"

"Jist gone by, ridin' to Fammuth town."

"How do you know?"

"I zeed um. She and Maaster Tresidder, and Maaster Nick Tresidder, and Miss Em'ly."

"Are you sure, Eli?"

"Iss."

Then I quickly ate what had been prepared for me, and when I had given Betsey a guinea out of the few I had been able to earn during the time I had been away, I tramped to Falmouth. I arrived

there in less than two hours from the time I had left Betsey's cottage, trying to make plans as I went. I walked up and down Falmouth street several times, all the time looking around in the hopes of finding her, not because I could do anything if I found her, but because I longed greatly to see her, longed more than words can tell. At length noonday came and still my eyes continued to ache for a sight of her, while my heart grew heavy. I found, too, that the streets became more and more crowded every minute, until I asked myself if it were a fair. But such was not the case. The reason of the crowd was that Mr. John Wesley had come to Falmouth, and his coming had caused a great uproar. I heard all sorts of stories about him, and many were the threats that were made. Some said he was a Papist, who wanted to bring back Popery to the country, while others declared that he wanted to raise a rebellion against the king and crown. Several clergymen from distant parishes had come into the town, and these, almost without exception, were very bitter toward him; while the publicans, who did a very big trade that day because of his coming, cried out against him very loudly. On the other hand, I heard that many people had come because of the great good he had done, and because through him they had been led, to use their own language, to become new creatures. This I will say, those who befriended Mr. Wesley seemed very steady folks. They used no bad language, neither were they mad with drink as many of the others were.

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I did not pay as much heed to the state of the town as I might have paid under other circumstances, for I cared for little but the sight of Naomi's face, while to hear her voice I felt I would give anything.

Now as I walked disconsolately along the street, finding my way among the crowd that grew greater and greater, I stopped outside a linen-draper's shop, which was kept by one Humphry Bolitho, and to my great joy I saw Naomi coming therefrom. By her side was Emily Tresidder, and I was wondering how I could speak to my love, when the woman in the shop called Richard Tresidder's daughter back just as Naomi's eyes met mine.

She gave no start of surprise at seeing me, so that even then I was sure that the Tresidders knew of my return, but she seemed, I thought, in doubt as to whether she should speak to me. But I had found my opportunity, and I determined not to be balked in my purpose, especially as Emily Tresidder had gone back into the shop again. And yet at that moment I knew not what was fitting to say, for my heart seemed in my mouth, and every inch of my body quivered with a strange joy.

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"Miss Naomi," I stammered, hardly knowing the words that came from my mouth, "thank you for what you did months ago. I loved you then, I love you a thousand times more now."

I saw the blood mount to her brow, and for a moment I could not tell whether she was angry or no. She looked anxiously back into the shop, then up and down the street.

"You are in danger here," she said.

"I care not, now I see you," I cried. "I have done nothing wrong, except that I am doing wrong in loving you. I have not won back Pennington yet, but I will do it, God helping, I will, if—if you will give me just one word of promise."

I spoke in a low tone so that no one could hear, and indeed the crowd seemed too much bent on other things to notice me.

"It is no use," she said—"it is no use. Do not try any more, it is hopeless."

"I shall never give up hope," I said.

"Even now my guardian is seeking to do you harm," she cried. "This I know."

"I am not afraid of him," I cried. "You know what I told you—that night—last November. You did not scorn me then. I hoped then that some day you might care for me; it is my hope still."

"It is no use," she cried again, looking anxiously around her—"it is no use. I am to be married to Nick Tresidder; at least they all want me to marry him."

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"No!" I cried. "No!"

"I cannot help myself," she said, piteously.

"Do you love him?" I asked.

"No," she said, again looking eagerly around.

"Then!" I cried, "you shall not marry him. I will keep you from that, even if I found you by his side at the church communion-rails."

Then my heart jumped for joy, for I saw a look of gladness flash into her eyes.

"Come with me," I continued; "come away where it is quiet. No one will notice us among all this crowd."

"No, no, I dare not; I am watched everywhere, and you are watched. We may be safe here for a few minutes longer, for when Emily is talking about finery she is forgetful of all else, but I must not leave here."

"Look here," I cried, "Betsey Fraddam told me last night that all sorts of lying stories have been told about me."

"I have believed none of them," she cried.

"Also that Nick Tresidder has told the parson to have your banns called at the parish church."

"But not with my consent," she said, eagerly, and again my heart thumped aloud because of my joy.

"Naomi Penryn," I cried, "I know I seem a worthless, thriftless sort of fellow, for as yet I have done nothing to get back Pennington, but if you could love me just a little"—and I looked toward her appealingly. "Anyhow, trust me," I continued, "and be not afraid. Remember I shall love you till I die, and I will be always near you to be your friend."

I said this in the heat of my love and youth, for nothing seemed impossible to me then. Somehow, I knew not how, a greater strength had seemed to come into my life, and I laughed at difficulty and danger.

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"Go!" she cried—"go; Emily Tresidder is coming. Go!"

"Not yet, the woman is showing her something else," and I felt thankful because of this girl's love for finery. "Promise me," I continued, "that you will not yield to those Tresidders. Stand firm, and they will be afraid to force you. Remember, I will be always near, if I can, and that they dare not harm you. Besides—oh, if you knew all you are to me!"

She looked at me eagerly while a film seemed to come over her eyes, and I thought she was about to say something. Then a look of terror flashed across her face. "Go!" she cried—"go! There is my guardian! Oh, take care of yourself!" and then she rushed into the shop, leaving me standing by the door, and only partially hidden from the crowd by some things which had been placed by the door.

I quickly got among the crowd, but I know that both Nick Tresidder and his father saw me, and I knew, too, that if they went into Humphry Bolitho's shop they would find out that Naomi had spoken to me. And yet I felt very joyous. I knew, although Naomi had not told me she loved me, that she thought of me with more than passing kindness, while the flash of her eyes told me that she could not be moulded at will, even by such men as the Tresidders and such a woman as Richard Tresidder's mother. Naturally I felt afraid for her, and for all she would have to suffer, and yet the remembrance of the fact that she would speak to me kindly, and had told me to take care of myself, as though she were anxious for my welfare, filled me with a great hope, and hope giveth wings of strength to those who are weighted with great burdens.

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I had not been in the crowd above a minute before I felt myself carried along the street, as if by the force of a mighty torrent. I was hemmed in on every side by a seething mass of men and women, some of whom were praying and singing, while others used many profane words, and uttered threats which would not be seemly for me to write down. I quickly learned that the people were making their way toward the house of a lady who, I was told, was called Mrs. Bennetto, although I am not sure that this was the correct name. I asked why they wanted to get there, and was told that Mr. John Wesley was there, and that many were determined to kill him. Most of the crowd, as I have said before, seemed exceedingly bitter toward him, but others were loud in their praises of the great man, and although they were severely buffeted they kept singing the hymns he had composed, some of which seemed very fine in their sentiment, although I must confess that the meaning of some of the verses I could not understand.

When we arrived at the house where he was there was a great amount of shouting, so great that had a storm been raging at sea close by I do not think we could have heard it.

"Laive us git to un, laive us git to un!" shouted the crowd, eagerly and angrily.

Now I have always loved fair play, and so I asked why they wanted to get to Mr. Wesley, and at that moment there being a lull, and my voice being deep and strong, my question was heard.

"He's a Canorum," they shouted; "he's a Papist, he drives men and women maazed, he keeps 'em from goin' to church, he destroys honest trade!" These among other things I heard as I struggled to get to the door.

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There was no law or order in the place. Not a single constable seemed to be near, and for the moment the friends of the preacher seemed to be afraid to act in his defence.

Presently I got to the door of the house, and I think my great proportions frightened some of them.

"Look you," I said, "he is one and you are many. I do not know this man, but I have heard up and down the country that he hath done much good. If any man dares molest him, I will strike him down as I would strike down a yelping cur."

For a moment there was a quiet, and the friends of Mr. Wesley took heart, for although it seems like boasting to say so, I think the sight of one strong, courageous man, as I thank God I have ever been, always has a tendency to quell the anger of an unreasoning mob.

"He's not a friend to the people," they cried. "He's destroyed the trade of Jemmy Crowle, who do kip a kiddleywink over to Zennor. Ted'n no use kippin' a public 'ouse after he've bin to a plaace. He do turn people maazed. He do convert 'em, and then they waan't zing songs, nor git drunk, nor do a bit of smugmlin', nor nothin'."

This was said not as I have written it down, but came to me in confused, excited ejaculations from many quarters.

"If that is all he has done," I said, "there is no reason for anger."

For a moment there was a silence among the crowd, and I heard voices from within the house.

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Said a woman, "Oh, sir, what must we do?"

"We must pray," was the reply. This was in a man's voice, and was strangely sweet and strong, and even then it thrilled me greatly.

I believe that many, angry as they had been, would have turned away at that moment, but some drunken privateers were among the mob, and one of them came and pushed me savagely. I caught the man up and lifted him above my head and threw him from me. This angered the privateers greatly, and they smashed down the door while others swore great oaths at me.

"What will em do weth the Canorum?" I heard the people cry, and then there was a silence again. I think they were subdued, as I was subdued, by the sound of a man's voice.

"Here I am," I heard Mr. Wesley say, "which of you has anything to say to me? To whom have I done wrong? To you, to you?"

At this the people seemed eager beyond measure to catch sight of him, and they shouted, "Come out, come out. Lev us zee 'ee."

Others again shouted, "Ef we can git to un, we'll kill un. We doan't want no Canorums, we doan't want no new sort ov religion. We like our beer and wrastlin', we do."

"Look," I shouted, "give every man fair play. Let him speak for himself. If he has anything to tell us, let him tell it."

"Iss, iss," shouted the crowd; "lev un spaik."

With that I heard the same voice speaking which I had heard inside the house, only this time it was louder. It was not panic-stricken, it was perfectly calm and fearless. It was strangely sweet, too, and it reached, I should think, to the very outskirts of the crowd. A strange hush fell upon the people as they heard it. It was like a stormy sea which had suddenly become calm.

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"Neighbours and countrymen," said the voice, "do you desire me to speak?"

"No, no," shouted some; "put un in stocks, throw un in the say."

Then I spoke again. "Fair play, Cornishmen," I said, "give the stranger fair play, let him speak."

"Iss, iss," cried the larger part of the crowd; "he sh'll 'ave fair play, he sh'll spaik."

With that a gangway was made, and then I turned and saw the man who had created such a great commotion in the country come bareheaded into the middle of the street, while the surging crowd hustled each other, some eager to do him injury, but many more anxious to hear what he had to say.

As for myself, I was silent, for the sight of him impressed me greatly.

CHAPTER XIV

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I AM TAKEN PRISONER, AND AFTERWARD EXPERIENCE MANY STRANGE THINGS—I AT LENGTH FIND MYSELF IN A DUNGEON

There was nothing at first sight very striking about Mr. John Wesley's appearance. He was, I thought, rather undersized, and I at that moment failed to see what there was about him to cause so much commotion. And yet as I looked again I could not help being impressed with the calm strength which shone from his eyes. He seemed to possess a power unknown to most men. Had I, Jasper Pennington, been brought face to face with such a crowd, I should have challenged the strongest man there to come out and let us fight a fair battle, but Mr. Wesley seemed only desirous to do good. He spoke calmly and with much assurance about our being sinners, and being children of hell, but that we could be saved from everlasting perdition by believing in Christ, who had appeased God's anger toward us.

Now, I am not a critical man, but even at that moment I could not quite see his meaning, for it seemed as though God were divided against Himself, and that God the Son felt differently toward us from what God the Father felt, and this, to an unlearned man like myself, brought only confusion. Moreover, as he spoke, while I could not help admiring his courage, and vowing in my heart that all one man could do to defend him I would do, I felt that he was not altogether a lovable man. He spoke with a sort of superiority which I did not admire, while he seemed to think greatly of himself. I know it sounds like presumption for me, an obscure, ignorant man, to write this, especially when I think of the good he has done; nevertheless, such thoughts came into my mind as I watched him. Perhaps his consciousness of his power over the multitudes merely gave

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him a confidence which I did not understand, or perhaps the fact that he was one of the principal men of the age made him feel his importance, for I think a man must be more than human if, talked about as Mr. Wesley has been, he does not become possessed of great esteem for himself.

After he had been talking a few minutes, however, I forgot all this. His little form seemed to dilate with a strange life, and many evil men groaned, as if with anguish. His voice became more and more resonant, and presently a touch of tenderness, which was at first absent, mingled with his tones.

Before long that great crowd became subdued, and then I realised the power of the human voice, of true courage, and of a good life; for I believe that the mob realised, although they might not be able to put their thoughts into words, that this man was gifted with an influence which can only come by means known to those who live with God.

After he had been speaking some time a clergyman, accompanied by some of the principal people of the town, spoke to the people, and he so angered them that I believe injury would have been done had not the town officials been present. Even with their presence Mr. Wesley seemed in great danger, and so, in my anxiety to help him, for he had stirred my heart greatly during the latter part of his address, I came to his side.

"No man shall touch Master Wesley," said I.

He looked up at me, for I think I was about a foot taller than he, and he said, "Thank you, young man."

"Whither would you go?" I said. "I will walk by your side, and will let no man harm you."

"I thank you," he repeated. "God hath evidently gifted you with great strength. Use it for His glory. I will accept your escort to Mrs. Maddern's house, but I have a strength which is omnipotent on my side. I will trust and not be afraid."

Even as he spoke I felt how true were his words, and then we walked down the street toward the sea, he continuing to preach most of the time.

When we reached the door of Mrs. Maddern's he said, "What is your name, young man?"

"Jasper Pennington," I replied.

"It is an old Cornish name," he replied, and then, looking into my eyes, he said, "Is your heart at peace with God and man—especially with man?" This he asked meaningly.

I did not answer him, for it occurred to me that the town officials who walked with him had told him who I was, although I had not heard.

"Trust in the Lord and do good, Jasper Pennington," he said, quietly, "*so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Then he went into the house, and I felt as though a benediction rested upon me.

I waited outside with the crowd, expecting him to come out again, but after a time they heard that he had got into a boat from the back of the house, for the sea came up close to the back of the house, and by this means he was able to escape, mingling with the crowd again.

It was now well on to six o'clock in the evening, but being summertime the light was still bright; indeed, the sun was yet high in the heavens. So I left the people who wanted to have a last look at Mr. Wesley, and who found their way to the seashore in great numbers. I went slowly toward Humphry Bolitho's shop, musing upon what the great man had said to me, but thinking far more of my meeting with Naomi. It is true I was too excited to understand its real significance, but the impression left upon me was gladsome, and, although my prospects seemed dark, my heart beat high with hope. Perhaps the peaceful words that Mr. Wesley had spoken to me made me rejoice, but the fact that Naomi had spoken kindly to me was that upon which my mind rested most fondly.

When I got to Humphry Bolitho's shop I looked eagerly inside, as though I expected to see Naomi there, but only strangers were within the building, and then I came to the spot where, a year before, I had been publicly degraded, and where I had first seen my love. Then my mind and heart were full of bitterness, and yet perhaps the piteousness of my condition had caused her to think kindly of me. And so, even at the place of my degradation, I hoped that my enemies' deeds might work out for me an exceeding great reward. Neither did I feel so bitterly toward the Tresidder family. I still determined to win back my own and to fulfil my promise to my father, but I wished my enemies no harm. Even then I wondered whether John Wesley's words were not a prophecy, providing I would fulfil the conditions.

But this feeling did not last long. I began to picture the danger Naomi was in; I thought of Nick Tresidder trying to persuade her to marry him; I thought of the threats that might be used; I called to mind the power of the woman who had persuaded my grandfather to be unkind to his only son, and then I was afraid, for if Naomi married Nick, what joy should I have in life; ay, what would Pennington be to me? It would seem only an empty tomb, while my heart would be eaten out with vain longings even to the end of my days; for such is the mystery of life, and such is the value of a woman's life to the man who loves her. I had seen Naomi only a few times, while I had

had but little intercourse with her, and yet she was more to me than aught else. But for her I think I should have given up hope, and when hope is gone all is gone.

I went back toward the sea again, musing over my hopes and my difficulties, when I saw Israel Barnicoat stumbling along the street, seemingly intoxicated. Not wishing to be seen by him, I went into an inn to escape him and to get some refreshments, for I remembered that I had eaten nothing since morning. The landlord of the inn, John Snell by name, had known me in my more prosperous days, and he asked me to come into the parlour, which he assured me was empty. So, desiring quiet, I accepted his invitation. I had been there perhaps an hour, and I was planning what I should do that night when John Snell came into the room and brought me a letter.

"A booy 'ave jist brought it, Maaster Jasper," he said.

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"A letter for me!" I cried, in astonishment.

"Iss; ther's your naame top of it, edn't et?"

I read the inscription—"Jasper Pennington, Esquire."

Now the word "Esquire" set me wondering; moreover, it set my heart a-beating hard, for I thought I recognised the writing, and yet I was not sure.

I did not break the seal because, although John Snell seemed friendly toward me, I did not wish him to be present when I read the missive, for I hoped that Naomi was the writer.

Presently John left me alone, and then I anxiously read and re-read the words which had been written. They were very few, but they made my heart burn with great joy, for they told me that I might soon see my love again. This is what was written:

"If you would help me, meet me to-night at Pendennis Castle gates at the hour of ten. I would then tell you what was impossible for me to say at Humphry Bolitho's shop. If you love me, do not fail; I am in greater danger than you think. If you fail our only hope is gone."

Now, as I said, I read this letter many times, and pondered greatly over its contents. I made up my mind I would not fail, for the letter told me of Naomi's love and Naomi's danger. The thought of speaking to her without hindrance was joy beyond all words; so much joy did I feel, indeed, that I thought not of where Naomi was when she wrote it, or how she was to escape her guardian while she spoke to me. Enough that her own hands had penned these lines to me, while the joy coming from the thought that she sought my help made me incapable of thinking clearly. I was sure that her hands had traced these lines, for I compared them with the other letter I had received from her, and which I carried with me wherever I went; and so long before the hour of ten I made my way toward Pendennis Castle. The little town was nearly asleep. No sounds reached me save those of revellers in some kiddleywinks near the shore. As I walked along many doubts came to me. By what means would Naomi reach the castle gates? Who would accompany her? for I could not think she would come alone. What was the reason she was staying in Falmouth over night? And, above all, how would she elude the vigilance of those who guarded her?

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Had I long to wait I have no doubt that many more questions would have arisen in my mind, for in spite of my joyful anticipations my mind began to clear, and I thought of many things which did not come to me as I read the letter. Besides, try as I might to throw off the feeling, a great dread laid hold of me, and I began to look anxiously around me, as if fearful of my surroundings.

Below me, in the near distance, the waves swished on the shore, while out at sea, perhaps a mile, I could see the lights of a ship twinkling. But for the musical sound of the waves all was silent; the night was clear and bright; the moon's beams played with the sea, making the waves shine like diamonds. Even although my mind was filled with many doubts, I felt that I had seldom seen a fairer night, and I dreamed of leading Naomi to the lanes outside the town and telling her again of my love.

Presently I came to the drawbridge near the castle gates. I knew it was nearly ten o'clock, but it might want a few minutes to the hour, so I went and leaned against the castle walls.

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I thought I heard a whisper, for my ears were eager to catch the sound of my love's footsteps; so I went back to the gates again; then I heard a quick shuffling of feet, and before I could turn around my arms were pinioned, my eyes were bandaged, and some woollen substance was thrust into my mouth.

I saw now what the letter meant. It was not written by Naomi at all, and in my heart I cursed myself as a blockhead for being so easily duped. I heard the gruff voices of men, and among others I felt sure I heard that of Israel Barnicoat. For some few minutes, although my hands were pinioned, I struggled fiercely, but it was of no use; besides, I heard a threatening voice near me saying, "You be quiet, Jasper Pennington, or you'll be thraved over the cliff. Doan't 'ee make no mistake now!"

I could not speak, neither could I see, so I became passive, and they led me along a road which I knew descended. The sound of the waves became nearer and nearer, so I judged we were going to the sea. In this I was correct. A few seconds later I heard the sound of paddles, and then I was half led, half lifted into a boat.

I tried to get the woollen material with which I had been gagged out of my mouth, for it made me sick; moreover, I found it hard to breathe, but I tried in vain. So I bore up as well as I could, wondering where I was to be taken and what was to become of me. I did not think they meant to kill me, or they would have thrown me over the cliff at Pendennis Point, so I came to the conclusion that Cap'n Jack Truscott's gang had got hold of me, and that they would take me to Kynance. I listened eagerly to hear the sound of his voice, but could not; but I felt sure I had heard Israel Barnicoat's, and this confirmed me in my opinion.

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I was angry at this, not so much for myself as for Naomi. Never until then did I feel how much she was in Richard Tresidder's power; never did I feel so certain as then that every means would be used to marry her to his son. And I had vainly thought that I would stay near to help her, and that I would save her from the power of my enemies. Now, however, a few hours after I had come back to Cornwall, I was taken a prisoner.

I sat upright in the boat. On each side of me sat a man holding me, while two men rowed. There were others near me, as I knew by the sound of their voices; how many I did not know. After I had sat thus for perhaps half an hour the rowing ceased, and I felt our boat thump against some hard substance, and by the movement of the men I knew that some new steps were to be taken.

A few seconds later I heard sounds above me; then my hands were loosed, but the bandage was not taken away from my eyes.

"Stand upright," said a voice.

I stood upright.

"Lay 'old ov this."

A piece of rope was put in my hand.

"You've got 'old of a rope ladder. Now climb."

I felt with my hands, and discovered that the man had spoken truly. I knew it was useless to disobey, so I started to climb. In a few seconds I felt my arms grasped by hard hands, and I was dragged on to the deck of a vessel.

I made no sound; I could not, for I was still gagged.

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"Come weth wee."

I knew by the dialect that Cornishmen still spoke, and a few seconds later I felt myself descending a stairway with two men holding me.

By the motion I judged that I was on a pretty large vessel, and this caused me to wonder greatly, for a large vessel would not be needed to take me to Kynance, neither would Cap'n Jack use one for such a purpose. I then thought I must be in the hands of the press-gang, and this was not altogether unpleasant, for I thought I might be able to escape, or use means whereby I should be able to communicate with Naomi.

A few seconds later I knew that I was enclosed in some sort of a cabin, and then I felt a great relief, for my gag was pulled from my mouth. I tried to speak, but I could not; my tongue seemed swollen and my throat was parched, but it was pleasant to me to be able to breathe freely.

At length I made a great effort.

"Why am I taken here?" I asked.

No one spoke.

"What have I done that I should be treated thus?" I asked. "I have harmed no man. I arrived in Falmouth only yesterday. What is your will with me?"

Still no one spoke.

"Pull the bandage from my eyes and let me see, I cried. I said this because two men still held my arms firmly, but no one moved to do my bidding.

"Then give me something to drink," I cried—"water; my throat is parched, and burns like fire."

"Yes, you shall drink," said a voice.

A few seconds later I heard the sound of bottles clinking, and then the gurgle of something being poured therefrom.

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"Here is something to cool your mouth. Here it is—fine stuff. Drink it quickly, drink it all."

I felt a goblet placed against my lips, and a strange odour rise to my nostrils. I thought it smelt like rum, and a sickly feeling came over me.

"Drink quickly," said the same man who had spoken before; "it will do you good."

I feared to drink, and I shut my teeth firmly, but a great sickness came over me, and I could not keep my mouth closed, and some of the liquid was poured on my tongue. It was pleasant to the taste and delightfully cooling to my tongue, and so thirsty was I that I drank the contents of the goblet, thankful for such a refreshing beverage.

"You feel better now, don't you?"

"Yes," I said; "take away the bandage, and I shall be all right."

No sooner had I spoken than I staggered, and should have fallen had not I been kept up by the men who still held my arms.

"You are not so well, after all," I heard some one say. "You had better lie down."

I yielded to the pressure upon my body, and felt myself falling; a great roaring sound came into my ears, and then I realised that I was lying on some sort of couch.

My senses, I was sure, were departing from me, and I had a vague idea that I was falling through unlimited space, while wild winds and loud thunders were all around me; then all became a great blank.

How long I remained unconscious I do not know, neither can I tell whether the experiences through which I thought I went had any objective reality. [Pg 196]

This was what I thought or dreamed happened to me. For a long time all was a perfect blank, except that I was left alone in darkness and allowed to rest in peace. Even now I have a vague remembrance of a delicious restfulness that came to me; every particle of my body seemed to be in repose, while all desire departed. By-and-by light seemed to come to me—a strange, weird light. I was moving, not by any action of my own, but unknown forces were carrying me through balmy air. Strange, shadowy creatures flitted around me, while I thought I heard the sound of distant music, as though ten thousand voices were singing.

This, I said, is death.

My eyes, I knew, were closed, and yet I could see. By an inward power of sight I could plainly discern the shadowy creatures around, and I remember interesting myself in trying to discern their faces. Presently one more than all the rest became plain. At first I thought it was Naomi's, so fair was it, but I soon discovered that I was mistaken. The woman was cast in a larger mould than Naomi, and looked more matronly.

She looked at me with infinite tenderness, and kept close to my side all the time.

"Speak," I said to her; "tell me who you are."

But she shook her head.

Then it seemed to me as though dark, evil forms came near, and a man with a face like Richard Tresidder's said, "Let him die; we shall never be safe while he is alive." But the woman seemed to surround me like a mantle of light, and lo! my enemies were powerless to touch me. Time after time did murderous weapons seem to come close to me, but the form of the woman received every blow, and yet they did not harm her. [Pg 197]

"This woman bears a charmed life," was the thought that came into my mind, and I longed greatly to know who she was.

Then another form came near. I saw my father.

"Jasper," he said, "this is your mother. She is always near you. This is a mother's joy, ever to be near her loved ones. She will protect you."

"Mother," I cried, "kiss me."

Her face came closer and closer to mine, and then for the first time I knew of a mother's love and felt a mother's kiss.

"Be brave, and pure and true, Jasper, my son," she said; "fear not even in the valley of the shadow of death. Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

After that a great darkness fell upon me again, yet through the darkness I could see the luminous form of my mother, with love shining from her eyes, and her hand pointing upward.

After that I felt as though I were on a stormy sea. The ship in which we sailed tossed like a cork, while the waves, foam-crested, hurled themselves furiously on our bark. A great panic seized the ship's crew, and they gave themselves up for lost. But for myself I had no fear. A great benign influence was around me, and I felt as safe as a babe rocked on its mother's breast, while the wild winds that roared seemed as sweet as the lullaby of a mother to a tired child.

For a long time the darkness continued, and then, when all hope seemed to have departed from the ship's crew, I saw a twinkling light. Then I felt rough hands around my body, while evil eyes gleamed; but I still saw the love-light shining from my mother's eyes, and I heard a voice saying, "He must not suffer harm." [Pg 198]

Then all was a perfect blank.

* * * * *

When I awoke to consciousness I found myself in a small room. It was dimly lighted, and the air seemed cold and clammy. As my eyes became accustomed to my surroundings I saw that the

walls were rough and unplastered. Above my head were huge beams, covered with thick, unplanned boards. Only one window was in the room. It was very small, and through the glass I could see iron bars. The window, I judged, was eighteen inches wide, and perhaps two feet high.

I was lying on a bed which was made of rough deal, and had evidently been knocked together hurriedly. But the clothes were clean and dry. Beside me was a table on which was a basin and some cups.

"Where am I, and how did I get here?" I asked myself.

For some time I had no remembrance of the past. Then events came to me in a dim, vague way. I remembered the letter which I thought was written by Naomi, and my journey to Pendennis Castle. But it seemed a long way off. It might have been years; I could not tell.

I tried to lift myself from my bed, but I could not, I was too weak. I looked at my hands; they were white like a woman's, and very thin.

"I must have been ill," I said; "but why am I here, and where am I?"

I listened intently, but all was silent as death. I longed for human voices, but I could hear none. No sound reached me but the roar of distant surf, but it was a strangely muffled sound. [Pg 199]

"I am by the sea somewhere," I muttered; "but where?"

Then my heart gave a bound, for I heard the echo of distant footsteps. They sounded strangely, just as one's footsteps sound at night when walking through an empty church. They came nearer and nearer, until they came close to where I lay. Then I was sure that some one was coming to me.

CHAPTER XV

[Pg 200]

MY EXPERIENCE IN MY PRISON—I AM TOLD TERRIBLE NEWS ABOUT NAOMI

I looked eagerly toward the direction from which I had heard the sound, and saw a door opening. A little old man entered. Evidently he was a serving-man, just as one sees in most old houses. Even then I concluded that he was one who had spent most of his life in some well-ordered house. His clothes were spotlessly clean, the buckles on his shoes shone, his stockings were without blemish. His wig, too, was powdered carefully, and all his linen was faultless.

All this made me wonder the more greatly as to where I was.

He met my questioning look calmly, and looked at me critically.

"Ah, you are better," he remarked, quietly.

"Would you tell me where I am?" I asked.

"You are safe from harm," he replied, vaguely.

"And why am I here?" I asked.

"To be kept from harm."

"And how long have I been here?"

"It is not for me to tell you. You have been very ill."

"What has been the matter with me?"

"You have had fever. Once I thought you would have died; but you have been nursed safely through it, and I have doctored you successfully." [Pg 201]

"Are you a doctor, then?"

"I have some knowledge of the human system and of medicines. It is well, otherwise you would never have lived through your sickness."

His face showed no emotion whatever, neither did it in the slightest degree indicate his thoughts. He spoke in perfectly measured tones, and each word was enunciated clearly. Many thoughts flashed through my mind, and many questions rose to my lips, but the old man's presence seemed to check them. Moreover, I felt very weak.

"I shall be well and strong soon," I said.

He came to me, felt my pulse, examined me in various ways, and said, quietly, "Yes, I think you will soon be well. You are a very strong man."

"What will become of me then?"

"You will stay here."

"How long?"

"I do not know."

"But why was I brought here?"

"To be kept from harm."

"What harm?"

"It is not for me to say."

"By whose command was I brought here?"

"I shall not tell you."

"But you can tell me where I am. This seems a part of a big house, an old house. Whose is it, and where is it?"

"I shall not tell you. You will receive nothing but kindness while you behave seemingly, if not, means will be used to check you."

"I am a prisoner, then?"

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"Yes, you are a prisoner, if you are pleased to call it so."

"But am I to have no liberty? Am I not to leave this room? I cannot live penned up here."

"I shall speak no further to you. Food will be brought, and no harm will happen to you."

With that he left the room as quietly as he came, and I heard his footsteps echoing again as I had heard them when he came to me. For a time my brain seemed to grow weak again, and in spite of my anxiety I dropped into a fitful sleep, from which I was aroused by the chinking of crockery near me.

My sleep made me feel stronger; I felt far better than when the old man had visited me. I looked around the room again, and saw a hard-featured woman. She, too, was elderly, fast beating on toward sixty. She placed a basin of gruel at my side.

"'Ere," she said, "ait this."

"Ah," I thought, "I am still in Cornwall. Anyhow, the woman speaks with a Cornish accent."

I thought I might fare better with her than with the old man, so I tried to gain some information from her.

"Let's see," I said, "what part of Cornwall are we in?"

"Ait yer mait, an' ax no questions," was her response.

I ate the gruel with a good appetite. It was carefully made, and seemed to be seasoned with some pleasant-tasting cordial. When I had finished the old woman grunted with satisfaction.

"It is very nice," I said—"very nice. Whoever made it knows her work. Did you make it?"

"Who es ther' that knaweth how to make sich stuff as that but me?" she said.

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Her answer set me thinking, and I drew two conclusions. One was that the old woman was vulnerable to flattery, the other was that she did not hail from that part of the county in which I was reared. The word "knaweth" told me that she belonged to the northern part of the county.

I put another question in order to test the truth of both these conclusions.

"You look too much of a lady to be the cook," I said, "and yet I thought the cook would naturally make such things."

"Ther's no cook. Her's gone. I'm in charge."

She said this proudly, but although her answer was brief, it confirmed me in my suspicions. People in the western part of the county would say "She's gone," so when she said, "Her's gone," I was sure that she hailed from either Devon or from somewhere in the region of Tintagel and Boscastle.

"It must be a place of importance," I said. "Have you lived here long?"

"I was born in this parish."

"Let's see, this is near St. Minver, isn't it?"

"Ax me no questions and I'll tell 'ee no lies," was the reply.

But she had let me know more than she imagined. She had told me that she was born in the parish where my prison was situated, and I knew by her brogue that the parish was situated a good many miles north of St. Eve.

I asked her many more questions, but she would answer none that gave me any further information concerning my whereabouts. As to why I was there she seemed as ignorant as

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myself.

After this I lay many days on my bed—how many I do not know. The mornings dawned and the daylight departed by; I did not pay much heed. From the remarks of the little man, who constantly visited me, I judged that some complication had arisen in my case, and so my recovery was delayed. At length, however, I felt myself grow stronger again, and then daily health came to my blood and vitality to my being.

By and by I was able to rise from my bed, and a suit of clothes of antiquated cut was given me to wear.

"What month is this?" I asked one day of the old man when he came to see me.

"It would do you no good to know," he replied.

"Yes it would," I replied; "I should have got better before this if I had not been harassed by so many doubts and questionings."

"Well, then, it is October."

"October! What part of the month?"

"Yes, October. To-day is the fifteenth of the month."

"Then I have been here three months."

He was silent.

"What is the year?" I asked, eagerly.

The little man smiled. "Oh, you need not fear. This is the year 1745. You have been here three months. I see you wish to ask more questions, but I shall not answer them."

For several days after that I asked no questions, for a great despair laid hold of me. Although I had not been told, I was sure I knew why I had been kidnapped and made a prisoner. I believed, too, that my illness was not a natural one, and I could have sworn that I was kept out of the way because Richard Tresidder feared me. This thought was not altogether unpleasant. It could not be because of the Pennington estates—there was no immediate danger concerning that—it was because of Naomi. He had discovered that she and I had met, and I believed that he had concluded what I fondly hoped, although the foundation seemed poor, that Naomi loved me. If this were so, I could understand why he should want to keep me away from Pennington, for if Naomi loved me, and was willing to wed me, even although she could not marry until she was twenty-one, the position was a constant menace to Richard Tresidder; for if, when she came of age, she became my wife, Trevoise Estate would at once be wrested from his hands, while I should be able to buy back Pennington.

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I considered these matters many times as I lay there. They came to me not clearly, but in a vague way; not quickly, but slowly and at rare intervals, while my strength came gradually back to me.

All this time I knew not where I was, for I was not allowed to go outside the room in which I had been imprisoned. Neither had my strength been sufficient to climb to the little window I have mentioned in order to look out. I was kindly treated, my food was good, and brought regularly; my room was kept clean, and I was carefully attended to. But not one of my attendants would tell me anything. Moreover, as I became stronger they seemed to watch me more closely.

One morning after breakfast, I judged that the sky was bright by the light which streamed into my room, and as I felt very much better, and knowing that no one would come to my prison for an hour or two, I decided to try and climb to the window, so that I might see what my surroundings were. This proved to be a harder task than I anticipated, but after many vain endeavours I at length reached the little aperture and looked out.

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My head became almost dizzy as I looked. Outside a great sea was running. I saw the breakers lash themselves into foam upon the rocks, and I saw a bold, ragged cliff stretching, as I judged, southward as far as my eyes could reach. Then I looked beneath me, and I saw that my prison had been built on the edge of the cliff. So high was I above the beach beneath that at first I could not measure the distance, but presently, as my eyes became accustomed to the sight, I was able to make my calculation. As far as I could judge I was at least two hundred feet above the roaring, rushing torrent beneath—probably the distance was greater. Escape by that means, then, was an impossibility.

I looked long and eagerly at the boiling surf and the weather-beaten cliffs which stretched far away in each direction. I watched the breakers as they hurled themselves on the rocks far, far down beneath me. The sight filled me with dull despair.

I tried to open the window, but it was fastened firmly. After repeated efforts, however, I managed to remove it about three inches from the frame, but I could not move it more owing to the iron bars that had been placed across. The fresh air blew in from the sea, which gave me great pleasure; it also cleared my mind somewhat, and acting on the impulse of the moment I tied my handkerchief to the iron bar. I did not see how it could do any good, but it could do no harm, and might possibly attract attention.

I looked again at the great waste of water, and marked the tumultuous tossing of the waves, and

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then I closed the window again, feeling that I could do nothing to effect my liberty.

I went back to my bed again and began to consider my condition. My mind for the moment seemed clear, and I was able to understand my position, and all the events I have related came back to my memory. Then I remembered that I always became dazed and drowsy after drinking the medicine which was given me. A torpor always crept over me, and I was incapable of definite action. This made me wonder still more.

I heard the sound of footsteps echoing along a passage, and a minute later the little old man I have mentioned came to me.

"It is time for you to have your medicine," he said.

Hitherto I had drunk it without demur; now I determined to avoid taking it.

"I will attend to it presently," I said, "but for the present I want us to talk together. I suppose you know you are placing yourself in great danger by keeping me here?"

He was silent.

"Of course," I went on, "I know that you are only the tool of others. My enemy's name begins with T, doesn't it?"

He gave a start, but did not speak.

"This cannot last much longer," I said; "I have friends who will be searching for me. Hanging's a serious matter. I shall take serious steps when I get away from here."

"When you do," he replied, significantly.

"Do you think I shall stay here always?" I retorted.

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"How can you get away? This morning you climbed up and looked out of that window. You did not know I saw you, but I did. Well, what did you see? You know you are on the top of a cliff, and it is nearly three hundred feet to the beach. Well, you cannot escape that way; if you tried you would break your neck. Very well; the only other way to escape is to try and escape through that door. Well, what would happen then? You would not get up the passage a dozen steps before you would be shot."

"By whom?"

"By those who guard a dangerous madman."

"Oh, I see. I'm mad, am I?"

"Certainly."

"And is this an asylum?"

"It's not for you to know."

"Still it would go hard with Richard Tresidder if his perfidy should come out."

"It can never come out. Yes, I know what is in your mind. Well, supposing you get well enough to be set at liberty? You would be taken to Pendennis Castle as mysteriously as you have been taken here. But where are you? You cannot tell. Are you in England, Ireland, or Scotland? You do not know."

"How long shall I be kept here, then?"

"Not, I should think, more than a week. You seem to be very much improved in your health."

Now this set me wondering greatly, for I did not expect such a revelation. Still I managed to remain calm.

"You know why I am here, then?"

"Certainly. You have been a madman; as such you have been a constant menace to Miss Naomi Penryn. She has been much afraid of you, and has dreaded the thought of your being at liberty."

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"Little man," I said, "you know this is a lie."

"I wish it were. I have nothing whatever against you; on the contrary, I rather like you."

He spoke this kindly, and I detected, as I thought, a friendly look in his face, so acting on the impulse of the moment I said to him, "Will you listen to what I have to tell you?"

"Yes," he said, "I will listen."

Then I told him briefly all I thought necessary to tell, and yet I felt that I had not the power to tell the truth well.

"Your history seems very plausible, young man," he said, "but I have been warned against you."

"But Miss Naomi Penryn knows that I am not a madman, neither have I annoyed her in any way."

"You lie. I myself received a letter from her before you were brought here."

"Let me see that letter."

"No. Enough that I have told the truth. She fears you; she pleaded that you might be guarded until such time as it should be safe for you to be at liberty."

"Are you sure the letter was written by her own hand? Do you know her handwriting?"

"Know her handwriting! Why?" Then he added, quietly, "Yes, I know her handwriting."

"But why do you think I shall be set at liberty in a week?"

"Because she will have a protector."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that to-day she is being married to Master Nicholas Tresidder."

"To-day?"

"Yes, to-day."

"Go away," I said—"go away, for the sake of God. I want to be alone to think."

He looked at me I thought pitifully and kindly; then he heaved a sigh and went away.

When he was gone I lay for hours like one stunned. Food was brought to me, but I took no notice. Had poison been left in the room I believe I should have taken it, so weary of life was I. They had worked their will, then, and Naomi had been forced into an unholy marriage with the man who I was sure she did not love.

I thought of trying to climb to the window, of breaking the glass, wrenching the iron bars from the wall, and falling headlong upon the rocks below, but I was too weak. I made a score of futile plans, each madder than the other.

Presently I became more calm. Might not this be all lies? Or, again, even if it were true, ought I not, instead of contemplating suicide, to be brave and watchful, so that I might be able to protect her? Would she not as Nick Tresidder's wife need a friend? Besides—and then a score of conflicting thoughts seethed in my brain.

Presently I began to try and understand the meaning of the old man's words about being set at liberty in a week. What did it mean? If she was to be married that day, why was I not set at liberty at once? Then I came to the conclusion that the man who was my gaoler would have to wait for orders. Richard Tresidder would wait until the marriage was consummated before he would communicate with him.

But I will not try and recount all my thoughts. Many of them were doubtless wild and foolish, neither would they interest those who may chance read this narrative. [Pg 211]

For the next week, in spite of my despairing thoughts, I looked forward to my being set at liberty. I counted the days eagerly, and daily did I ask questions of the little old man who came to see me when my captivity should be ended. But he always shook his head, neither could I get from him any other answer.

When the week ended I expected something to happen. I should be probably blindfolded, pinioned, and conveyed to the walls of Pendennis Castle. But I was disappointed. A fortnight passed away, and still there was no change in my condition.

"What is the meaning of this?" I asked. "Why am I not liberated as you promised?"

But he gave no reply. Once I thought he would have spoken, for he seemed strangely moved, as though his mind were filled with doubts, but he left me without telling me the doubts which were in his mind.

Another week passed away, and in spite of myself I began to hope. If my captivity were to continue until Naomi was wedded to Nick Tresidder, did not my continued imprisonment show that the marriage had not taken place? I remembered Naomi's words. I thought of the look she gave me when she bade me good-bye. Yes, I felt sure she loved me, and that she had refused to wed my enemy! I still fretted and fumed at my imprisonment; I longed with a longing beyond words to be free, but this thought was like a beacon light to a shipwrecked sailor. It gave me strength, too. In spite of everything health surged back into my being.

But my release did not come.

The days began to grow very cold, and I asked for a fire, but none was given me, and my captivity was hard to bear. I think I should have gone mad but for a Bible that had been given me. I read again and again the Book of Job; especially did my mind rest upon his latter days when the sun shone upon him again. [Pg 212]

One day the little man, who had told me to call him Jonathan, came into my cell weeping.

"What ails you, Jonathan?" I said.

"Alas!" was his reply.

"What?" I cried eagerly.

"My little Naomi is dead!" he said.

"Your little Naomi—dead!" I repeated, like one dazed. "What do you mean?"

He started as though he had told me too much.

But I was not to be trifled with. I caught him and held him fast.

"You have made me desperate," I said; "I must know all now. Who told you that she was dead? What do you mean by calling her your Naomi? I must know everything."

"I dare not!" he cried, distractedly—"I dare not, I am afraid."

"Afraid of whom?"

"Richard Tresidder. He will be master of—" He stopped, and then he wept bitterly.

My hands dropped from him, for my strength had gone.

"Tell me," I said—"tell me, Jonathan, all you know."

He kept sobbing, and this made me pity him, but no tears came to my own eyes. My heart became cold and seemed as hard as a stone.

"She did not wed Master Nicholas Tresidder," he said; "and—and, oh, God forgive me, but since then she has died." [Pg 213]

For a time I could not collect my thoughts, the news seemed to have unhinged my mind, but presently I remembered. I thought of what I had heard Richard Tresidder say, and many wild thoughts came into my mind.

"If she is dead," I said at length, "you can set me free."

"No, no, I—" He got up from the stool on which he had been sitting and left the room. I heard him lock the door behind him, and I had no strength to hinder him. At that moment I cared for nothing.

CHAPTER XVI

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I HEAR A STRANGE NOISE IN MY PRISON—THE SECRET PASSAGE WHICH I FOUND—A WILD STRUGGLE, AND A HAIRBREADTH ESCAPE

I have said many times that I am not a man of quick understanding, neither was I ever clever at explaining puzzles. At that time, however, my brain seemed more than ordinarily active, and I saw things with a clearness that I had never seen before. Besides, I was sure that in the past I had been rendered partially incapable by the drugs which had been given me. Anyhow, the sudden shock seemed to have given me greater clearness of vision, so that I was able to comprehend things far more clearly than in the past. Hitherto, with the exception of occasional flashes of light, all had been dull, now I seemed to see the truth plainly. That which had come to me as vague conjectures now appeared as certainties, and in spite of the old man's dread news, I had more hope than in the past. I felt sure there were many things as yet unexplained. With my greater mental activity came also more physical vigour. I felt myself capable of trying to escape. I wondered at myself, Jasper Pennington, being kept so long a prisoner without making any attempt at escaping, and I determined that very day to take some definite steps to obtain my liberty. I therefore ate my dinner eagerly when it was brought, for I felt that I should need all my strength, but within half an hour from the time the meal was ended a feeling of torpor again crept over me, and I fell asleep, neither did I wake for several hours. After I awoke some two or three hours passed before my vision was again clear. I saw then that if I were to take any definite action, I must refrain from the food provided for me, and this also placed me in a dilemma, for if I ate no food how could I retain my strength? What was done must be done quickly. Not only had my medicine contained a powerful narcotic, but my food also was drugged.

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Consequently I did not partake of my night meal, but instead I feigned illness when it was brought, and afterward thought of many things which I hoped to do.

Presently, by the great silence which prevailed, I concluded that the inhabitants of my prison house had gone to rest, so I got up and tried the door. It was built strongly, but I believed it could be wrenched open if I had something in the shape of a crowbar. I thought of every article in the room, but could fasten on nothing suitable for the purpose, when I remembered the iron bars which had been placed outside the window. I climbed to the little opening in the wall, and opened the window as far as I was able. The cold air came rushing in, giving strength to my resolution. I seized one of the bars, but it did not move. Then I put forth my strength, which had been slowly coming back to me, and in a few minutes had torn it from the wall.

"It will act as a weapon as well as a crowbar," I mused; then I got back to the door and began to try and place the iron between the door and the hinges. I had no light, and so I had to find out the crevice with my fingers. While trying to do this I gave a start. I was sure I heard a noise under my

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feet. At first it sounded like footsteps, then I heard a scraping against the floor. I listened intently, and presently I was able to locate the sound. It was just under the bed on which I had been lying.

As quickly as I was able I removed the bed, and then listened again. For a time all was silent, then I heard a sound again, only this time it was different. Three knocks followed each other in quick succession, and I heard the boards vibrate under my feet.

"Is it a friend or enemy, I wonder?" I asked myself, and I grasped the iron bar more firmly.

I heard the boards creak as though something were pressed against them, but I could see nothing. Only a very faint light crept through the window which I had partially opened. Presently the boards began to give way. I knew this by a light which streamed into the room. Then I saw the floor move, and I heard a voice say, "Maaster Jasper."

I knew the voice immediately. There was only one person in the world who could speak in such a tone.

"Eli!" I cried, joyfully.

"Doan't 'ee holla, Maaster Jasper," said Eli, in his hoarse, croaking voice, "but come to once."

"Where?"

"Away from 'ere. Ther's some steps down to the say. Come on."

I needed no second bidding. I knew that Eli was thoroughly trustworthy, and so I lifted the boards, which proved to be a trap-door, and then, putting one foot through, I realised that I stood on a stone step.

"Come after me, Maaster Jasper," said Eli; "maake 'aste, they may come after us."

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So I squeezed my body through the trap-doorway, and prepared to follow him.

"Cloase thickey trap, Maaster Jasper," said Eli, and I saw his strange eyes shining in the dim light.

In my eagerness to do this I made the thing drop heavily, and the noise echoed and re-echoed through the building.

"That'll waake 'em up," cried Eli. "Come on, come vast, Maaster Jasper!"

With an agility of which no man would have thought him capable, he hurried down the steps, mumbling fiercely to himself all the time. I soon found that this stairway was very crooked and often small. I imagined then, what I have since found to be true, that the house in which I had been imprisoned had been used as a place of storage for smuggled goods, while the way by which I was trying to escape was a secret way to it.

We had not descended many yards before I heard voices above, while I knew that feet were tramping on the floor of my late prison. Evidently the noise I had made in closing the trap-door had aroused my warders, and they would now do their utmost to capture me.

My senses were now fully alive, and I determined that it should go hard with those who tried to hinder my escape. To my dismay I discovered that I had left my iron bar behind, and that I had no weapons, save my two hands, which had naturally been weakened by my long imprisonment. However, there was no time for despair, so I followed close on Eli's heels, who wriggled his way down the crooked and often difficult descent.

We must have got down perhaps one hundred feet, when, turning a corner, a current of air came up, blowing out Eli's light and leaving us in darkness.

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"Can 'ee zee, Maaster Jasper?" cried Eli.

"Just a little. Can you?"

"I cud allays zee in the dark," he grunted, but his statement was not altogether borne out, for his speed was much lessened. Still we managed to get on fairly well, for Eli could see in places which to most people would be impenetrable darkness, and I had been so much accustomed to the dark that I was not altogether helpless.

After all I suppose it is difficult to find perfect darkness. Light is only a relative term, and depends very much on the nature of our eyes. Thus it was that while we could not go nearly so fast as we had been going, we could still with difficulty find our way.

Presently we heard the sound of footsteps, and I knew by their rapid movement that our pursuers would gain upon us. Eagerly we hurried on, and each minute the sound of the footsteps behind us became plainer.

"How much farther, Eli?" I panted.

"A long way yet, and a hard job when we git to the end," he replied.

"How?"

"The mouth of this 'ere addit es fathoms above the say," he replied.

"How did you get here?" then I asked.

"I'll tell 'ee when we git away," he said, impatiently.

Then I chided myself for asking so much, for even these few words must have somewhat lessened our speed.

Meanwhile, the steps came nearer and nearer.

"Stop!" cried Eli, presently.

We stopped suddenly, while we both listened eagerly.

"There be three on 'em," he grunted.

"Yes, or more."

"No, only three—we caan't git away—"

"We must, we will!" I cried.

"Only by fightin' 'em."

"Well, then, we'll fight them," I cried.

"Come on then—there es a big place down 'ere. Furder down tes awful to git along, and we caan't go wi'out a light."

A few seconds later we stood in an open place. It was almost round, and might have been twenty feet across. I saw this by the light which Eli managed to fit as soon as we got there. It took him some few seconds to fit it, however, and by that time our pursuers were upon us.

I saw in a second that two of them looked like serving-men, the third was dressed as a gentleman. I could not see his face, however, but I thought he looked a strong man. To my joy none appeared to be armed. Eli stood by my side, but his head was no higher than my loins. Thus I and the dwarf had to battle with the three. I did not wait a second. I dared not, for my liberty, perhaps my life, were at stake. Besides, I believed, in spite of what I had heard, that Naomi was not dead. Had she been I should have been removed from my prison, if not set at liberty; at least, such was my belief.

Without hesitation, therefore, before a word could be spoken, I struck one of the serving-men a tremendous blow. He staggered against the side of the cave with a thud, and fell like a lump of lead. For a little while at all events we should be two to two, for Eli, insignificant as he seemed, was a formidable opponent, although at that time I did not believe him to be a match for a well-grown man.

Encouraged by the success of my blow, I made a leap on the man I took to be a gentleman. My blow was, however, warded off, and I received a stunning blow behind the ear.

Now during the time I had been imprisoned I had, as I have stated, been kept in a half-dazed condition, and although my strength had been slowly coming back to me, I was weak compared with the time when I had been taken a prisoner at Pendennis Castle. My food had been drugged, and my enforced inactivity had made my sinews soft like a woman's. Besides, I felt I had met with a skilled fighter, and I knew by the blow he gave me that he was a strong man. Moreover, I doubted Eli's ability to engage with the other serving-man, and this made me doubtful about the result of our struggle.

All this passed through my mind in a second, but I did not yield, for while the want of hope takes away strength, despair makes men desperate, and I was desperate. Somehow, although I could not tell why, I felt I was fighting for Naomi as well as myself. So, reckless of consequences, I made a second leap on my opponent and caught him by the collar, and then some wrappings which had partially obscured his face fell off, and I saw Nick Tresidder.

He writhed and struggled in my hands, but I held him fast.

"Ah, Nick Tresidder," I cried, "we meet face to face, then. Well, I've got an adder by the throat, and I mean to hold him there."

"Yes," he said, "we meet face to face." Then with a sudden twist he made himself free.

For a second I looked hastily around the cave. A torch was lying on the floor which lit up our strange meeting-place, and near it I saw Eli struggling with the serving-man.

He looked at me scornfully, while I, panting and partially exhausted, tried to harden my sinews for a second attack. I determined to be careful, however. I knew Nick Tresidder of old; I knew he would fight with all the cunning of a serpent, and that he had as many tricks as a monkey, so that, while he would be no match for me had my strength been normal, he would now possibly be my master in my comparative weakness.

He took no notice of Eli, who struggled with the serving-man, but kept his eyes on me.

"You fool, Jasper Pennington," he said. "I had come here to set you free; now you will never leave this place alive."

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"Why?" I panted, for want of better words.

"Because you know now who imprisoned you, and if you escaped you would tell it to the world. I dare not let the world know this, so you and Eli will have to die."

I felt sure there was some trick in this, although I could not tell what it was.

"But if I had been set free the world would have known," I replied.

"No, you would have been taken to a far-off spot, and you would never have known where your prison was, nor could you have sworn who imprisoned you."

"But I am going to escape," I said, still keeping my eyes on him, while I could hear Eli grunting as he struggled with the serving-man.

"No," he said, "you are as weak as a baby. Your strength even now has gone. You thought bodily strength everything; I, on the other hand, know that brains is more than bodily strength. Do you think I did not know who I was dealing with? You are a fool. Every mouthful of food you have been eating while you have been here has kept you weak. Now you are no match for me. And I am going to kill you! Shall I tell you where you are? You are at Trevoise, the house that was Naomi's. Shall I tell you something else?" and he laughed mockingly. "Naomi Penryn loved you—but she's dead; and now Trevoise House and lands belong to the Tresidders, do you see?" [Pg 222]

Then, I know not how, but a great strength came to me, an unnatural strength. My heart grew cold, but my hands and arms felt like steel. His bitter, mocking words seemed to dry up all the milk of human kindness in my nature. At that moment I ceased to be a man. I was simply an instrument of vengeance. His words gave me a great joy on the one hand, for I knew he would not have told me she loved me, did he not believe it to be true, but this only intensified my feeling of utter despair caused by those terrible words, "But she's dead." I felt sure, too, that she had been persecuted; I knew instinctively of all that she had had to contend with, how they brought argument after argument to persuade her to marry Nick, and how, because she had refused, they had slowly but surely killed her.

And Nick gloated over the fact that Trevoise lands belonged to him as though that were the result of good luck rather than as the outcome of systematic cruelty and murder.

I was very calm I remember, but it was an unnatural calm. I looked around me, and Eli was still struggling with the serving-man, and to my delight he was slowly mastering him. [Pg 223]

"Nick Tresidder," I said, "you and your brood robbed my father, you have robbed me, robbed me of everything I hold dear. I am going to kill you now with these hands."

He laughed scornfully, as though I had spoken vain words; but he knew not that there is a passion which overcomes physical weakness.

"I know it is to be a duel to the death," he laughed, "for I could not afford to allow you to leave here alive."

"God Almighty is tired of you," I said; "He has given me the power to crush the life out of you," and all the time I spoke I felt as though my sinews were like steel bands.

He leapt upon me as quickly as a flash of light, but it did not matter. In a minute I caught him in what the wrestlers call the cross-hitch. I put forth my strength, and his right arm cracked like a rotten stick, but he did not cry out. Then I put my arm around him and slowly crushed the breath out of his body. I think he felt the meaning of my words then.

"Stop, Jasper," he gasped, "she's not dead—she's—"

"What?" I asked.

But he did not speak. I do not think he could. I relaxed my hold, but he lay limp in my arms like a sick child. Never in my life could I hurt an unresisting man, so I let him fall, and he lay like a log of wood. But he was still breathing, and I knew that he would live. But my passion had died away, and so had my strength.

I turned around and I saw that Eli had mastered the serving-man. He had placed his hands around his neck, and had I not pulled the dwarf away the man would have died. [Pg 224]

"Eli," I said, picking up the torch, "they will not follow us now. Come."

But Eli did not want to come. He looked at the men we had mastered, and his eyes glared with an unearthly light, and like a lion who has tasted blood he did not seem satisfied.

"An eye for an eye," he said; "tha's what mawther do zay. Iss, an' a tooth for a tooth."

"Lead the way to the sea, Eli," I said, and like a dog he obeyed. Taking the torch from me he crawled down the passage, laughing in a strange guttural way as he went. All the time my mind was resting on Nick Tresidder's words, "She's not dead. She's—" and in spite of myself hope came into my heart again, while a thousand wild thoughts flashed through my mind.

A few minutes later we felt the sea-spray dashing against our faces, while the winds beat furiously upon us. Below us, perhaps twenty feet down, the sea thundered on the rocky cliff.

"What are we to do now, Eli?" I asked.

He looked anxiously around him like one in doubt; then he put his fingers in his mouth, and gave a long piercing whistle.

"Who are you whistling to?"

"He's coming," he answered, looking out over the wild waters.

"Who's coming?"

"The man that told me."

"Who is he?"

"I'll tell 'ee, Maaster Jasper. I've bin 'ere fer days, I have. I was loppin 'round 'cawse I knawed you was 'ere."

"How did you know?"

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"I'll tell 'ee as zoon as we git away, Maaster Jasper. Well, as I was loppin' round I zeed a man, he looked oal maazed. He spoked to me, and I spoked to 'ee. Then we got a talkin' 'bout lots o' things. He seemed afraid to meet anybody, but axed scores ov questions. Oal he tould me about hisself was that he was an ould smuggler that used to land cargoes round 'ere. One day I seed a hankerchuff 'angin' from thickey winder, an' I knawed 'twas yours. I was wonderin' 'ow I cud git to 'ee, and I axed the man ef he knawed anything 'bout the 'ouse. After a bit he tould me that there was a sacret passage a-goin' from the cliff to the room where the winder was. Tha's 'ow 'twas. I'll tell 'ee more zoon. There he es, look."

I saw something dark moving on the water, and presently discerned a man in a boat.

Eli whistled again, and the whistle was answered.

"How did you get from the sea up here?" I asked.

"I climbed up, Maaster Jasper, but I can't go down that way."

The boat came nearer.

"Es et saafe to plunge?" shouted Eli.

"Yes," was the reply underneath.

"No rocks?"

"Dive as far out to sea as you can, and you'll go into twenty feet of water."

"All right," shouted Eli, then turning to me, he said, "I'll dive first, Maaster Jasper."

"Can you swim?" I asked.

"Swem!" he sneered; "ed'n my mawther a witch?"

He plunged into the sea, and I heard the splash of his body as it fell into the water, then I saw him get into the boat, which was rocked to and fro with the great waves.

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"All right," I heard a voice from beneath say, "now then!"

I gathered myself together for the dive, and I think my heart failed me. My strength seemed to have entirely left me, and it looked an awful distance between me and the frothy waves beneath. Besides, might I not strike against a rock? Then I think my senses left me, although I am not sure. It seemed as though the sea became calm, and a great silence fell upon everything. After that I heard a voice which seemed like Naomi's.

"Help, Jasper!" it said.

Then all fear, all hesitation left me, and I plunged into the sea beneath. I felt my body cutting the air, then an icy feeling gripped me as I sunk in the waters. When I rose to the surface I saw the boat a few yards from me rising on the crest of a wave.

I could hear nothing, however, save a roar which seemed like ten thousand thunders. I struck out boldly for the boat, but Eli and the other man seemed to mock me with jeering menaces. I struggled hard and long, but the boat seemed to get no nearer, and presently I thought I heard unearthly laughter above the wild roar of the breakers.

"Ha, ha," I thought I heard them saying, "now we've got you; this is Granfer Fraddam's phantom boat, this is. Swim, Jasper Pennington, swim!"

I tried to swim, but my legs seemed to be weighted, while around me floated thousands of hideous jabbering things which I thought tried to lure me on to the rocks.

I looked landward and the house in which I had been imprisoned appeared to shine in a strange ruddy light, until it looked like one of those enchanted houses which one sees in dreams.

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Then I thought I heard Naomi's voice again, "Help, Jasper, help!"

But all my struggles seemed of no avail. I fancied I was being carried by the force of the waves farther and farther out to sea, while all the time Eli and the other man beckoned me onward, their boat rising and falling on the bosom of the ever-heaving waters.

Then I felt cold hands grip me, and I was dragged I knew not whither, while everything was engulfed in impenetrable darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

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TELLS OF THE MANNER OF MY ESCAPE, OF THE STRANGE MAN I MET, AND OF ELI'S STORY OF A BURIED TREASURE

The next thing I can remember was a sensation of choking, of trying in vain to get my breath; then a weight seemed to be slowly rolled from me, and I felt myself free.

I opened my eyes and found myself in a cave. At first I thought it was the one in which I had fought with Nick Tresidder, but I soon found myself to be mistaken. I lay upon coarse, dry sand, while close to me a fire burned. Its grateful light and warmth caused a pleasant sensation; then I realised that my wet clothes had been taken from me, and that I was rolled in a warm, dry blanket.

"You be better now, Maaster Jasper, be'ant 'ee, then?" I looked up and saw Eli Fraddam bending over me.

"How did I get here?" I asked, in a dazed kind of way, "and where am I?"

"You be cloase to Bedruthan Steps, an tha's where you be, Maaster Jasper; you be in one of the caaves. 'Tes oal lew and coasy 'ere, and you'll be oal right again. But you've bin as sick as a shag, and as cowl'd as a coddle."

I tried to call to memory what had passed. Then I said, "But how did I get here, Eli, and how long is it since we came?" [Pg 229]

"We brought 'ee 'ere, Maaster Jasper, in the booat, ya knaw. You tumbled in the say, and we was a goodish bit afore we cud git 'ee on booard. We was feard for a long time that you was dead, but you're oal right now. Yer things 'll zoon be dry, and then you c'n dress up oal spruce and purty."

Slowly my mind became clear; then I remembered the man who had been in the boat while Eli and I had been together in the secret passage.

"Where is the man who helped you with the boat?" I asked.

"Here 'ee es. Come 'ere, maaster."

Then I saw a strange-looking man who, as far as I could judge, might be any age between fifty and seventy. I looked at him steadily for some time. Somehow his face seemed familiar. I could not call to mind where I had seen it, however. He had a long gray beard, while his hair was also long and unkempt. His eyes shone with a wild brilliancy, and he seemed to be always eagerly watching.

"Thank you for helping me," I said; "it was very good of you."

"Was it?" he replied. "Do you really think it was good of me?"

"It was, indeed," I responded. "I wish I could repay you somehow. Some time I hope to have the power."

He looked at me eagerly.

"I'm glad you think it was good of me," he said; "so very glad. Will you tell me something?"

"If I can I will," I replied.

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"Do you think it possible that many good deeds—many, many, many—can atone for wild, bad, murderous actions?"

"God takes everything into account," I replied.

"Do you think He does—do you? I'll tell you something," and he drew closer to me. "Years ago—long years ago—oh! so long, so long!—well, say I was a smuggler, a wrecker—oh, what you like! Well, say in self-defence, in passion, in frenzy, I killed a King's officer—do you think God will forgive me? And say, too, that since then I've roamed and roamed, all over the world, always trying to do good deeds, kind deeds—do you think God takes them into account?"

"I'm sure He does," I answered.

"I only wanted to know your opinion," he replied, as though trying to speak carelessly. "Of course I only imagined a case, only imagined it—that's all."

Now this kind of talk set me wondering about the man, and imagining who he might be. Wildly as

he looked, strangely as he spoke, curiously as he was dressed, he still spoke like an educated man. I watched him as he continued to cast glances around the cave, and I came to the conclusion that he was mad. I opened my mouth to ask him questions, but the remembrance that Eli might be able to tell me what I wanted to know about the Tresidders restrained me.

"How did you know how to find me?" I asked of Eli. "Tell me everything that happened since I left you that morning."

Eli, who had continued to look at me all the time I had been speaking to the stranger, gave a start as I asked the question.

"Wondered why you did'n come back from Fammuth," he grunted, "so I went and axed 'bout 'ee. Cudden vind out nothin'. Then I beganned to worm around. I vound out that Neck Trezidder 'ad tould the passon not to cry the banns at church. Then I got the new cook at Pennington to come to mawther and 'ave 'er fortin tould; then mawther an' me wormed out oal she knawed 'bout the things up to Pennington." [Pg 231]

"What?" I asked, while all the time the strange man seemed to be eagerly devouring Eli's words.

"The Trezidders and the purty maid ev quaruled about you."

"Are you sure?"

"Iss. Neck wanted the purty maid to marry un, and she wudden, and they axed 'er 'bout you, and she wudden tell nothin'."

"How did the new cook know this?"

"She 'arkened at the door."

I did not feel then, neither do I feel now, that I did wrong in trying to find out the actions of the Tresidders even by such means as this. My heart was torn by a great anxiety, and my love for Naomi seemed to grow every hour.

"Well, what then?"

"The cook cudden maake it oal out, but the purty maid axed to go to some plaace called a convent."

"Ah! a convent—yes," I cried, my mind reverting back to the conversation I had heard between Richard Tresidder and his son.

"Well, she went; tha's oal I do know 'bout she."

"You are sure?" I asked, eagerly.

Eli hung his head.

"Tell me is that all?" I gasped. "Tell me all you know—everything." [Pg 232]

"Poor Jasper, deear Jasper!" crooned Eli, patting my hands. "Eli loves Jasper."

"But tell me everything, Eli."

"You wa'ant go maazed?"

"No."

"Then I heerd she was dead; but I dunnaw. There, do'ant 'ee give way, Maaster Jasper."

For a few seconds I was stunned, but I called to mind Nick's words, and I was comforted; at any rate, there was hope.

"And the rest, Eli?" I asked. "How did you find out where I was?"

"It took me a long time. I went to Kynance, and I 'arkened round Pennington, but I cudden 'eer nothin'. Then wawn day I seed Israel Barnicoat talkin' with Maaster Trezidder, then I beganned to wonder."

"Yes; what then?"

"I tried to pump un, but I cudden."

"Well?"

"Then wawn day I got'n home to mawther's, and we maade un nearly drunk, and then I vound out. He'd bin 'ired by Maaster Trezidder to taake 'ee to Trevawse 'Ouse. Little by little I vound out where it was, then I comed to 'ee."

I did not ask him any more questions. I knew nearly all he could tell me now; besides, the presence of the stranger kept me from entering into further details. My imagination filled up what was not related.

"Eli got summin to tell Maaster Jasper when we git aloane," grunted Eli presently.

The man with whom I had been speaking walked out of the cave, and I could not but think he had [Pg 233]

been brought up as a gentleman in spite of his wild, unkempt appearance.

"What is it?" I asked. "Where is the convent to which Miss Penryn was taken? Can you tell me that?"

"No, I ca'ant; ted'n 'bout that."

"What then?"

"You reckleck thicky night when you comed 'ome from say—that night when mawther brought out the crock and brandis, and tould yer fortin?"

"Yes."

"And you do mind to that Cap'n Jack and Cap'n Billy Coad comed to 'ee?"

"I remember."

"Well, you eerd 'em axin mawther 'bout the saicret paaper that tould 'em 'bout a treasure?"

"Yes."

"Well"—and Eli put his mouth close to my ear—"I do knaw where thicky paaper es. I've vound un out, an' saved un for Maaster Jasper."

"What do you mean?"

"Eli do love Maaster Jasper"—and again the poor gnome began fondling and caressing my hands—"so Eli have wormed around and around, and ev vound out where et es. Aw, aw, when Cap'n Jack an' Cap'n Billy cudden vind et they ded swear they ded, but Eli do knaw, an' Eli'll give ut to Maaster Jasper, 'ee will, then Maaster Jasper c'n pay 'em oal out. Turn out Maaster Trezidder, my dear, and live at Pennington."

"Tell me more about it, Eli?" I cried.

"Hush, we mus'n tell nobody. Aw, aw!" and again the dwarf laughed gleefully.

"There's no witchcraft, no wizard's charms about the treasure, is there? It wasn't made in hell, was it?" [Pg 234]

"No, no; tes oal right. Granfer Fraddam was once a pirut on the 'igh says."

"Yes; I know he was once a pirate on the high seas, but what of that?"

"Well, he got the paaper from another pirut. Some do zay he ded kill un, but that ed'n true. Well, 'ee got et."

"Yes; but if he got a paper telling where the treasure was, why did he not take it away?"

"Well, Granfer cudden raid, fur wawn thing, and fur another, 'ee wos feared."

"Afraid of what?"

"Several things. For wawn thing, he was tould that 'twas onlucky to git a treasure that was got through killin' people; but that wudden stop Granfer, I do knaw."

"Then what was it?"

"Well, Granfer cudden raid the direckshuns, and 'ee cud never maake up his mind to shaw et to anybody that cud. Now, they do zay that when 'ee talked 'bout et 'ee was awful feared. He zed ef 'ee shawed et to anybody they'd kill un. I spoase Granfer was a wisht ould man after 'ee 'ad a accident, and was too ould to live out to say. He repented and turned religious. That was why 'ee ded'n do nothin' but smugglin'. Well, so 'ee did eed away the paper wot 'ee got from the man, and waited till 'ee cud vind somebody to trust. But he cudden vind nobody—nobody toal. Besides, everybody was frad to 'ave anything to do wi' Granfer. People did believe 'ee was a wizard, and 'ad dailins weth the devil. Mawther do zay that nobody would go out mor'n seven mile out to say weth Granfer." [Pg 235]

"And where is this paper?"

"Aw, aw. I vound out I did. Granfer tould mawther, and mawther did tell me. I vound et, and did eed it in another plaace. Aw, aw, you shud a eerd Cap'n Jack and Cap'n Billy swear when they cudden vind et. Aw, aw. But I did love Maaster Jasper, and I'll take 'ee to et, Maaster Jasper, my dear."

All the time Eli was speaking he kept fondling my hands and caressing me, just as a man would caress a maid whom he loves.

"But does your mother know what you have done?"

"No, she doan't. She do believe it have been sperrited away."

"Spirited away; what do you mean?"

"Mawther do knaw. Aw, aw. But she ed'n right this time, and yet she is oal the time."

As I have before mentioned, it was no uncommon thing to hear about hidden treasures along our coast. Indeed, from earliest childhood I have heard of gangs of pirates burying treasures in many of our secret hiding-places; so common were such stories that we had ceased to pay attention to them. Consequently I had given but little attention to the conversation I had heard between Cap'n Jack and Betsey, neither did I attach much value to what Eli had been telling me. If such a treasure existed, and if Granfer Fraddam knew of it, he would have found means to have obtained it. I knew that during Granfer Fraddam's later years he was said to have tried to get religion, and wanted very hard to break away from a compact he made with the evil one in his young days. There were also stories telling how he pleaded with Betsey to give up all connection with witchcraft, and that because she would not agree to this he died in his secret cave rather than have her near him. But all these were stories to which I, who had had a fair amount of schooling, had paid but little attention.

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Besides, at this time I was thinking about the sweet maid that I loved rather than the treasure that Eli spoke about. What were treasures to me if she were dead? What was Pennington, the home of my fathers even, if she had been slowly killed by the Tresidder brood? I asked myself many times what Nick Tresidder had meant by his words; I wondered, too, where the convent was in which she had been placed, and as I wondered my heart was torn with anguish, for all the world was nothing to me without Naomi.

And so for a long time I did not talk to Eli concerning that about which he had spoken. I seemed rather to be eating my heart away, and almost wished that I had died when I had plunged into the sea a few hours before, for what could I do? Where was the convent in which she was placed? How could I get to her? And if I tried, what steps would the Tresidders take to hinder me? From the fact that Nick Tresidder had come to Trevoise, would it not suggest that he had come to claim the land as his? And would he not take steps even now to get me out of the way?

These and a hundred other questions I asked myself, until my brain became weary again, and my heart was sick with disappointment, sorrow, and despair.

"Will Maaster Jasper go with poor little Eli?" grunted my companion presently. "I know where the paper es, Maaster Jasper. 'Tes covered weth ritin' and funny lines; but Maaster Jasper es clever, he can vind et out. Spanish money, Maaster Jasper—'eaps and 'eaps ov et. You could buy back Pennington, Maaster Jasper, and pay out the Trezidders—pay 'em out; iss, an' turn 'em out, neck and crop!"

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Why is it, I wonder, that the human heart turns so naturally to revenge? In my despair it came to me as a comfort, this thought of driving the Tresidders from Pennington. For the moment I became eager about Eli's story of the treasure, and asked many questions—foolish as the whole business might be—as to what Granfer Fraddam had told his mother, and what she had told him.

After a while I remembered the man who had been our companion, and I sent Eli to try and find him.

When Eli had gone I examined my clothes and found them dry. So I put them on, wondering all the time as to whose they might be, and who had worn them prior to the time the man had given them to me.

No sooner had I finished dressing than Eli and the man came in. I thought the latter looked more calm and self-possessed. He brought some bread, too, and some salted fish. Then for the first time I saw some simple cooking utensils in the cave.

"Have you been living in this cave?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied; "I have been living here for a month. But you are welcome. I want to do good deeds if I may. I want to atone."

"Have you done anything so bad, then," I asked, "else why do you wish to atone?"

He looked at me eagerly for a few seconds; then, without speaking, he put two pans on the fire, first of all filling them with water. After this he placed the fish in one of the pans, and waited while the water boiled.

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"What is your name, young man?" he asked presently.

"Jasper Pennington."

"Of Pennington?"

"Yes; what do you know about it?"

"I knew of a family of that name long years ago. Pennington of Pennington. Why are you in this plight?"

"Because I have been robbed of my birthright," I replied, bitterly.

"By whom?"

"The Tresidder family."

"The Tresidder family—ah!" He said this with great bitterness and passion. After a few seconds he grew calm again. "And have you sought to be revenged?"

"I have sought rather to win back my own. But what do you know of the Tresidders?"

"Nothing—oh, nothing, nothing, nothing! What could I, a poor shipwrecked sailor, know about a great family?" This he said hurriedly, almost fearfully, I thought. Presently he continued, "And you have done no rash deeds, Jasper Pennington?"

"No."

"You have not killed any of their men, their women?"

"No; not yet."

"Oh, be careful. Do you know"—and he heaped some driftwood on the fire—"that one moment of madness drives a man to hell? I've been in hell now for—oh, nigh upon twenty years. Hell, Jasper Pennington, a burning hell! Suffer anything, anything rather than—than—oh, it's nothing. I'm only imagining still; but there—" And he became silent again.

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In spite of my many doubts and fears I became interested in the man, and I watched him closely.

"Look, Jasper Pennington," he said presently, "anything got through evil, through bloodshed, through murder carries a curse with it. I've had the curse of Cain upon me now for many a year. I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth, but I have kept my eyes open. Everywhere it has been the same. Blood money, hate money, money evilly got, always carries a curse. Don't touch it, don't touch it! It does not burn the hands—oh, but it burns the heart, the soul! Oh, I have seen! I know!"

"But supposing your father had his home stolen from him by lies, treachery, fraud—suppose your father said to you with his dying breath, 'Get back that land; it is yours, it is your birthright, your true possession,' what would you do?"

"Jasper Pennington, there be other birthrights than those of law—there be those of God. There is the birthright of clean, bloodless hands and a pure heart; there is the birthright of an easy conscience, and the power to pray! It is more than money."

"You do not know everything," I said, "or you would speak differently."

"I not know!" he cried; "I not know! My God! my God!"

For a few seconds I thought him mad again, but presently he became calm. "The food is ready," he said; "we will eat of it. I got it from a cottage yonder. After we have eaten you may like to tell me all about yourself. Perchance I could help you; perchance, too, I am not what I seem."

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Something about the man charmed me. As I have mentioned, he spoke correctly, and in spite of his strange attire he looked like a gentleman. So when I had eaten I told him my story.

"Is that all?" he said, when I had finished. "There is something else. Your eyes would never shine so at the thought of being robbed of lands."

"Yes, there is more," I cried, for I had not told him of my love; and then—and I wondered at myself as I did so—I told him of my love for Naomi, but only in barest outline. I did not tell her name, I did not speak of her as coming from Trevoise, I did not relate how Richard Tresidder hoped through her to gain Trevoise.

When I had finished he sat for many minutes looking steadfastly into the fire, while his eyes grew as red as the red coals into which he looked.

"You have not told me all yet, Jasper Pennington," he said; "there is much behind. Why do you think they have ill-treated if not killed the fair maid you love? Why should they seek to put her into the convent? Ay, more, how and by what right were you taken to yon house on the cliffs? Tell me that, Jasper Pennington."

He spoke slowly, but with terrible intensity, and for a moment a feeling which I cannot describe passed through my heart.

"There is something else, Jasper Pennington," he continued. "What is the name of the fair maid you love, and whose child is she?"

On saying this he caught my hand with a hard, tight grasp, and looked eagerly into my eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII

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HOW I LEFT BEDRUTHEN STEPS AND, AFTER MEETING TAMSIN TRUSCOTT, SOUGHT FOR NAOMI

I know not why, but when the stranger acted in this way he seemed to put a bridle on my tongue. The name of my love was on my lips, but I could not utter it.

"Are you afraid to tell, Jasper Pennington?" he asked, eagerly.

"It is not for you to know," I replied; "besides, she may be dead. I have been told that she—" Then I stopped, for my heart seemed to grow too big for my bosom.

"Died of a broken 'art," mumbled Eli. "The Trezidders killed 'er."

"Tell me more!" cried the stranger, excitedly. Then he added, in calmer tones, "I may be able to help you."

But I did not speak, whereupon he walked to and fro the cave, making all sorts of ejaculations, and at times looking savagely at me, as though I were his enemy.

Presently, however, he grew calm and thoughtful; he seemed to be musing over what I had told him, as though he had an interest in it. This surprised me greatly, and set me thinking who he could be, until plans of action for myself began to form themselves in my brain.

After I had thought awhile I went out of the cave and stood in the bay called Bedruthen Steps. Accustomed as I had been all my life to the sight of a fine rock-bound coast, I could not help being awed at the scene. The great rocks which lift their mighty heads in Kynance Cove were not equal to these. Often while living at Cap'n Jack's house I had wandered along the many-coloured cliffs which stretch from Kynance to the Lizard, and had seen the waves leap on them, sometimes playfully, sometimes in mad anger, while thousands of streamlets ran down their rugged sides afterward, as if to laugh at the anger of the sea; but never had I seen anything so fine, so awe-inspiring as this. For a moment it made me forget the objects dearest to my heart. The tide was not high enough to reach the mouth of the cave at which I stood; at the same time the angry seas rolled madly along the sand, and were churned into foam by the great rocks along the beach. I had heard about rocks standing as sentinels, but never until then did I realise the meaning of the words. That day, however, the meaning of such language was quite plain. The cliffs stood from three to four hundred feet high, almost perpendicular, save here and there where some narrow gully sloped somewhat. These cliffs were dark gray, rough, jagged and forbidding, and seemed to quietly mock the roving, rushing sea which beat upon them.

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Along the beach, perhaps a hundred yards or more from the cliffs, a number of huge rocks stood alone. I suppose at some time they must have slipped from the mainland, but that was undoubtedly in the far-back past. One of them, I remember, was shaped like a spire, and seemed to look with derision on the foaming waters that sometimes nearly covered it, and at others left it standing ill all its majesty on the white, hard sand.

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"Surely," I thought, "God has been lavish of His grandeur here," and even as this came into my mind the relentlessness and the cruelty of the sea impressed me. Everything made me feel my littleness, my impotence. A strong man would be but as a bit of rotten wood if he were thrown into it; those cliffs would beat the life out of him, while the white foam, which looked so soft and inviting, covered that which would smash the sides of a boat as easily as a man snaps a piece of wood across his knee.

A feeling of despair possessed me again, for I was utterly lonely. It is true Eli stood by my side saying loving words and fondling me, while the stranger walked to and fro the cave; but no one felt my grief or understood it. By-and-by, however, my mood began to change; the roaring sea, the gray, leaden sky, the mighty cliffs inspired me, they urged me to action. I must find out the truth about Naomi; ay, I must find her, for, standing there that morning, I could not believe that she was dead.

A few minutes later I had made preparations to leave the cave and go away from the neighbourhood of Bedruthen Steps.

"Where do you go, Jasper Pennington, and what are your plans?" asked the stranger.

"That is a matter which concerns myself," I replied, not very graciously. A moment later, however, I felt I had acted like a cur, for this man had endangered his life to save mine, and but for him I might not have been alive. "Forgive me," I continued; "my mind is much distracted, and I scarcely know what I say."

"Perchance I could help you, if you would trust me," he said.

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"I can scarcely trust myself," I replied, "much less a stranger."

"Am I stranger?" he cried, with an hysterical laugh, just as though he were a madman.

"If you are not, who and what are you?" I asked. "What is your name?"

"Name!" he said, wildly. "Esau is my name, my true name."

"Why your true name?"

"Because I have sold my birthright."

"Your birthright! To whom did you sell it?"

"To the devil!" he cried, his eyes glittering. "My birthright was my manhood; it was a clear conscience, it was the power to fearlessly think of the past, and to—" He stopped suddenly, then he went on again: "Perhaps Cain is the truer name, but I know not; call me Esau."

"Yes, he's mad," I said to myself. "I can trust him with nothing—nothing." Still, I humoured him.

"You have been very good to me," I said. "Some time, if I live and gain my own, I will repay you."

He came to me again, his eyes still shining brightly, and he looked eagerly into mine, as though, too, he had decided to impart something to me; but a second later an expression of doubt rested on his face. "No," I heard him say; "I must do it myself, and alone, if I can—if I can."

We parted then. I made my way up the side of a sloping place along the cliff, while Eli followed close at my heels. When we reached the grassy headland I looked back, and saw the stranger still standing at the mouth of the cave. I looked around me. Not a house of any sort was to be seen; only a rugged, bleak coastline was visible. I saw, however, that some of the land was cultivated, and so I knew that there must be some farmhouses in the near distance.

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After walking for about a quarter of an hour we came to a lane, but it was grass-grown, and was evidently but seldom used. I looked around me and espied a gray church tower. This gladdened my heart, for it was pleasant to think of the House of God situated in a bleak, barren countryside. I was about to make my way toward it when I heard the click of a labourer's pick. I jumped on a fence and saw a man hedging.

"What is the name of that church?" I asked.

"St. Eval, sur."

I looked at the man more closely. He looked far more intelligent than the ordinary labourer. "Do you know much about this neighbourhood?" I asked.

"I've lived 'ere oal my life, sur."

"Do you know of any convent in this neighbourhood?"

"Convent, convent?" he repeated, questioningly.

"Yes," I replied; "a place that belongs to the Catholics—a place where priests and nuns live."

He looked at me suspiciously, as though he suspected that I had evil motives in asking such a question. "No, sur," he said presently. Then he gave a start, and I turned and saw that Eli had come to my side. "Is he—is he the devil?" he gasped.

"No; only a dwarf."

"You'm sa big and 'ee sa small, it do seem funny," he laughed, nervously.

"What is the nearest town?" I asked.

"St. Columb, sur."

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I made up my mind to go to St. Columb, and was asking the man how far it was, when another thought struck me. "There's a parson at St. Eval, I suppose?"

"Aw, iss, sur; hes 'ouse ed'n fur from the church."

"Is he a man that you like?"

"Aw, iss, sur; everybody do like the passon."

I made my way toward St. Eval, and after half an hour's walking found a church and perhaps a dozen houses. I was not long in finding the vicarage, for it was the only house of importance in the neighbourhood.

Parson Thomas received me very kindly. He was a little man, well fed, and apparently on good terms with every one. I don't think he knew much about religion as Mr. John Wesley taught it, but he was kind-hearted and full of merriment. Moreover, if he neglected people's souls, he did not neglect their bodies. He insisted on giving me refreshments, and although he looked very curiously at Eli, he sent him into the kitchen and gave instructions that he must be looked after.

"I am a bachelor," laughed the jolly vicar. "So much the better all around. I've no one to bother me. I've got my dogs and my horses. At St. Ervan there is a pack of hounds, and I've the best hunter within six parishes. I have a service every Sunday afternoon in the church, and so far we have no Methodists. I've some good wine, good home-brewed ale, and plenty of cider. I rear most of the flesh eaten in the house, and am happy—ha, ha! Now, what can I do for you?"

I asked if he knew of any religious house belonging to the Catholics in the neighbourhood.

"There are a few Catholic families," he said.

"Who are they?"

"Well, there was a Catholic family at Trevose House—an old house built on the cliff not far from Trevose Head. At least, Mrs. Penryn was a Catholic, and the girl was brought up a Catholic. A priest from Padstow used to visit the house."

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"Do you know anything about them?" I asked.

"Mrs. Penryn is dead; her husband—well, it's a sad story. Poor fellow, he committed suicide well upon twenty years ago. Everything was left to the daughter. She has gone to the West to stay till she's of age, or married, under the guardianship of a Richard Tresidder. I think I heard

something about Tresidder's son marrying Naomi, but I'm not sure."

"Did the priest who visited Trevoise belong to any religious community?—I mean, is there a convent or nunnery at Padstow?"

"No. Let me see—oh, yes, I remember now; my friend Page, from Mawgan, was telling me about it. Close to Mawgan Church is the Manor House of Lord Arundell. I daresay you will have heard of it—Lanksome. It is a delightful spot. Well, the Arundell family has always remained Catholic, and were terribly bitter against the Reformation. The present Arundells came into possession about thirty-five or forty years ago, and it is quite a home for priests and Catholics generally. Some of the priests, I believe, visited Trevoise from there."

"But it is not a convent or nunnery?"

"Oh, no; not that I am aware of. It is simply the headquarters of the Catholics in this district. I have heard it said that some young Catholic girls, religiously inclined, have been taken there as novitiates, but I doubt its truth; not that the place is not admirably suited for such a purpose. It is surrounded by a high wall, over which no one can see, and in one of the walls is a secret chamber in which it is said a priest was concealed for eighteen months in the reign of Elizabeth. At present, however, it is not recognised as a convent."^[1]

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"But it is a Catholic centre?"

"Oh, bless you, yes; the place is full of Catholic priests, nuns from France, and what not. I should not like to say what is done within those walls. That house is full of secrets, and the people who go to Mawgan Church, which is adjoining it, look upon Lanherne as a home of mystery. The servants are silent, the priests are silent, the very atmosphere seems full of secrets."

I did not stay long with Parson Thomas after this, although his hospitality seemed to know no bounds. I had heard enough to set me thinking, and I determined to go to Mawgan that very evening. The time was now three in the afternoon, and soon night would be upon us. Still, there would be another hour of daylight, and I started to walk in the direction of Mawgan Forth, while Eli trudged close by my heels.

We had been walking, perhaps, half an hour, when I saw, as I was passing by a farmhouse close to which the road ran, a woman on horseback. Below us we saw the sands of Mawgan Forth, but no house was near save the farmhouse to which I have referred.

"It is some woman riding home from St. Columb Market, I suppose," I said as her horse climbed the hill.

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"No," said Eli; "no, Maaster Jasper. 'Tes Tamsin Triscott, Tamsin Fraddam; that's who et es."

"Tamsin!" I cried; "surely no!"

A few seconds later, however, I saw that Eli was right.

"Master Jasper Pennington!" she cried, as she saw me, and the blood mounted violently to her face. "You are free, then?"

This she said in a tone of disappointment almost amounting to anger.

"Yes, Tamsin," I replied. "What do you know about my imprisonment?"

"I suppose you got him away?" she said to Eli, angrily, without noticing my question.

"Iss," grunted Eli; "I ded, ded'n I, Jasper?" and the dwarf laughed gleefully.

"And I meant to have done it," she said, as if musing to herself. "I have travelled a long way."

"What do you mean, Tamsin?" I asked.

She hesitated a minute, then she spoke like one in pain.

"I did my best, Jasper—believe that. But for me you would have been killed. Israel Barnicoat and others vowed it, but I persuaded father. I heard about your coming back, and I tried to find out where you had been taken. As soon as I knew I started to come. I would have set you free; I would, Jasper, I would."

My slow-thinking mind was trying to find its way to Tamsin's motives for acting thus, when she went on if possible more earnestly than before.

"She didn't care for you, Jasper; if she did, why were you imprisoned in her house?"

"Tamsin," I said, for I began to see her meaning, "do you know what is become of Naomi Penryn?"

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"No," she said, sullenly.

"Tamsin," I went on, "I thank you for your goodness to me; I am glad I had a friend willing to travel so far to help me. But I am in great sorrow, Tamsin. I may tell you about it, I know; I love Naomi Penryn—love her like my own life. I have heard strange rumours about her, and my heart is very sad. I can trust you, Tamsin, I know that. Have you heard anything about her?"

She became very pale as I spoke, and I thought she would have fallen from her horse, but she recovered herself presently.

"Israel Barnicoat told me that she would not marry young Tresidder," she replied, "and that she asked to be taken to a convent until she came of age."

"Yes," I said, eagerly, "and what then?"

"I heard that she died there."

"And do you know where the convent is?"

"No; I know nothing! She is dead, that's all."

"Tamsin," I replied, "something tells me she is not dead. I have heard this again and again, and I cannot believe it. I am going to search for her until I find her."

"Why do you not believe she's dead?" she asked, like one in anger.

"I have reasons," I answered. "They are real to me, although they might not be real to you. Besides, I cannot think of her as dead. Tamsin, suppose you loved a man, would you rest upon hearsay in such a case?"

"I would search until I died," she cried. "If he were alive I would find him; if he were dead I would die too." [Pg 251]

"Then you can feel for me," I said, "for I love Naomi Penryn. I shall love her till I die, and if she be dead, I shall want to die, too."

Then the girl gave a heartrending cry. "Don't, Jasper Pennington," she said, "don't!"

I looked around me and saw that Eli had wandered toward the Porth. I was glad for this, for I realised what her words meant.

"Tamsin Truscott," I said, "I never had a sister; will you be one to me? For I love you as truly as ever brother loved sister. Can you care for me as a sister cares for a brother?"

I said this because I wanted to be true to Naomi, and because I determined to dispel from Tamsin's mind all thoughts of me as one who could ever love her. I wanted to appeal to all that was best and truest in her, too, believing, as I have always believed, that by this means alone can we get the best that people are capable of giving.

For some minutes she seemed like one fighting a great battle, then she said quietly, "Yes, Jasper Pennington, I will do for you all that a sister would do."

"Then, Tamsin," I said, "if it should please God to let me find my love, would you befriend her?"

"Yes," she gasped.

"It seems as though she hath many enemies," I went on, "and there be many who plot against her. If I find her among friends all may be well, but if I were to find her among enemies and rescue her, I know of no place to take her where she would be safe."

For a little while Tamsin sobbed as though her heart would break; and at that time I thought it was because she pitied both me and Naomi. [Pg 252]

Presently she said, quietly, "If you should ever find the one you mean alive, and she needs a home, take her to my aunt's at Porth Mullion. She is a good woman, my mother's sister, and hates my father's ways. She will do anything I ask her."

"What is her name?" I asked, "and how shall I find her?"

"Her name is Mary Crantock, and there are but three houses at Porth Mullion. Hers is a white house, with a wooden porch painted green. The other houses have no porches."

"And how will she know about me?"

"I will ride there to-morrow and tell her."

"And where will you go to-night?"

"I will ride to St. Columb. I have another aunt who lives there."

Then a great fear came into my heart, and, almost without thinking, I had caught hold of Tamsin's hand.

"Tamsin Truscott," I said, "you once told me you loved me. I may trust you, may I not? As God is above us, you will be true if ever I need you?"

"As surely as what I once told you is true, as surely as God is above us, you may trust me."

Then she turned her horse's head, and rode rapidly toward the St. Columb road.

Now, in describing my meeting with Tamsin, I have failed to record many things. I have not told of the many questions she asked regarding my imprisonment or my escape, nor of the answers I gave, because they do not bear directly on the history I am writing. Besides, it is difficult to

remember many things after the lapse of long years. So many things were said, however, that it was nearly dark when she rode away from me. [Pg 253]

From Mawgan Porth it is about two miles to Mawgan Church, and I was anxious to get there before night had quite come upon us. So, calling Eli to my side, we hurried across the Porth, and then went up a narrow lane, where we met a man who directed us to Mawgan Church.

A quarter of an hour later we were descending into the vale of Lanherne, and in the light of the departing day I could see the tower of the church rising from the trees among which it nestled. The sight seemed to give wings to my feet, and so fast did I go that Eli had great difficulty in keeping close to me. Eagerly did I jump across the brook that ran down the valley, after which I ran along by the churchyard wall, and a few seconds later I stood before the gray walls of Lanherne Manor House.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Lanherne Manor House, in the parish of Mawgan, Cornwall, while being a centre of Catholic influence for several centuries, did not become a recognised convent until the beginning of the present century. At that time a sisterhood of Carmelite nuns was driven from France to Antwerp. When the French entered Belgium they emigrated to England, and Lord Arundell of Wardour assigned the house to them. The inmates are at present an abbess and twenty nuns. J. H.

CHAPTER XIX

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TELLS HOW I CLIMBED THE WALL OF THE MANOR HOUSE GARDEN, AND WHAT I SAW

My first impulse on seeing the house was to go boldly up to the door and ask for Naomi Penryn, but a second's reflection told me that such an act would be madness. I remembered the words of Parson Thomas. This house was the property of a man widely known and respected, and while it was given over to Papist ways and usages, I could not ask questions as though it were a public institution. My brain, slow to work as it was, told me that I must act warily, and in such a way as to arouse as little suspicion as possible. On looking back over my plan of action, however, I can see how foolish I was, and how, but for the kind providence of God, I did that which was calculated to frustrate the dearest desire of my heart.

This, however, is what I did. I waited for some few minutes in a state of indecision, then it occurred to me that I had better find an inn, so that I might leave Eli in a place of safety, and on looking round I quickly found a kiddleywink. Here I left Eli, and after telling the landlady to cook some supper, I again went back to the front of the old Manor House. Fearing to be seen, I wandered around the place, and saw that the walls around the garden were over fifteen feet high, and that from no position could I look over, except by climbing one of the huge trees that grew in the near distance. Never in my life had I realised the meaning of silence as I realised it then. Not a breath of wind stirred, and beyond the sound of the brook as it rippled down the valley, nothing was to be heard. To me it seemed like the home of the dead. "How can I discover what is behind those walls?" I asked myself, but no answer was forthcoming. [Pg 255]

Twice did I walk around the house and gardens, and was about to go back to the inn again, when I heard the sound of singing. I listened intently, and discovered that the singers were within the Manor House, and from the number of voices and the nature of the singing, I concluded that the inmates were taking part in some religious service. I stood like one entranced, for the music was very sweet, and it seemed to my excited imagination that Naomi's voice mingled with the rest. Presently it died away, and I heard the sound of footsteps. But there was no loud voices or confusion, neither was there any laughter; all was quiet, orderly, and subdued.

The night was not dark, for the clouds which hung so heavily in the sky during the morning had been swept away, and innumerable stars shone brightly.

As I watched, I saw a man, who, from his garb, I took to be a priest. I went up to him and saw that I was right in my surmise.

"I am a stranger to these parts," I said, "and have travelled far to-day. May I ask if this is a monastery or religious house?"

"No, young man, it is not a monastery, but the house of a Catholic gentleman."

"I heard the sound of many voices just now. I thought I heard a mass being sung," I said. [Pg 256]

"You are right, young man."

"If it had been a monastery I should have asked for shelter to-night," I said; "and from the number of voices singing mass, I concluded that it was a religious institution."

"Souls that are weary are admitted here for rest and guidance and help," he replied, "and some have passed from here to some religious home. This is by the kindness of the owner of this house."

But why do you ask? Are you a Catholic? Are you, amid so much heresy, a member of the true fold?"

At this time I wished that I had prepared for a meeting with a priest, so that I might have been in a better position to have fulfilled my desires. I wished, too, that, instead of being slow to think, I had been clever to make plans, and quick to act upon them. Still, I determined to do the best I could.

"I am but a wanderer, father," I said, "and my mind hath been torn by many doubts. I have been troubled, too, about one who is very dear to me, who is of the Catholic faith, and who, I am told, found her way to a convent or a religious home, to find rest and peace. I know not where she is, and whether she has found the peace that she hoped for. I have heard that it was in this neighbourhood that she sought to find what she desired."

"Is she young or old, young man?" said the priest, looking keenly at me.

"She is young," I replied, "scarcely twenty, I should think."

"And her name?"

"Her name is Naomi Penryn," I replied; "she once lived at Trevoze, close by the great headland." [Pg 257]

I thought he gave a start, and he seemed to measure me, as though he thought of trying whether he or I was the stronger man.

"Alas!" he said, presently, "she is dead."

"Dead!" I repeated, and my heart became cold.

"Yes. She came here some time ago. She was very pale and fragile when she came. She was in sore distress, too. But she received the consolation of the Church, and died in the faith."

At this all my strength seemed to ebb away from me, and my hands became nerveless.

"How long is it since she died?" I asked.

"About three weeks ago," he replied.

"And where was she buried?"

"I would show you her grave," he replied, "but the house is not mine. I grieve to see your sorrow, but there is consolation, young man. Trouble for our young sister no longer, for she is with the blessed. I am sorry I cannot offer you food and shelter; but it is only four miles to St. Columb, and you will find accommodation there."

"But surely there is an inn here?" I suggested.

"Yes; but it is not a place you would care to stay at, and you will fare far better at St. Columb. Good-night."

Then he left me, and I went away toward the kiddleywink like one dazed. I made no pretence of eating the supper which had been prepared, neither did I speak to Eli, who looked at me pityingly; and I saw that tears dropped from his strange-looking, cross eyes, and rolled down his ugly, misshapen face.

All hope had now gone from me; I felt I had no desire to win back my own, or even to live. My life had more and more become bound up in that of Naomi Penryn, until now, when I could no longer comfort myself with the hope that she lived, nothing was of value to me. [Pg 258]

"Eli," I said, presently, "you had better go to bed. You will need all your strength."

"Why, Maaster Jasper?"

"Because to-morrow I shall go with you back to St. Eve."

"And what then, Maaster Jasper?"

"I do not know," I said; "it does not matter what becomes of me now."

"And why, Maaster Jasper? Poor little Eli do love 'ee, love 'ee dearly."

"But my love is dead," I answered; and then I told him what the priest had told me.

His cross eyes shone brightly, and his mouth began to move just as I had seen his mother's move many times.

"I've found out things," he said, cunningly; "mawther 'ave tould me, I c'n vind out ef she's dead; ef she es, I c'n bring 'er back. Zay I shall, Maaster Jasper, 'n little Eli 'll do et."

"No," I cried, with a shudder; "Naomi, who is as pure as the angels of God, shall never be influenced by the powers of darkness."

At first I thought he was going to say some angry words, but he only fondled my hands and murmured loving words to me just as a mother murmurs to a tired or sick child.

"Poor Maaster Jasper, dear Maaster Jasper," then he went to bed, leaving me alone. [Pg 259]

The landlady of the kiddleywink was a kind and motherly soul, and treated me with much sympathy, for she saw I was in trouble, and when I told her that I should not go to the bedroom with Eli, she prepared a bed for me on the window-seat, and left a candle burning for me.

But I could not sleep; when all the inn was quiet I went out into the night, and wandered around the old Manor House like a man bereft of his senses, as indeed I was. I found my way into the churchyard, and roamed among the grave-stones, wondering all the time where Naomi's grave was, and why the death of one who possessed so much property was so little thought of. Perhaps I stayed here two hours, and all the time I grew more and more fearful. It seemed to me that the dead were arising from their graves and denouncing me for disturbing them, while all around me evil things crawled, and mocked me in my sorrow. I thought I saw men and women, long dead, haunting the graves in which other bodies lay, and I fancied I heard them pleading to God to hasten the resurrection day. These and many more phantoms appeared to me until, with a cry of anguish, I rushed back to the kiddleywink again. The night had become clear, and the moon, which was half full, caused the church-tower and the Manor House to appear very plainly, and as I lay on the window-seat I could see both.

Toward morning I began to grow less fearful, although a great pain still gnawed at my heart. I remember, too, that I was making up my mind that when daylight came I would seek the priest to whom I had spoken, and ask him to show me Naomi's grave, when I heard a sobbing wail that seemed to come from a heart as broken and bleeding as my own.

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I started up and listened for some seconds, but all was silent.

"Was I dreaming?" I asked myself, "or are the spirits of the dead come back?"

Scarcely had the thought passed my mind when I heard another cry, more piteous, if possible, than the other.

"Jasper, Jasper, my love, Jasper!" I heard. "Can you not deliver me?"

The cry was very real, and it had no suggestion of the grave. It was the voice of some one living.

"My God!" I cried; "it is Naomi!"

I looked at my watch; it was six o'clock, and thus wanted two hours to daybreak. Hurriedly I left the inn and went out again. A rimy frost had come upon every twig and bush and tree, and in the light of the moon the ice crystals sparkled as though the spirits had scattered myriads of precious stones everywhere. But I thought not of this. I made my way toward the spot from which I thought I had heard the sound come, and then listened intently. All was silent as death.

Near me was a tall tree. I made a leap at its lowest branches, and a few seconds later was fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. From this position I saw the whole garden. I looked long and steadily, but could discern nothing of importance. I continued to strain my ears to listen, but all was silent save the rippling of the brook that wended its way down the valley, and which seemed to deride me in my helplessness.

"It was all fancy," I said, bitterly—"all fancy; or perhaps I am mad."

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I prepared to get down from the tree when I heard a sound like sobbing not thirty yards from me.

My heart thumped so loud that I could detect no words, but not so loud as to keep me from locating the sound. Yes, it came from a little house used as a summer bower. Instantly my mind was made up. I had no patience to consider whether my determination was wise or foolish. I madly dreamed that Naomi was near crying for my help. Else why should I hear my own name, or why should I think it was the voice of my love?

In another second I had leapt from the tree, and then ran along by the wall until I came close to the place where the bower had been placed.

I listened again. Yes, I heard sobs—sobs which came from a breaking heart!

The wall was, as I said, from fifteen to twenty feet high, but this did not deter me. I caught hold of an ivy branch, and by its aid sought to climb, but at the first pull I had torn it away. So there was nothing for me but to stick my fingers into the masonry and climb as best I could. How I managed I know not, but in a few seconds I had accomplished my purpose.

"Naomi!" I whispered, but I heard no answer.

I waited a few seconds and spoke again: "Naomi, my love," I said, "it is Jasper."

At that I heard a movement from within the bower, and then I saw some one come into the garden. It was a woman. I saw her look eagerly around, like one afraid. Then her face was turned toward me. It was my love!

"Naomi," I said, "do not be afraid; it is Jasper—Jasper Pennington comes to set you free."

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Then she saw me and gave a glad cry.

"Jasper, Jasper!" she cried; "not dead!"



"JASPER, JASPER!' SHE CRIED."

A few seconds later I had descended and stood in the garden, my heart swelling with joy until it seemed too large for my bosom. I came close to her, and then my confidence departed. All my old doubts came back to me. Joyful as I was at the thought that she was alive, I could not believe that she cared for me. How could she when I was so unworthy?

The moon shone brightly on the garden, while the rimy frost, reflecting its light, dispelled the darkness, and thus I was able to see the face of my love and the flash of her eyes. I seemed close to the gates of heaven, and yet I felt as though they were closed against me.

I stood still. "Naomi," I said, "forgive me. You know who I am—Jasper Pennington."

Then she came toward me, and I heard her sobbing again. Then I, anxious not to frighten her, went on talking.

"Naomi," I continued, "you are in trouble, and I fear that you have enemies. I have tried to make you feel my protection in the past, but I have been unable. But I have come to help you now, if you will let me."

All this I said like one repeating a lesson, and I said it badly, too, for I am not one who can speak easily. But when I had spoken so far a weight seemed removed from me, and my heart burned as though great fires were within my bosom.

"My love, my life!" I cried, "will you not come to me? I will give my life for yours."

Then I opened my arms, and she came to me, not slowly and timidly, but with a glad bound, and, as though leaning her head upon me, she found joy and rest and safety. [Pg 263]

Ay, and she did find safety, too, for it would have gone ill with any man, ay, with many men, if they had come to harm her then. The lifeblood of ten strong men surged within me, and the touch of her little hand gave me more strength than the touch of magic wands which we are told were potent in far-off times. I felt as though I could do battle with an army, and come off more than conqueror. Besides, the first words she spoke to me, telling as they did of her helplessness and her dependence on me, were sweeter than the music of many waters.

"Jasper," she said, "I have many enemies—I who never harmed any one—and I have no one to help me but you."

Ah! but she had me—she had me! I know this seems like boasting, especially when I remember

that I had been the easy dupe of the Tresidders, and that they had foiled me in every attempt I had made against them in the past. But her love made me wiser, and though, thank God, I have never been a coward, her presence made me many times braver. Besides, I felt I could protect her, that I could save her from the fear of her enemies, for I loved her—loved her a thousand times more than can be expressed in cold words on paper; and let who will say otherwise, the unsullied love of an honest heart is of more value than great riches.

All the time I longed to ask her many questions. I wanted her to tell me all her trouble, but there were other things I wanted to know more. I wanted her to tell me what I had told her.

But she did not speak further; she only sobbed as though her heart were breaking, until I, awkward and fearful, and knowing nothing of the ways of women, was afraid lest I had frightened her, or had in some way caused her pain.

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"Naomi, my little maid," I said, "have I done anything to frighten you? I could not help coming to find you, for I could not believe what I have heard. I have not angered you, have I?"

"No, no," she said with a sob, "only they made me believe you were dead!"

"And did you care?—you who were so coy, and who, when you knew my heart was hungering for you, would tell me nothing!"

I will not tell you what she said. Only God and myself heard her words, and they are sacred to me. They have been my inspiration and my joy in lonely hours, they have nerved my arm in time of peril and danger. They opened the gates of heaven to me, and filled my life with sunshine. So great is the power which God hath given to woman!

She nestled her head on my bosom as she told me what my heart had been hungering to know, and for the time we forgot our surroundings—forgot everything save our own happiness. The morning, which slowly dawned, we did not heed, neither did we notice that the silvery light of the moon died away. The cold was nothing to us, the bower in which we sat was indeed a place of warmth and beauty and sunshine. No sadness was there, for each welcomed the other as one come back from the gates of death. We rejoiced in life and youth and love.

And yet we said nothing to each other with regard to our experiences in the past, or our fears for the future. In those blissful minutes we only lived in the present, regardless of all things, save that we were near each other.

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Thus it was that Naomi Penryn and I, Jasper Pennington, became betrothed.

I think the realisation of our position came to each of us at the same moment, for just as the thought of our danger flashed through my mind Naomi tore herself from me.

"Jasper, Jasper," she cried, "you must not stay here longer. You are in danger here, and if we are seen together—" She did not finish the sentence, but looked eagerly, anxiously around.

Then I blamed myself for not acting differently, but only for a moment. We had been only a few minutes together, and even if the direst calamity befell us, I should rejoice that we had spent that blissful time together, living only in the joy of love.

"I must go back to the house now," she said, hurriedly. "I shall soon be missed, and searched for."

"No; do not go back," I said. "I can climb the wall and take you away. Let us leave now."

"It would be no use now, Jasper," she said. "I should be followed and brought back."

"Why?" I asked.

"There is not time to tell you now," she said; "if you were known to be here you would never escape alive. Oh, Jasper, I am beset with danger; I have almost died in my sorrow."

"What time will your absence be discovered?" I asked.

"We are supposed to attend mass at seven o'clock," she said.

I looked at my watch, it only wanted a few minutes to that time.

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"Tell me how you came here, and why you are surrounded by dangers?" I asked.

"I would not marry Nick Tresidder—I could not, Jasper; you know why now. He tried to force me, and when I refused, he told me you were dead. At first I did not believe him, and then one of my old servants from Trevoise came and said you had died there." She told me this in a trembling voice, as though she were frightened, told me in broken sentences, which revealed to me more than the mere words could express.

"Yes; what then?" asked I, eagerly.

"I became distracted, and knew not what I did. I had no friend, no one to whom I could go. Then a priest came, and persuaded me to become a nun. He also brought certain papers which he wanted me to sign."

"And did you sign them?"

"I scarcely knew what I did. I know that I consented to come here. That was several weeks ago.

Oh, Jasper, I have been in sore straits."

I set my teeth together and vowed vengeance on the Tresidder brood, and then told her to go on with her story.

"I hardly know how to tell you, Jasper. About three weeks ago a young woman died. The priests told me it was I who died; they also tell me that I am Gertrude Narcoe, and that I am to be removed to a convent in France in a day or two. I have not known what to do. Last night I could not rest, I seemed to be going mad, and after tossing for hours on my bed without sleeping I came here in the garden, and all the time my heart was crying out for you."

"And did you not cry out to me?"

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"No; only in my heart." And at this I wondered greatly.

A bell began to ring.

"There, I must go, Jasper!" she cried.

"Not yet," I said, folding her more closely to me; and I should have held her so if the lord of the manor were walking toward us through the garden.

"Be brave," I continued, "and be here to-night as soon as you can after the inmates of the house have retired to rest. I shall wait until you come, and I shall be ready to take you to a place of safety. You can come, can you not?"

"Yes, I think so, if I am not suspected of anything now. And can you take me away, Jasper? You will not allow them to harm you, will you? Oh, I will not be taken away now I know you are alive."

"Do not fear, my little maid," I said, "I will take you away. You shall not be carried off by any priests to a convent. There, go now." And I held her to me more closely.

But I let her go at length with many warning words and many expressions of my love. It was like pulling my heart out to see her walk away from me, but I comforted myself that I would take her away when the next night came. Then I climbed the wall again, and made my way toward the inn, strangely glad, yet with many misgivings, for I was sore afraid lest I had acted foolishly in not taking her with me even then.

As I passed the front of the Manor House I caught a glimpse of a frocked priest, and from the look on his face I fancied he suspected me of something. But I paid little heed to him. I went back to the inn to make my plans for rescuing Naomi. I did not know then that Naomi and I had been watched all the time we had been together by a wily priest.

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CHAPTER XX

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HOW I FELLED A HORSE WITH MY FIST, AND CARRIED NAOMI SOUTHWARD

When I got back to the inn I found Eli anxiously awaiting me.

"Jasper better?" he said, looking at me questioningly.

"Yes, better, Eli."

"Jasper 'eard 'bout the purty maid?"

"Yes, Eli."

He chuckled joyously, and then gave several expressive grunts. After this he asked me some questions, which showed me that he understood more than I had thought, and had formed correct reasons why my love had been taken away.

"Neck Trezidder's awful deep; all the Trezidders be," he grunted. "Made et up with the priests—go shares. I zee, I zee!"

"Eli," I said, "we must take her away to-night; take her to a place of safety."

"Iss, iss," he chuckled. "Where?"

"I must decide that after we have got her away from yon prison," I said.

"Can Jasper trust little Eli?" he asked.

"Yes, Eli, what do you want me to do?"

"Will 'ee tell little Eli what the purty maid tould 'ee—'bout 'erzelf?" he added.

So I told him all that I cared to tell him—everything I knew, in fact, save the story of our love.

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He sat very still for some time, save that he contorted his face more than usual, and rolled his cross eyes around like one demented.

"And what be yer plans, Maaster Jasper?"

"We must get horses, Eli," I said; "from where I do not know yet, but we must get them by to-night. One must have a lady's saddle—for her."

"Is Maaster Jasper going to git 'em?"

"Yes. I shall have plenty of time through the day, and nothing can be done while we are away."

"No, Maaster Jasper, no," he grunted. "You mus' stay 'ere oal day and watch. You mus' eed out ov sight, but you mus' watch. Cos they be oal deep. They know, they know!"

I understood his meaning, and saw that he was right; at the same time, I felt I would have to risk being away, else how could I get the horses without attracting attention?

"Little Eli 'll git the hosses," he grunted; "little Eli that everybody do laugh at. But 'ee'll 'elp Maaster Jasper, 'ee will."

"But if you are caught stealing horses you'll be hanged," I said.

He laughed gleefully.

"Who'll catch little Eli?" he chuckled, "priest or knave? No, no! Is little Eli a vool? Ef 'ee es, then mawther es too. But es she? es she?"

"But where will you get the horses?" I asked, anxiously. "Anything will do for me or you; but she must have one easy to ride, for she is weak and ill."

"I know, I know," he laughed. "Maaster Jasper 'appy again, Maaster Jasper git his own. But he must watch, watch. [Pg 271]"

"Priests all shaved,
Clothed in black,
Convent walls,
Screws and rack.
Women walkin' in procession,
Cravin' for a dead man's blessin',
Weepin' eyes, wailin' cries,
Lonely, lonely, oal alone."

"Stop," I cried; "stop, I'll have none of that here."

"Aw, aw," chuckled Eli; "mawther ded zee, mawther ded zee. Never mind, little Eli 'll git the hosses then—aw, we sh'll 'ave braave times, we shall!" And he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

I must confess that he made me shudder, especially as I remembered how much depended on our actions during the next twenty-four hours.

Presently he became more grave, more cautious, and when he had had his breakfast, started to get horses.

"You'll be careful, very careful," I said anxiously.

"Iss."

"And what time may I expect you?"

"T'll be dark at vive o'clock," he said, like one musing, "little Eli'll be 'ere by seven. Eli c'n zee, aw, iss, iss," and then he went on talking to himself, uttering all sorts of wild ejaculations.

"What do you mean by talking so strangely?" I said, but he gave me no answer.

"You watch, Maaster Jasper," he said, significantly—"watch. The Trezidders be'ant a-bait yet. Besides, there's the

"Priests all shaved,
Clothed in black,
Convent walls,
Screws and rack."

Then, as he leapt across the stream, he gave a curious cry, like the cry of a wild beast in pain. [Pg 272]"

All through the day I kept out of sight, but nothing escaped my notice. I determined to be very careful, for Eli had caused me to have many suspicions. Twice only did I see any priests, and then I noticed that they talked eagerly to each other, as if they had something important engaging their attention. In the Manor House, however, all was silent as the grave. No words can say how I longed to gain admission and see my loved one again, especially when I thought of the history of the house, and the many secret places it possessed. Still I had done the best I had been able, and it was for me to follow out the plans I had made.

When five 'clock came my heart began to beat high with hope. I should soon see my loved one again, and take her to a place of safety. My many fears began to depart, too. I felt certain that no

one suspected my plans, and that Naomi would be able to find her way to the bower in which I had seen her.

My hiding-place was in the sexton's tool-house at the back of the church, and from here I could see the entrances to the house, so unless there was some subterranean way leading to Lanherne Manor, no one could come or go away without my notice.

After the clock had struck five I went back to the inn. It was now dark, for the moon had not yet appeared, and the clouds hung heavily in the sky. While I was eating the beef and potato pasty which the landlady had provided for me, I thought I heard the sound of wheels, so I went to the door and listened intently, but all seemed silent. I could not be quite sure, however, for the wind had risen and wailed dismally among the trees which grew so plentifully in the valley. I went back and finished my meal, knowing that if I would be strong I must not neglect my food. I was hungry, too, for we Penningtons have always been a hearty race, and have ever insisted on keeping a good table.

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When I had appeased my hunger I went to the door again. Feeling in my pocket for the rope-ladder I had been making through the day, I prepared to make a detour of the house again. I fancied that Naomi might have some communication to make now darkness had come, and so, eager for something to do, I wandered through the churchyard, and then walked up the road at the back of the house, near which another and smaller building had been reared. Still listening intently, I came to the tree which I had climbed in the early morning, then I went to the place near which the bower had been built. I threw my rope-ladder on the wall, and climbed sufficiently high to have a view of the garden. Nothing rewarded my efforts, however, for I could neither see nor hear anything worthy of attention.

I was about to get down again, when I heard the neigh of a horse, followed by a man's angry exclamation. I had scarcely time to consider what this meant, when I heard a woman's cry.

With one leap I descended from the ladder, and then, instinctively freeing it from the masonry and stuffing it in my pocket, I ran toward the spot from whence the sound came. I reached the front of the old mansion, but could see nothing; then, like one demented, I ran to the entrance which I had noticed through the day, and which evidently was seldom used. Here I saw flickering lights, and here, also, I heard the voice of the priest to whom I had spoken on the previous evening.

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"Neatly and safely done," he said. "The fellow is evidently a blockhead after all. I was afraid that the neigh of the horse would give us trouble."

Excited beyond measure, I was about to cry out when I heard the sound of horses' hoofs splashing in water, followed by a rumbling noise.

"They are crossing the brook!" I cried, and then, scarcely realising what I did, I hurried thitherward.

Now, Mawgan Church and Lanherne Manor House, as every one knows who has visited that part of Cornwall, are situated in a fine wooded glen. On every hand are hills, so that no one can get away from the spot without hard climbing. It is true that one of the roads which runs northwest is less steep than the rest, but even that is difficult of ascent, especially for carriages. I comforted myself with this as I ran eagerly on. A few seconds later I saw the dark outline of what looked like an old family chariot. I did not consider the number of men that might be accompanying the conveyance, neither did I remember that they would probably be armed, while I had no weapon of any sort save my own strong arms.

The driver was urging the horses greatly, but, as I said, the hill was steep and the carriage was heavy. I came up to the carriage-door, and, listening, I heard the sobbing of a woman's voice and the stern tones of men. I was about to try and force open the carriage-door, but instinctively felt that even if I could do so, it would be useless while the carriage was in motion, for in spite of the hill the horses had been urged into a frantic gallop. Still, with the heavy chariot behind them their steps were naturally short, and their speed comparatively slow. So I hurried on, and looking up saw two men sitting on the box, the coachman and another.

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It would have been possible to have caught the horses' heads, and thus bring them to a standstill, but the sound of Naomi's voice pleading for help—for I felt sure it was hers—made me careful not to render myself powerless. I remembered, then, that doubtless the man beside the driver would carry horse pistols, and the moment I caught the reins would shoot me down like a farmer shoots vermin.

So I determined to try another measure, more difficult perhaps to execute, but more effective if I were successful. Bending low by the horse's side I came up on what farmers call the "further side." Then, hardening the muscles of my right arm and clenching my fist, I aimed a blow at the horse's head close below the ear. The animal was protected somewhat by the headgearing, and my strength had been lessened by my imprisonment and by the drugs which had been placed in my food, still the blow I gave was heavy, and the aim was sure. He stopped for a moment stunned, then he fell heavily, snapping the pole that was placed between him and the other horse as though it had been a match.

Instantly the men jumped down to see what was the matter, while I hurried to the carriage-door. I had no need to open it; this was done for me, and a man from within asked angrily what the

trouble was. Before he could be answered I caught him and hurled him against the hedgeside as though he had been a child, and never did I feel so thankful as then that, although God had not given me a clever head, He had bestowed upon me a body stronger than that which is common among men.

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"Naomi, my love!" I gasped.

"Jasper! Oh, thank God!" It was Naomi's voice, and my strength seemed trebled as I heard it. God pity the man who had dared to oppose me then, for I would have showed no mercy!

There was another man in the carriage, a priest, I think, but he seemed too frightened to offer any resistance. So I took her in my arms, and lifted her as though she were a baby, then I ran down the hill, carrying my love.

"Don't trouble about the horses, follow that fellow!" I heard a voice say. "I will give twenty guineas for the man who brings him back, alive or dead."

As I rushed on I heard a bullet whizz by me, but it did no harm, at the same time it made me fearful. For myself I did not care, but my great strength could not protect my darling against firearms, besides if I were smitten down what would become of her?

"You are not harmed, my little maid?" I said.

"No, Jasper."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Not now, Jasper."

Then I held her more tightly, and vowed that I would crush the man who sought to take her away from me, as I have often crushed an egg in the palm of my hand by bringing my fingers together.

I heard footsteps behind me, and then I realised that I should soon be between two fires, for I was running in the direction of Mawgan Church. The footsteps came closer to me, while angry voices with many oaths bade me stop, but the black clouds which covered the sky kept them from taking anything like accurate aim. Besides, the lane was darker than the open countryside, owing to the high hedges which had been built on either side. Still my position was dangerous, and I was about to leap over a gate which I saw close beside me, when I heard the sound of horses' hoofs, and evidently they were coming from another direction.

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"Can it be Eli?" I thought. But I dared not shout, as by so doing I should assist my pursuers. There were four of them I knew, possibly there might have been more.

I was in sore straits, for by this time my strength was becoming spent; and although I could not bear the thought of dropping my precious burden, her weight was a sore strain upon my already overtaxed muscles. Still I never lost heart, and I know that had I stood face to face with the men who sought me, God would be with me in my battle.

My heart gave a joyful leap, for I heard Eli's whistle. It was a weird, unearthly sound, and was suggestive of spirits of darkness rather than of a human being. I ran in the direction of the sound, however.

"Eli, quick!" I gasped; then I heard the welcome click of horses' feet again.

"Maaster Jasper, got purty maid?" he grunted.

"Yes; her horse, Eli, her horse."

"'Tis a fiery wawn. Be careful now!"

"I can ride any horse," said Naomi, eagerly; "don't fear for me now."

We were now under the trees close to Mawgan Church. It was so dark that I could scarcely see my hand, and the rain began to fall heavily.

I heard the voices of the men near me again. "Which way are they gone?" one said, for there was a branch road near us.

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"Down to the left, past the kiddleywink," came an answering cry.

"No, up the hill, toward Mawgan Cross," said some one else.

By this time Naomi and Eli had mounted their horses.

Then I heard a man's shout. "Help! quick! the girl has been taken from us!"

"Who by? Where?" This voice came from the direction of Lanherne House.

"That big fool Pennington. Where's Tresidder? Quick, we shall get them."

"Are the horses good, Eli?" I asked.

"Beauties," grunted Eli; "reg'lar beauties. The purty maid shud know 'em, they come from Trevause."

"Is this my Nero?" cried Naomi.

The horse whinnied as she spoke; evidently he recognised her voice.

"Are you right, Eli?"

"Iss."

"Ride quietly up the hill," I said; "make no noise, if you can help it."

But the horses could not help making a noise, and the click of their ironed hoofs rang out plainly.

"There, they've got horses. Fetch out ours, quick!"

"Which way are they going?"

"Towards Carnanton Woods. Make haste."

Rapidly we rode up the hill toward Mawgan Cross, where there are four crossways.

"Naomi," I said, "shall I take you to Trevose, or shall I take you to a place of safety, many miles from here?"

"She mustn't go to Trevause," grunted Eli.

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"Why?"

"Richard Trezidder is there, so es thou'll laady."

"Tresidder's mother?"

"Iss."

"How do you know?"

"I zeed 'er—zeed 'em both," and Eli chuckled as though he vastly enjoyed himself.

"He's squire there," continued Eli. "People zay that the purty maid es dead, and everything do come to he."

"Who told you this?"

"No time to tell 'ee now. They'll be foll'in' we soon. Neck Trezidder es down to Mawgan."

"No, Jasper, let us not go where the Tresidders are. Anywhere but there."

I turned my horse's head southward.

"Then we'll go to Mullion," I said. "We can get to Truro by the morning; we can get refreshment there."

At that time another difficulty presented itself. I remembered that I had no money. Eli had that morning paid the landlady at the kiddleywink at Mawgan for our food and lodgings. I said nothing about it, but Eli, by that strange intuition which divined men's thoughts, knew what was passing in my mind.

"Plenty ov money, Maaster Jasper, plenty ov money."

"How did you get it?" I asked.

"How ded I git the hosses?"

"I do not know. How?"

"Old man called Jonathan. Aw, aw!"

"Did he give it to you?"

"Iss, iss! He do 'ate the Trezidders. I tould un purty maid wad'n dead; tould un Maaster Jasper takin' 'er 'way—aw, aw!" and again the gnome laughed gleefully.

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"Jonathan!" repeated Naomi. "Did you see him?"

"Iss, I ded."

"Tell me all about it, Eli—tell me."

"Wait till we git vew miles vurder on, then I tell 'ee everything."

So we rode on for several miles in silence, save that Naomi asked me many times if I were sure I were not hurt, and assured me that she was perfectly well and happy. And this filled my heart with gladness, for I knew by her questions that the dear maid loved me, and felt no fear when I was with her. This to me was wonderful, for who was I that she should love me? Was I not homeless and penniless? And had not the Tresidders beaten me again and again? Ah! but no one can describe the joy that surged within me, for the greater my unworthiness, the more happiness did the knowledge of her love give. In many respects we were strangers, for we had met only a few times, as all readers of this story know; but love laughs at the ways of men, and as she told me afterward, although she dared not tell me so when I saw her in Pennington kitchen or in Falmouth Town, she loved me even in my degradation and poverty.

That long ride through the dark night, even although I had not slept the night before, did not fatigue me at all. I was strengthened by her presence; I was inspired by the object I had in view. Sometimes as I rode along I had to reach forth my hand and take hers in mine to assure myself that I was not dreaming. Everything seemed too good to be true. For many weary weeks my mind and heart had been torn with anxiety concerning her, and during my days in prison I was like a lion in his cage. I had thought of her as loving Nick Tresidder and as marrying him; then I had imagined her as being persecuted by them because she would not yield to their wishes. I had seen the Tresidders planning to get her property, and using every cunning device to make her their tool. Then I had seen her pleading to be sent to a convent, and afterward dying of a broken heart. Ay, I had heard a priest only the previous day telling me of her death, while my heart had seemed to turn to ice covered with lead, so heavy and cold was it. And now to see my loved one by my side; ay, to remember that while we had sat in the bower she had confessed her love for me, while her lips had joyfully pressed mine, was joy beyond words.

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Presently, however, I began to see many difficulties, for I determined that Naomi should have her rights, and that she should not be robbed as I had been robbed. Besides, I still remembered my promise to my father, and vowed that I, Jasper Pennington, would possess my own, if only for my dear love's sake. Then as I remembered my past impotence, my heart grew heavy again in spite of my joy.

I saw, too, that I must begin to act at once, and I determined to go to my old friend. Lawyer Trefry, when I got to Truro, and to consult him as to my future plans.

Then I remembered that Eli had not told his story, neither had Naomi told me hers; so as soon as we got two miles past Summercourt, and were on the turnpike road, where we could ride three abreast, I asked them to tell me all there was to tell, so that I might be able to fight my enemies fairly.

CHAPTER XXI

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HOW I TOOK NAOMI TO MULLION PORTH AND THEN STARTED WITH ELI TO FIND THE TREASURE

Eli told his story first. With many strange ejaculations and gesticulations he related how he had sought out Jonathan Cowling, the old man who had so often visited me while I had been a prisoner at Trevoise, and how, after much difficulty, he had persuaded him to be communicative. Then Jonathan told him that a messenger had brought a letter in Naomi's writing asking him to protect her from me by taking me prisoner, and that he would serve her greatly by guarding me. He told Eli, too, how his suspicions had been aroused, especially when, after the news came of Naomi's death, the Tresidders came and seemed anxious to say as little as possible. Richard Tresidder told him that Naomi had died of a disease that necessitated her immediate burial, and that no doctor had been able to visit her. This set the old man a-wondering greatly, and thus it came about that when Eli told his story he was anxious to render him what assistance lay in his power. Especially was Jonathan delighted at the news of my safety, for he did not see how I could have escaped from Trevoise alive, even although Nick Tresidder had failed to overcome me in the smugglers' cave. He assured him, moreover, that Richard Tresidder had taken up his abode at Trevoise, and claimed to be the owner of the estate according to the conditions of Mrs. Penryn's will.

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All this Eli told me with many other things which need not be mentioned here, and after this Naomi related her experiences. Her story confirmed in almost every detail what I had surmised. Her life at Pennington had been one long series of persecutions after the time she had borne witness before my judges that I was innocent of carrying a false light along the coast. She told me, too, that after she had absolutely refused to marry Nick Tresidder, their one desire seemed to be to induce her to take the veil. She was sorely tempted to yield to their wishes, especially after the man from Trevoise came, telling her that I was dead; and presently when a priest came, she lent a willing ear to his persuasions, and promised to go to a house which was in many ways regarded as an institution for novitiates. Some papers were brought to her, but although she was much distracted, she did not think she had signed any which were of importance. She understood from the priest that on taking the veil her property would pass into the possession of the Church, although she gathered from scraps of conversation which she had heard, that Tresidder and the priests were arranging the matter between them.

With regard to her experiences at Lanherne, she assured me that she had been treated with great kindness, and while not allowed outside the grounds, she had comparative liberty within them. She believed that while the lord of the manor was an ardent Catholic, and had practically given up the house to the use of the Catholic clergy, he would not be a party to anything wrong. The priests had told her that they had seen the meeting between her and myself in the garden, and this had determined them to take her to a convent on the Continent immediately. For the rest, she had been treated with kindness and consideration.

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It was early in the morning when we arrived at Truro, and we determined to stay at a good inn there, which, if I remember aright, went under the name of "The Royal." The owner looked at us

somewhat suspiciously, but when he saw that we were well mounted asked no questions. It was now two nights since I had had any sleep, while Naomi was much fatigued; so after breakfast we lay down for a few hours, and then I paid a visit to Lawyer Trefry.

Keen lawyer as he was, and doubtless used to many strange stories, Mr. Trefry was much startled at what I told him, and seemed much interested in my own experiences as well as in Naomi's.

"They are a clever lot, these Tresidders," he said, approvingly. "As I told you long ago, they never leave a bone until it is picked dry."

"But have they not put themselves within reach of the law?" I asked.

"Not they."

"Not in imprisoning me?"

"Who's to prove it was they? You do not know who took you away from Falmouth, and naturally they will not witness against themselves."

"And what about Miss Penryn?" I asked.

"There is no case there, Jasper Pennington. Richard Tresidder is the young woman's guardian until she is twenty one, and as far as I can see, you can prove nothing illegal against him. Indeed, he has a case against you, for you have forcibly taken her from those under whose protection she had been placed by his and her own consent. Mind, I do not think he will proceed against you publicly, because he would not care for the matter to be discussed openly, but if you sought to prosecute, he would be able to answer all your accusations easily."

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"But what about him saying that she was dead? What of him taking possession of Trevoze? What of the priest's trying to destroy her identity?"

"Trust Tresidder and the priest to get out of that. Besides, for that matter, we must remember that the man is her guardian still, that he has the right to place her practically where he will. If he were to come to the inn where she is staying and demand that she shall go with him, he would have the law on his side."

I was silent, for I saw that he was speaking the truth.

"Your plan, as far as I can see, is to place her in seclusion and safety until she is twenty-one, then she can claim her own. Meanwhile, my lad, you keep out of sight, for you are not safe. If I were you I would leave the county, while the further Miss Penryn is removed from the Tresidders the better, for no doubt you are right in all your surmises about them."

His words made me for the moment feel helpless, and I cursed the family who had been my enemies.

"There is no need of all that, Jasper, my lad," said the lawyer, grimly. "Neither Richard Tresidder nor his son are much worse than many others who might be in their place. It was natural for the woman who married your grandfather to seek to do well for her son; it was natural, too, that they should seek to maintain the position which they secured. You are the one man they have to fear, consequently it is reasonable to suppose that they should protect themselves against you. It is generally understood that Tresidder is in a sad way financially; he is therefore trying, and naturally, too, to save himself through his ward. If she had fallen in love with Nick, all would have been well with him; but she hasn't. Instead, she falls in love with you. Oh, you needn't blush, my lad, I can see how things stand. Very well; Tresidder sees that if she marries you, you will be owner of Trevoze, and will thus be able, under your grandfather's curious will, to oust him from Pennington. He is naturally fighting for his hand; ay, and will to the end. You may call him a villain if you like, but his course is almost natural. The fact is, the old lady was, and is, ambitious for her family, and all of them love money, dearly love it. This explains their actions. Mark, I will admit that the whole lot of them have stained their honour to get their way, but not more than most others would have done had they been similarly circumstanced."

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Lawyer Trefry walked up and down his office as he said this, and seemed to be speaking partly to himself, partly to me.

"But I have no money," I said, "neither has Naomi. How can I do as you suggest?"

"That shall be forthcoming if you will do as I suggest," he replied. "I will find a safe retreat for the young lady, at least I will try, although my name must not appear in the matter. Of course, it will take a week or two; in the meantime, you could, perhaps, arrange for a safe hiding-place, for I dare not let her stay at my house, much as I would like."

"And until Naomi is twenty-one?" I asked.

"Tresidder will be the nominal owner of Trevoze. It cannot be helped. I don't think he will do anything very rash; in any case it seems to be the only arrangement for the present. In the meanwhile I will consider the matter more carefully, and what can be done shall be done."

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I suggested many other things, but I did not succeed in altering Mr. Trefry's opinions.

Now when I had left him, while I could not help seeing that he had uttered many wise words, I was far from satisfied with his plans. True, Naomi had promised to be my wife, but my whole

nature revolted at the thought of becoming entirely dependent on her income, while my rightful possessions had been robbed from me. Thus, although the lawyer had told me to leave the county, so as to ensure my safety until Naomi came of age, I determined that I would stay and seek to get back my own. True, I had been entirely unsuccessful in the past, and had played into the hands of those who had wronged me. At the same time I had been learning wisdom, and I pondered over the schemes which had come into my mind.

It was dark when we left Truro, for I did not think it wise to travel in the day. I took the precaution, however, to buy a brace of pistols in the town. This I was able to do by means of the money which Eli had obtained from Jonathan Cowling, the old serving-man at Trevose.

By the following morning we had reached Mullion Porth, and without difficulty found the house of Mrs. Mary Crantock. Indeed, we found Tamsin standing in the little green-painted porch as if she expected us.

Now I must confess that I felt uneasy at being obliged to resort to this means of finding a temporary home for my love. I did not know Mrs. Mary Crantock, and I was afraid lest Tamsin Truscott should betray me. At the same time I did not see what else I could do. To take her to Trevose was altogether impracticable; Pennington was just as bad, even worse, while Lawyer Trefry expressly stated that he could not consent for her to be taken to his house. Moreover, I trusted that Naomi by her kindness and winsomeness would make both Mrs. Crantock and Tamsin her friends.

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I found Mrs. Crantock to be an exceedingly pious woman. She had been very religiously inclined previous to Mr. Wesley's visit to Cornwall, and since then her religion had become more pronounced. Her great aim in life seemed to be to make people believe in the Methodist doctrines, and to become converted according to the ideas of those wonderful people. She had found out through Tamsin that the young lady I was seeking to rescue was brought up a Papist, and this caused her to be eager to give her a home. First, because she was anxious to know the distinctive doctrines of the Papists; and, second, because she would have an opportunity of, to use her own terms, "snatching a brand from the burning."

The great thing that comforted me, however, was the fact that she seemed desirous of making my love safe and comfortable, for I determined that I would not stay at Mullion Porth, but take immediate steps to see if what Eli had told me about the buried treasure was true.

Two hours after she had been welcomed at Mrs. Crantock's, therefore, I left the house. It was terribly hard for me to tear myself away from my love, especially as she clung fondly to me as her only protector. How gladly I would have stayed with her, God only knows, but for the sake of my little maid's good name, as well as for many other reasons, I dared not.

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When I bade her good-bye, however, I saw Tamsin watching us, and the look on her face almost made me shudder, and at that moment I repented bringing Naomi to Mullion Cove. It was too late to draw back now, however; besides, I was powerless.

One of the difficulties which confronted me after I had left was what to do with the horses, and Eli and I had a long conversation as to the course we should pursue concerning them. While we talked Tamsin came to us.

"Mr. Jasper," she said, "can I help you?"

"You are very good, Tamsin," I said; "I am afraid you could not. I want to send these horses back to Trevose, and I know not how it is to be done."

"Even a sister may be useful," she said, in tones which I could not understand.

I looked at her questioningly.

"I will see that the horses are taken to Trevose," she said, quietly.

"How, Tamsin?"

"I have many means. My father has many men who will do anything for me."

"Could it be done without letting the Tresidders know?" I asked, eagerly.

"Why not? They could be taken to an inn at St. Columb or Padstow, and then the man who goes with them could take a note to the Jonathan Cowling you told us about, telling him what he had done."

I thought over this plan very carefully, and then I congratulated Tamsin on being such a clever girl. She did not reply to my words, however, but instead kept her eyes on the ground as though she were thinking deeply.

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"Will you arrange this, Tamsin?" I said, presently.

"Yes, I will arrange it."

"So that neither your father nor the Tresidders shall suspect anything?"

"Yes, it shall be done."

Then I went away, pondering at Tamsin's behaviour, for although she seemed to be kind I could

not understand her.

Now, Mullion Forth is only a few miles from Kynance Cove, and as I was anxious not to meet with any of Cap'n Jack's gang, I suggested to Eli that we should keep as far inland as possible.

"No," grunted Eli.

"Why?"

"You said that we must vind the dreckshuns for Granfer's treasure."

"Yes, but they are at St. Eve, are they not?"

"No, no! Aw, aw!" and he laughed like one tickled.

"Tell me what you mean, Eli."

"Cap'n Jack do think 'ee's awful clever, 'ee do. 'Ee do zay 'ee can vind out everything. But 'ee ded'n reckon 'pon poor little Eli. Little Eli knawed he'd be allays at mawther. He ded think the dreckshuns was cloase to Granfer's Caave. Zo they wos, but Eli took 'em to a plaace ovver by Kynance Cove. Aw, aw!"

"Then they are near Cap'n Jack's house?"

"Iss, iss. Cloase by. Mawther was purtly frightened when she cudden vind the paper. But little Eli knawed, an' ded'n zay nothin'."

"And what are we to do?"

"Git cloase to the Cove, then lop round till dark, after that little Eli'll tell 'ee."

"But why did you take the papers there?"

"People do look everywhere cipt cloase by their own doors. Little Eli ed'n a fool!"

Now I must confess that all this talk about the buried treasure became very foolish to me at this time. As I have said, there were many tales when I was a boy about such things until no one took any heed. Still I determined to make the most of Eli's knowledge, for if what he suspected were true, I should be able to buy back Pennington at once, and have the Tresidders in my power. All the same, I built very little upon it, and through the day tried to make plans which should be more feasible.

When darkness came on we made our way across Goonhilly Downs and came down to the cove when the tide was at its ebb. I saw Cap'n Jack's house in the distance, by means of a light which shone from the window, and could not help thinking of the morning when I first saw it, and of the circumstances under which I came thither. Only a little more than a year had passed away since then, and yet it seemed ages.

"We must be very careful, Eli," I said; "if I am caught by Cap'n Jack's gang I am a dead man."

"All right," grunted Eli. "You'll not be seed. I'll take care o' that. Come after me."

He led the way down a beaten track until we came to a deep gorge, by which we were completely hidden.

When we had reached the bottom of the gorge I stopped suddenly.

"I heard a noise, Eli," I whispered. "Stop, listen!"

We stopped, but all was silent. No wind blew, and so every sound was easily heard. I ran up the path again, and looked around. The moon had not yet risen, but the night was clear. Still I could see nothing.

"Maaster Jasper es feartened," grunted Eli; "come on."

I followed him again, and had scarcely reached the beach when a sound like the crack of a musket reached our ears.

"The devil es blawin' hes billies (bellows) to-night," laughed Eli.

Now, as all the world knows, the devil is supposed to wander much among the caves in Kynance Cove. Perhaps this is owing to many of the strange sounds heard there. In one of the caves a terrible hissing sound may be heard, which is called the "Devil's Frying-Pan;" in another is a deep hole, from which a vapour like steam comes forth, and this is called the "Devil's Punch-Bowl." It is also said that he walks in bodily form among the rocks, and makes great noises with his bellows.

"We need'n fear Cap'n Jack's gang to-night," laughed Eli.

"Why?"

"They never come near 'ere when th'oull Sir Nick is blowin' hes billies by night."

I remembered the stories I had heard when I lived among them, and believed he told the truth.

"I shudden like to zee th'oull chap hissself," grunted Eli, with a laugh, "I shudden mind, though. We cud git our way ef he wos to come. We cud jist sell ourselves to un, and then you'd bait the

Trezidders aisy."

I did not reply, for a great dread laid hold of me. Besides, the sight of Eli, as he made his way between the rocks, grunting and making all sorts of weird noises, was enough to make one's blood run cold.

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"Remember, Eli," I said, "everything must be clear and right. I'll have no dealings with darkness, mind that."

But Eli made no answer, except to go jabbering as though he were mad.

"'Tis a good job the tide es out," he grunted, presently.

"Why?"

"We cudden git in the Devil's Church else."

"What have we to do with the Devil's Church?"

"The dreckshuns be there," and he laughed in his strange, guttural way.

As I have said, being better educated than most of the Cornish folk, I had been led to disbelieve in many of the foolish stories told, but I shuddered at the idea of going there. For, first of all, it was very difficult to get into, and could only be reached when the tide was out, and it was, moreover, reputed to be accursed ground. Here shipwrecked sailors had been lured by inviting lights and welcome sounds, and here they had met their doom.

"I'll not go there, Eli," I gasped.

"Don't be a vol, Jasper Pennington," snarled Eli. "We sh'll be saafe there. Nobody will disturb us. I put it there, I did. Come on, Pennington; and yer love is there, you boobah."

I saw that the dwarf was much excited, and, like one under a spell, I followed him without another word. We climbed over many slippery, dangerous rocks, and then walked over the grass-grown summits of a small island. Then we slowly descended on the south side of the island. Neither of us spoke, for we were in great danger. Below us, many feet down, were great jagged rocks, at whose feet the frothy waves leaped.

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"How much farther?" I asked.

"Here we be," grunted Eli, and he disappeared.

The next minute I found myself in a roomy cavern.

"Wait, and I'll get a light," cried Eli, feeling in his pockets.

I heard a strange whizzing noise, and then something struck against my face, and I heard a screech in the darkness outside.

"This is the Devil's Church," grunted Eli, "and 'tes 'ere I've put the dreckshuns."

CHAPTER XXII

[Pg 295]

HOW I FOUND THE SECRET OF THE TREASURE, AND WENT TO THE SCILLY ISLES

The cave called the Devil's Church is little known, and yet it is larger than any of the caverns in Kynance Cove. Strangely enough, too, it is shaped like a church; even the entrance looks as though it might have been fashioned by the hands of men. It was perfectly dry, for the sea never entered it except at very high tides, and even when it entered the water was never known to reach the roof. It was, moreover, seldom visited, for, as I have before stated, in addition to its evil name, it was extremely difficult to reach.

"You say you've put the papers here?" I said to Eli.

"Iss; 'ere, stoop down and laive me git top yer back."

I stooped down, and the dwarf climbed on my shoulders. I had no idea he was so heavy, and when he placed his shoes on my shoulders I gave a cry of pain.

"Aw," laughed Eli, "I be'ant no wizard, be I? I be 'eavier than the church Bible, I be. Ther' now, hold yerself stiddy, and I'll take et out."

He felt along the roof of the cavern, and presently gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"I've got et, Jasper, I've got et. 'Tis oal 'ere. Pennington and the purty maid. Aw, aw!"

With that I let him down on the floor, and saw that he held something in his hand.

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"Now, then, let's see it," I cried, for in my eagerness I had forgotten all about my ghostly fears.

"Come 'ere to a lew place," said Eli; "this'll do. I'll hould the candle while you raid."

The packet which he had taken from a hole in the cave was covered with some kind of skin, and was carefully sewn with strong twine. I took my knife from my pocket, and was about to cut it open when I looked around. The candle which Eli held partially lit up the cave, sufficient, indeed, to enable me to see nearly every part of it. A moment later I had started to my feet and seized the pistol which I had bought at Truro, but my hand became nerveless.

Close to me, not ten feet away, I saw that which turned my blood to ice. It seemed to my excited imagination a creature fashioned in the likeness of a man, and yet its eyes shone as I had never seen human eyes shine, and the face was terrible to look upon. The thing held up its hands, and I saw that they were long and lean. He uttered a cry. "No, no, no!" he said.

A mist came before my eyes, and my senses seemed to depart from me. For a minute or more I was ignorant of what passed.

"You be a vool, Jasper!" I heard Eli say.

"What is it?" I asked. "Where is it gone?"

"Dunnaw, dunnaw. We'll go out."

I hurried out of the cave, forgetful of the purpose for which we came, and I did not rest until I reached the mainland.

"This is terrible, Eli!" I said.

The dwarf laughed.

"I 'spect it was Granfer's ghost," he grunted; "but what of that? He ed'n goin' to stop we." [Pg 297]

"He has stopped us."

"Not a bit of it. I've got the dreckshuns 'ere. I bean't no vool ef you be."

I hurried on, for I was terribly afraid, and yet at each step I felt more glad that Eli had taken the papers. All the time Eli kept close to my heels, sometimes laughing at my fears, and at others grumbling with me. Presently I seemed to see things in a new light. Wasn't this apparition merely the creature of my own imaginations? Had I not conjured up the spectre myself?

"Eli," I said presently, trying to be brave, "you are right, I am a fool. That thing was nothing but my fancy."

"Aw, aw!" laughed Eli.

"Come," I said, "there's a furze-cutter's hut somewhere, I saw it as we crossed the downs to-day. Let us go and read the papers."

"Tha's yer soarts," replied Eli. "'Ere we be."

With that we found our way to a hut which some one had built as a temporary shelter, and a few minutes later Eli had lit another candle. The wind which had risen howled across Goonhilly Downs, on which the hut was built, but the place was sufficiently sheltered to allow the candle to burn steadily.

"Here 'tes," cried Eli, safely; "raid, Maaster Jasper, raid."

A nervous dread again laid hold of me as I took the thing in my hands, but mastering my weakness, I cut the threads, and a few minutes later I had smoothed out the piece of paper on which the directions, of which Eli had so often spoken, were written.

The following is a copy, as nearly as I can make it, although it is impossible for me to reproduce the peculiar characters in which it was written. [Pg 298]

CILLYILES
ANNETT NOBODELIVIN
KAMSAY.
LAWTID *Be sur ov this*
DOO SOTH. VURS
KUNGIT.
SOTH AGIN *Lik thiky*
DEVILS POINT



ELLS MOTH S W.
BILYSED N. W.
PIK BAR SHOWL
IREBOX JAMTITE
Loard be marciful to we.

I pored over the directions for a long time, while Eli looked over my shoulder, as if trying to decipher the characters.

"Eli bea'nt no schullard," he grunted at length; "Jasper be, Jasper raid et to Eli."

"Wait a bit, Eli," I said, trying to remember some of the things I had learnt at school, "it's beginning to get plain to me."

"Wish I was schullard," he cried excitedly.

Again I pored over the paper, and presently I translated it to mean as follows:

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Scilly Isles.
Name of Island: Annette. Uninhabited.
Calm sea. (Be sure of this.)
Due south of the island. Go as far as possible.
Here southward still is a rock, of which a
rough sketch is given. The treasure is laid at
the point indicated by the black spot, called the
Devil's Point.
Hell's Mouth S.W. Billy's Head N.W.
An iron box jammed tight. Take pick, crow-
bar, and shovel.

The longer I looked at the paper the more certain I was that I had given the correct meaning to it, and yet the whole idea of a buried treasure became absurd.

"Eli," I said, "are you sure this is intended to tell where a treasure is?"

"Iss."

"Look, Eli, tell me the history of this paper. Tell me who wrote it, and what Granfer Fraddam had to do with it. Tell me how it came into your mother's hands and into yours."

"Shaan't tell 'ee nothin' more," grunted Eli. "'Tes there. Give et to me ef you doan't want et."

I sat for a long time in deep thought, for I scarcely knew what step to take. Presently, however, my mind was made up. I would, at any rate, see if these rudely drawn characters had any meaning. By this means I might get back Pennington, and I should not take Naomi to the altar a penniless outcast.

If these directions had no meaning I should be none the worse; if there were a treasure, I had as much right to it as any other man; nay, more. Eli was Granfer Fraddam's descendant, and he had given the paper to me.

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Besides, the longer I thought of it, the more I was convinced that there was a meaning in what I had been reading. Why should it have been written at all? Why was Granfer Fraddam so particular to preserve it? And, above all, why should Cap'n Jack Truscott be so eager to obtain it?

I had heard of *Annette* as forming one of a group of islands lying about thirty miles from the Land's End, but beyond that I knew nothing. It was evidently uninhabited, and regarded by the pirates, if pirates they were, as a safe place to bury their treasure.

Anyhow I determined to follow the directions given. So far I had done nothing to get back my own. I had been driven from pillar to post without making a single step forward. At worst I could but fail, while it might be possible that by this step I might be revenged on my enemies.

"Yes, Eli," I said, "we'll go, you and I."

"Tha's yer soarts," grunted Eli.

"We shall want a boat, and we shall want tools, Eli. How are we to get them?"

"Aisy, aisy," cried Eli.

"Come on, we must be off."

"We must walk to Land's End," cried Eli, "and git a boat there. Another say voyage, aw, aw!"

I did not altogether like this arrangement, and yet I knew no better plan, so we started on our journey. We had not gone more than a few yards when I turned and looked around.

"I heard a footstep," I said.

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"You be feartened," grunted Eli.

"There is some one following us, I'm sure."

"How can there be? We be 'ere in the oppen downs, and can zee oal around."

He spoke the truth. Around us was a vast stretch of open country upon which nothing grew save stunted furze bushes. It seemed impossible that any one could hide from us.

I took heart, therefore, and trudged forward. I feared nothing living—it was the departed dead, the powers of darkness that held me in awe. But for Naomi I would not have ventured to go to the Scilly Isles; the remembrance of her, however, nerved me, for my Pennington pride mixed largely with my love. I knew that if the desires of my heart were fulfilled and she became my wife, I could easily obtain the means to buy back Pennington, but the thought was repugnant to me. Somehow I felt as though I should be disgraced in my own eyes if I did such a thing, natural as some people might regard it, for we Penningtons have always been regarded as an independent race, desiring nothing but that which we could obtain by our own hands and brains. And thus, although I loved Naomi very dearly, I could not bear the thought of asking her to link her life to a penniless outcast.

Besides another fear possessed me. From what Lawyer Trefry had hinted when we parted, and from what Naomi had said to me, it was possible that the Tresidders had become possessed of her property. I pondered long over what she had said concerning the conversation held between the priests and Richard Tresidder. I tried to discover why they desired to have her regarded as dead. To my dull mind everything was enshrouded in mystery, but the very mystery urged me forward to find out the truth concerning Granfer Fraddam's treasure.

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When we reached Penzance I bought a compass and a chart containing many particulars about the Scilly Isles. This done we trudged on to the Land's End, and, arrived there, the real difficulties of our adventure presented themselves. First of all we had to possess a boat, and to do this without causing suspicion seemed difficult. Then we had to obtain tools and start on our journey without being seen. Eli, however, laughed at my fears.

"'Tes arternoon now, Jasper Pennington," he said; "I'll git the boat, you git the other things."

I asked him many questions as to how the boat was to be obtained, but he made no answer save to tell me to be in Gamper Bay, close by a rock called the Irish Lady, at ten o'clock that night, when the moon would rise. I knew I could trust him; so walking to the village of St. Bunyan, which is about three miles from Land's End, I obtained at a blacksmith's shop a pick, a crowbar, and a shovel, according to the directions given. This done I found my way back to the coast again. I had plenty of time, so putting the tools in a safe place I wandered along the edge of the cliffs. The moon had not yet risen, but for the time of the year the weather was very calm and pleasant. The waves leaped pleasantly on the great rock called the Armed Knight, and even the breakers on Whicksand Bay were not angry, as is usually the case on this wild coast. A few clouds swept along the sky, but mostly the heavens were clear. Presently I looked at my watch, and after some trouble discovered that it was nearly nine o'clock. As I was nearly a mile from the Irish Lady I determined to start, and was just going to the place where I had laid the pick and shovel when I heard the sound of voices in the near distance. I immediately fell flat on the ground, for I did not wish to be seen. A minute later I knew that two men were coming toward me, and I judged would pass close beside me. However, I lay still. I was partly covered by the heather which grew abundantly just there, and in the dim light could not be distinguished by the ordinary passer-by from the many great gray rocks which were scattered along the headland.

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"I heard the dwarf say," said a voice which I could not recognise, and yet which seemed very familiar to me, "that they would start from the Irish Lady at ten o'clock."

"Iss, sur," was the reply.

"They cannot get a boat nearer than Sennen Cove, can they?"

"'Tes the only place a booat can be got to-night."

"And it could not be got without your knowledge?"

"No, sur."

"You are quite sure?"

"Iss."

"And you have given orders as I directed?"

"Iss, that I 'ave for sure."

"Very good; but keep a sharp look-out. I shall be at the Ship Inn at Sennen. If by any means they launch a boat let me know."

"I've put six men to watch, sur."

"That's all right."

They passed within six feet of me, but they did not see me. A few seconds later they were out of sight. So far I was safe, then, but what did this conversation mean? Who was this man who had been watching my actions, and what could be his purpose? He spoke like an educated man, and I could not imagine why he should place six men to watch the coast. Was he a creature of Richard Tresidder, or did he belong to Cap'n Jack Truscott's gang?

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"I must go and find Eli," I thought, so I made my way toward the Irish Lady as fast as I was able. I had just reached a part of the cliff where it was safe to descend to the beach when I saw a dark object creeping toward me. I was about to rush toward it and grapple with it when I heard Eli's voice.

"Summin in the wind, Maaster Jasper. Somebody 'ave hired all the booats."

I was not surprised at his words; what I had heard previously prepared me for them.

"I tried to stall one, but 'twas no use. All the cove is watched."

"What have you done, then?"

"Nothin'. I did'n want nobody to take notice of me."

For once my slow-thinking mind was able to hit upon a plan. I remembered when I was with Cap'n Jack's gang hearing of a cave in Gramper Bay, not far from the Irish Lady, where smugglers landed their goods. One of Cap'n Jack's men had pointed it out to me, and had told me that a gang who worked with them sometimes often kept a boat in it.

This I told to Eli, who immediately suggested our trying to find it.

"What we do we must do dreckly, Maaster Jasper," he said; "they be watchin' for we."

I felt the truth of his words, and a few minutes later we had accomplished a precipitous and dangerous descent to the shore beneath. We should have got down more quickly but for the tools which I carried.

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We searched very quietly, very cautiously, for I remembered what I had heard, and were not long in finding out the cave I have mentioned.

I may say here that I visited the Land's End only last week, and I find that the place is now quite open to view. A great mass of cliff which formerly hid its mouth has during the last few years fallen away, so that it can be no longer regarded as secret. Then, however, the opening was fairly well hidden.

On entering the place I was delighted to find two fairly large boats. I discovered, too, that oars were lying in them, also a small mast and sails.

"Good, good!" cried Eli, in a hoarse whisper. "Lev us be off right away."

"The moon has not yet risen, Eli," I said; "it'll be dangerous to go out among so many rocks."

"All the better, they waant zee us."

I saw there was much truth in this, especially as they did not expect us to start until ten o'clock. So together we pulled out what seemed to be the best boat, and a few minutes later we were rocking on the heaving waves.

It was, perhaps, a foolish adventure. As all the world knows, there are no wilder seas than those off Land's End. Here two mighty currents meet, and often when the waters are smooth elsewhere they are wild and troubled here. Besides, to undertake a long journey of more than thirty miles in the open sea in a rowing-boat, and to visit a group of islands noted for the treachery of their coasts, seemed harebrained and senseless, especially so when we were watched by people who were, as I judged, far from friendly toward us. And yet this fact added zest to the adventure; it made me feel that I was not chasing a phantom, else why should precautions be taken to hinder us, why were we the objects of so much suspicion?

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Nothing happened to us during our sail across the waters, and yet more than once I almost regretted undertaking the journey in such a way, for with the rising of the moon came also the turbulence of the waves. Indeed, when we had accomplished only half our journey I feared we should never reach the Scilly Isles at all. Our boat was tossed on the waves like a cork, and so rough was the sea that I was almost unable to row. Matters became better presently, however, and as morning came on I was able to hoist our little sail, and thus the latter part of our journey was far more pleasant than the first.

As soon as daylight came we looked eagerly to see if we were followed, but a light mist had fallen upon the sea, and thus all vision was obscured. Still I imagined that we were safe, and I eagerly made plans whereby we should visit Annette Island, and formed many a wild conjecture as to what the treasure would be.

It was not without considerable difficulty that we effected a landing. At first I determined to make straight for the place we had come to seek, but presently I felt hungry, which led me to remember that we had no food on board, and that we should surely need some before we reached the object of our search. So after much haggling with Eli, we at length decided to land at St. Mary's, where there was a safe harbour, which we did after much hard struggling. Indeed, so much had the journey fatigued us that, supposing that we found what we desired, I almost despaired of ever taking it to the mainland, unless the sea were much becalmed. Still I imagined that we might on returning commence our journey in the morning, and if the wind were favourable accomplish a great part of the distance before the night came on.

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Our appearance at Hugh Town, St. Mary's, seemed to call forth no special comment. Accustomed

as were the islanders to all sorts of sea excursions, they apparently regarded our voyage as natural. At the same time they were curious as to our visit, and in a kindly way asked our business.

I left all the questions for Eli to answer, who was far more adept at such matters than I, and who seemed to satisfy the curiosity of the fisher people without trouble. Perhaps they thought we were smugglers like themselves, for I suppose that almost all the men on the islands were in some way interested in deceiving the king's officers. They were very hospitable, however, and would charge nothing for the hearty meal of which we partook.

Late in the afternoon we boarded our little boat again, and without apparently attracting any attention we rowed for Annette Island. It was well it was calm, for the place was surrounded with low-lying rocks, which might any moment destroy our craft. Never shall I forget the reef off Annette Head, for even on that calm day the innumerable "dogs" churned the waters into foam as they roared around them, as if to tell us that if we came near them they would surely destroy us. And we were near becoming wrecked, too, for there were many cross currents, which, had we not been very watchful, would surely have drawn us to destruction. One especially was dragging us to the reef of the *Hellweathers*, and but for my great strength we should never have landed.

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As the day was closing, however, we saw a small cove, and toward this we made our way, and finally succeeded in landing. I saw now why this island had been chosen for the burial of the treasure, if, indeed, one was buried. Even the islanders themselves seldom visited it because of its dangerous coast, and because there seemed nothing on it to tempt them to go thither.

Once on land, however, we climbed Annette Head and looked cautiously around. No one was, as far as I could see, in sight. We were alone on a tract of land about forty acres big, entirely surrounded by treacherous waves and rocks.

"Come, Eli," I said, "we are safe so far. Now we will see if this paper has any meaning."

I saw that he was nearly as excited as I, for his eyes shone strangely, and he uttered many wild ejaculations as we wended our way southward.

CHAPTER XXIII

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HOW WE FOUND THE IRON BOX ON ANNETTE ISLAND, AND THE TERRIBLE ENDING TO OUR ADVENTURE

There can, I think, be few drearier prospects than the one which presented itself to us as we made our way toward the south of Annette. Above was a gray sky, all around was a sullen sea. True, the waters were calm, but they looked as though at any moment they might rouse themselves to fury. East of us we could see the Island of St. Agnes, but beyond this no land was visible, except the rocky islets which lifted their heads from out the dark sea.

On the Island of Annette we could see nothing of interest. No human being lived there, neither was any cattle to be seen. Possibly there might be enough verdure to keep a few alive, but I think that even they would have died of loneliness. The people at Hugh Town said that scarcely any one ever thought of going to Annette. Why should they? there was nothing to induce them there.

Since then I have seen the whole group of islands bathed in the sunlight of summer, I have seen them covered with rich vegetation, I have seen the waves shine bright as they leaped on the many-coloured cliffs, and make sweet music as they played around the innumerable rocks. Seen in this way they are pleasing to all who can enjoy a strange and lovely beauty, but on the day of which I am writing they were gloomy beyond all the power of words to tell.

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Even the wind, little as there was of it, wailed and sobbed as it moved along the waters, while birds, the like of which I had never seen before, cried as though they were in bitter pain.

"Eli," I said, "surely we are on the devil's mission, and God is forbidding us to go further."

Eli made no answer save to grunt savagely.

"Let us row back to St. Mary's again," I said, "this place is given over to Satan."

"Then you'll go by yourself, Jasper Pennington!" snarled Eli. "I ded'n come 'ere to go away without gittin' what I wanted. Besides, 'tes nearly dark. I be'ant goin' to go 'way from here till daylight. Ef we tried we should both be drowned."

I saw that he spoke the truth. None but a madman would put out to sea off Annette in the dark, and I saw by the gathering darkness that in a few minutes night would be upon us.

"Cheer up," continued Eli, "Pennington es 'ere, so es the purty maid. Eli do love Jasper, Eli do," and the dwarf caught my hands and fondled them.

In spite of myself I was cheered by his words, and throwing off my superstitious fears, I made my way southward to the spot where the great rock was supposed to lie.

When we had walked a few minutes we saw that the island tapered down to a narrow point; we saw, too, that the strip of land was about three quarters of a mile long, perhaps a quarter of a mile broad, and lay pretty well north and south. Arriving at the southern extremity, we looked eagerly around. As I said, day was fast departing, but there was sufficient light to see the general features of the coast.

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I gave a start. Yes, there was the rock mentioned in the paper which I have described.

"Wurrah!" cried Eli excitedly, "we be rich as Jews, Maaster Jasper."

"Come, Eli," I said, as excited as he, "give me the tools. I'll get there at once."

"We cannot do et yet," replied Eli. "In five minutes more 't'll be dark."

"What fools we were not to come before!" I said, angrily.

"No," grunted Eli; "ef people was to zee us diggin' they'd begin to 'spect summin. We mus' do et in the dark."

"How, Eli? You must be mad."

The dwarf looked anxiously at the sky.

"'T'll clear up dreckly," he replied complacently, "and the moon'll rise earlier to-night than he did last night. Ef 'tes clear moonlight we c'n zee. Ef tes'n, we must be up as zoon as ther's any light and find et afore anybody can be about."

"Spend the night here?" I cried.

"We sh'll 'ave to do that anyhow," he said. "We mus'n stay 'ere now," continued the dwarf, "we must git away. Tell 'ee, I b'leeve we be watched as et es."

"What makes you think so?"

"Never mind," and he looked anxiously toward St. Agnes. "Tell 'ee, Jasper, 't'll be a rough night's work."

I, too, looked toward St. Agnes, but could see nothing.

"Come on, come on!" he cried excitedly; "we've got the dreckshuns; we knaw," and he walked northward as fast as he was able, carrying the spade under his arm. Presently we reached a deep pool not far from Annette Head, and near here we found some huge overhanging rocks. Underneath these we both crept, and here we sat for a considerable time. We had brought food with us, and of this we partook, after which we tried to pass away the time by smoking some prime tobacco which I had bought at Penzance. It was just after six o'clock when we finished our meal, and we sat there in the darkness for two hours. I rejoiced to see the clouds depart and the stars begin to shine, for the genius of loneliness seemed to govern the place. We could see nothing but the sea, which in the night looked as black as ink as it surged among the rocks. Even "Great Smith," a huge black rock which lay about half a mile from us, was almost hidden from view, and no sound of anything living reached us save the weird, unnatural cry of the sea birds which now and then fluttered among the rocks on the coast.

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When eight o'clock came Eli crawled out from our hiding-place and crept to the headland. Here he stayed for some minutes.

"We be saafe, I reckon," he grunted when he came back; "ther's nobody here, nobody 'toal. We'll go back to the rock again. We musn't talk, jist go quiet."

I followed him, for somehow I felt that he was more capable of leading than I. He kept perfectly cool, I was excited and irritable. Moreover, a nameless dread had laid hold of me. We kept close by the northeast coast of the island, while at frequent intervals Eli would hide behind a rock or lie flat on the ground, listening intently all the while.

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"Are you anxious, Eli?" I asked. "Who could come here without our knowledge? while, as you say, it would mean death for any one to come in the dark."

"Cap'n Jack and Cap'n Billy Coad be'ant like other people," he grunted. "I've bin thinkin', thinkin'."

"What about?"

"Sha'ant tell 'ee!" he snarled; "but I reckon we be oal right. Come on."

Presently we reached the southern extremity of the little tract of land again, and as I made my way to the rock I became possessed of a feverish desire to get the treasure. All ghostly fears departed, I felt strong and capable again, and it was with great impatience that I waited for the moon to rise.

The wind had gone to rest, while the sea was settling down to dead calm.

"'Nother aaf an hour, Jasper," grunted Eli.

"Yes," I cried, and I grasped my crowbar.

But we had to wait for more than half an hour, for with the rising of the moon came also a black

cloud which obscured its light until it had risen some distance in the heavens. By and by, however, the moon shot above the cloud, and that which before had been obscured by darkness became plain. There was the great rugged rock which bore a resemblance to the rude scratching on the paper. By the side of the rock ran a deep gulf filled with black water. Near by, perhaps twenty feet away, was another and larger mass of cliff. I looked at the water which lay between the two, and saw that it whirled and eddied, as though there were some terrible forces underneath which moved it at will.

I picked up a bit of stick and threw it into the middle of the gulf, which ran perhaps forty feet into the island. I saw the water take it and carry it a little way seaward, and then it came back again. After that it started whirling around, and in a minute or so later it seemed to be drawn downward, for it disappeared from our sight. [Pg 314]

"Ef a man was to git in there 'ee'd never git out again," grunted Eli.

"No, never," was my reply, and I shuddered as I spoke.

"Well, then, be careful, Jasper Pennington."

Seizing the pick and crowbar, I crept along the rock until I had reached the extreme point.

I remembered the words written on the piece of paper: "*Hell's Mouth, S. W.*" Yes, that was the gulf into which I had thrown the stick.

"*Billy's Head N. W.*" I looked to the right of me and saw a rock shaped something like a man's head.

The night became lighter. The moon was rising higher and higher in the heavens and sailing in a cloudless sky.

I examined the Devil's Point carefully, but I could see no sign of place into which an iron box could be placed.

"Can 'ee find et?" I heard Eli say, in a low, rasping voice.

"No; there's nothing here. From here it is perpendicular to the sea, a dozen feet down."

Eli swore a terrible oath.

"For God's sake, don't," I cried; "this place is true to its name. That's Hell's Mouth, and this is the Devil's Point right enough."

He crept by me, grunting savagely, and began to feel around the edge of the rock. [Pg 315]

"Be careful, Eli," I said, "if you slip you are lost."

"I sha'ant slip," he cried savagely, "I sha'ant!"

Then I saw him lift a stone several pounds weight and throw it into the sea. This was quickly followed by another.

"Pick, Jasper!" he cried.

He placed the pick between two stones and began to heave at the handle.

"Ca'ant move um!" he snarled. "'Ere, you do et."

I caught the handle of the pick and lifted. I felt it begin to break in my hands.

"It's no use," I said; "I must use the bar."

I inserted the point of the bar into the crevice and lifted. I felt a rock move. I put forth my strength, and a great slat several hundredweight fell into the sea with sullen splash.

Eli got on his knees beside the hole we had made.

"We'm right," he gasped, and I felt he had spoken the truth. After this we took away several stones from the fissure which nature had formed at the Devil's Point.

I put my bar into the hole we had made and let it slip through my hands. Its point struck a piece of iron.

"Iron box. Jammed tight!" grunted Eli savagely. "We've got um!"

We were terribly excited. For my own part, I had forgotten everything, save that a treasure lay at my feet. The treacherous waters in Hell's Mouth troubled me not one whit; all my superstitious fears had fled.

As well as I was able I crept into the fissure and felt one foot on a piece of iron. Then I put my hand down and felt carefully. Yes, an iron box had been put there. It lay edgeways, at least I judged so. The part I could feel seemed about a foot wide and three feet long. [Pg 316]

"Got et?" gasped Eli.

"Yes," I cried; "my God, here's a handle!"

"Heave um up, then, you who be sa strong."

I tried to lift the thing out, but could not.

"I can't move it, Eli."

"Jammed tight," he grunted.

He was right. Many hard stones were driven in at its sides.

How long it took me to move these stones I know not, but at length I succeeded in unloosing many until I was able to rock the box from side to side.

"It'll come now!" cried Eli. "Heave agin!"

Never was my strength put to such a test as at that time. I saw sparks of fire flash before my eyes, while the muscles of my arms seemed as though they would snap. It was all in vain, however.

"Let me rest a bit, Eli," I said, "then I'll try again."

"No time to rest," snarled Eli.

He seized the crowbar, and after much manœuvring he passed it through the iron handle of the box, and rested the point against the side of the fissure.

"Haive now, Jasper," he grunted.

I did as he bade me. The box freed itself from the sides of its resting-place.

I had nothing but the weight of the casket to lift now, so I caught the handle again. The thing was ponderously heavy, but I drew it to the top of the fissure, and laid it on the rock called the Devil's Point.

"Ho! ho! ho!" yelled Eli, like one frenzied.

As for me, I was nearly mad with joy.

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"My beauty," I said, fondling the box, "I see Pennington in you, I see Naomi's joy on you. You make me free, you make me independent. I love you, I do—I love you!"

"Laive us drag un away from the Devil's Point," cried Eli; "Hell's Mouth is too close to please me."

So I placed my arms around it and prepared to carry it from the rock, and away from the inky waters that curled and hissed in the "Devil's Mouth." No sooner had I lifted it from the ground, however, than I let it fall again.

"No! no!" screamed a voice near me. It was not Eli's guttural cry, it was a repetition of the words we had heard in the "Devil's Church" at Kynance Cove.

On starting up I saw the same ghastly-looking creature, the same long beard, the same wild eyes, the same long, lean hands.

"No! no! no! I tell you no!" cried the thing again.

"Why?" I asked, half in anger, half in terror, for I could but realise what such an apparition meant to us.

"Because the thing is accursed!" he cried—"because it is red with the blood of innocence, black with sin, heavy with the cries of orphans' tears and widows' moans. It is the price of crime, red crime, black crime! Come away."

I jumped from the rock and caught the strange thing in my hands. It was flesh and blood, and all fear departed. I turned his face to the light, then I burst into a loud laugh.

"Ho! ho!" I cried, "the madman of Bedruthan Steps. Well, well, you saved my life, you fed me when I was hungry, you clothed me when I was naked. I forgive you. But let me be now. I must take this away."

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"No, no, Jasper Pennington," he cried again, "your hands are yet unstained with blood. The moment you were to use such gains the curse of a hundred Cains would be upon you. I know, I have felt."

"Why?" I said; "I do no harm in getting it; I hurt no man. It is mine as much as any other man's—nay, it is more. Eli Fraddam really owns it, and he has given it to me."

"Look you, Jasper Pennington," he cried, "you would get back your birthright. If you got it back in such a way you would lose the better birthright, the birthright of God. I know of this treasure, I have heard its history. It is red with blood, I tell you, and black with crime."

In spite of myself the man's vehemence affected me.

"But," I said, "I love. I cannot go to her empty-handed. A Pennington does not do that. Besides, I am afraid that my love is also penniless, afraid that she has been robbed."

"Look, Jasper Pennington," he said, "I have heard strange things. I have been afraid to ask

questions, because—because—but tell me, who is the maiden you love?"

"Naomi Penryn," I replied.

"Yes, yes; I know that, but who is Naomi Penryn? whose child is she? Does she come from Penryn? Who is her mother? who her father? where was she born? Tell me."

"He is mad, stark, staring mad," I said to myself, yet I humoured him. True, the treasure lay at my feet, and I wanted to take it away, while Eli kept grumbling at my delay, but the man seemed to drag an answer from me. [Pg 319]

"She was born at Trevoise House, close by Trevoise Head," I replied. "Indeed, she should be the owner of the estate."

"And her mother?" he cried.

"Was some relative of the Tresidders."

"And her father? Tell me, man, tell me quickly."

"Her father was called Penryn—John Penryn, I think his name was."

"But how can that be? Did he not kill his wife before—that is, did she not die?"

"No," I said, "he did not. He thought he killed her, and because of it committed suicide, but his wife was not dead. She got better soon after—indeed, she died only a year or two ago."

"And Penryn committed suicide, you say?"

"Yes."

"And the girl you love is his child?"

"Yes. But what is all this to you? Why have you followed me? What are my affairs to you?"

"Everything, Jasper Pennington. Stop, let me think."

"I cannot stop, I must get this away! Look you, man," and I caught his arm, "this is nothing to you, I have found it," and I kicked the iron box. "It's mine, mine!"

"No, no; it's not yours, I tell you." He stopped and looked around him, then clenched his hands as though he were passing through a terrible crisis.

"Do you say the Tresidders have taken Trevoise from the—the maid you love?"

"I am afraid they have. I believe they have."

"But where is she?" [Pg 320]

"It is naught to you. She is away from all danger. When I have taken this treasure to a place of safety I shall go to her. I shall buy back Pennington and take her to my home."

"No, Jasper Pennington, this must not be. Naomi Penryn must never live in a home bought with the price of crime. But you are sure she is safe?"

He spoke like a man demented, and yet his earnestness, his evident hatred of crime made me patient. Moreover, he had come upon me at a critical time, and was to an extent a sharer in my secret.

"Look you, Esau, or Cain, or whatever else you may call yourself," I said, "these are but idle words of yours—idle words. I have committed no crime, I hurt no man, I am poor, I have been robbed of my rights, my home. Here, I trust, is my power to win back my home and give it to my love, who is dearer to me than my life."

"There is no need, Jasper Pennington, I tell you there is no need! Throw this thing to the Hell's Mouth, by which it has been lying. Take me to your love; let me see her face, and then—well, I will not promise what, but it shall be well with you," and he laughed like a man from whose life a great fear had gone.

I looked at him, and he presented a strange appearance in the light of the moon on that lonely island. I could not let the treasure slip from my hands at his bidding, for what was the promise of such as he, whose every action told me he was mad?

"Look you," he continued, "I have followed you for your good. I tried to keep you from leaving Land's End last night, I followed you to the cave in Kynance Cove. Come, there is more danger around than you think." [Pg 321]

"What danger?" I asked.

The words had scarcely escaped my lips when I heard the sound of voices, and Eli gave a shriek as though some one had given him a deadly blow.

I turned and saw several men standing close by me. A moment later one spoke.

"Oa, Jasper Pennington, this *es* kind of 'ee to come 'ere like this. You knawed I wanted to vind out Granfer Fraddam's secret, did'n 'ee, then? An' you was a goin' to make a present of et to me,

wad'n 'ee, then? Well, you be kind, Jasper."

"Cap'n Jack!" I cried.

"Iss, Cap'n Jack. Allays a friend to 'ee, Jasper, a stiddy, pious man I be. So es Billy Coad 'ere. Ther's few people c'n give sich a religious experience as Billy. Well, we vound out wot you was up to, so we be cum to help 'ee, my deear boy."

I saw that all was lost. The treasure, if treasure there was, could never be mine.

"You told them this!" I cried, turning to the madman, to whom I had been talking.

"No, Jasper Pennington, I have told nothing. But I heard they were coming, and I came to warn you."

He spoke quietly and with dignity. His madness was gone, he seemed a new man.

"Ded 'ee think that we wos vools, Jasper, my deear? Aw, iss, Eli es a clever boy, but law, Cap'n Jack's gang 'ave got eyes everywhere. And we cudden find the dreckshuns, and we bea'nt no schullards, but we do know that two and two do maake vower. That's how we vound out. Aw, aw, Jasper, my deear, you bea'nt a-goin' to buy back Pennington in that way. No, no; and I have my doubts ef the weather 'll laive 'ee git back to the caave in Gamper Bay again, for oal you stailed my boat from there."

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His words drove me to madness, especially when they roused a laugh from Israel Barnicoat, who stood close by him.

"Then I'm not to have this," I cried, pointing to the box.

"No, you bea'nt, my deear. I be a generous man, but I cudden afford that."

"Then you shan't!" I cried.

With a strength that was unnatural I seized the heavy iron box, and before they could prevent me I threw it into the black waters of the gulf.

"There," I said, "if I cannot have it neither shall you, or if you get it, you shall go into Hell's Mouth after it."

Cap'n Jack gave a terrible oath. "Send him after it, Israel Barnicoat!" he cried.

I stooped to seize the crowbar in order to defend myself, but before I could use it as a weapon Israel Barnicoat threw himself upon me. My foot slipped upon the rock, and before I could regain my footing I received a stunning blow. A moment later I felt myself sinking in the black waters from which Eli Fraddam had said there was no escape. And all this happened in a few seconds—so quickly, indeed, did it take place that I had not even time to call upon God to have mercy upon my poor, sinful soul.

CHAPTER XXIV

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TELLS OF THE STRANGE REVELATION MADE BY THE MADMAN OF BEDRUTHEN STEPS, AND OF TAMSIN TRUSCOTT'S TREACHERY

For a moment I gave myself up as lost. I remembered how the black waters of the gulf coiled and circled, and knew that there must be some strong current underneath. I remembered, too, how the stick I had thrown into it had disappeared from sight, and felt that there could be no hope for me. But this was only for a moment. I was a strong swimmer, and had been accustomed to the water all my life. After all, "Hell's Mouth" was not very wide, and I hoped I should be able to grasp the edge of the rocks and thus save myself. Then I remembered that Cap'n Jack and his followers would, if possible, keep me from ever escaping if it were in their power so to do. I had in a moment destroyed their hopes of ever getting Granfer Fraddam's treasure, for not one of them would dare to descend into the treacherous depths of the waters where I had thrown it.

All this passed through my mind like a flash, and then I felt myself drawn by a terrible current down and down into the depths.

"It's all over," I thought. "I shall have to go to my Maker without ever saying good-bye to my darling," and then death seemed terrible to me; so terrible, indeed, was the thought of it, that I determined I would not die, and I held my breath as well as I could while I was carried along by the force of the current.

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How long I was under water I cannot say. It could not have been long, for one cannot live long without air, but it seemed ages to me. As I look back now it seems as though those few seconds were long years. I will not try and tell the thoughts that passed through my mind, or of the terrible things through which I thought I went. It is not a part of this story, neither do I expect I should be believed if I related it.

God in His infinite mercy, however, did not wish me to die, for presently my head shot above the

water, and that without any effort of my own, and then instinctively I started swimming, after drawing a deep breath. As soon as I was able I looked around me, but the surroundings were entirely strange. Above me rose a cliff a good many feet high, and toward this I swam, being very careful, however, to save myself from striking against any of the countless rocks, some of which were only partially covered.

The sea was very calm, and this was my salvation, for presently I was able to get a footing on one of the rocks without being hurt. This done, I again looked around me, but all in vain. On the one hand was the sea, on the other rose the black cliff.

As I said, the night was very calm, only now and then the sobbing, moaning wind swept along the waters, and it was through this fact that I ascertained my whereabouts. On listening I thought I heard the sound of voices, loud, angry voices, but I was so bewildered that at first I knew not what they meant, but I fancied they were not far away; then I fell to thinking of the direction from which the sound came, and I imagined that the current must have carried me to the east side of the island, not far from the southern extremity where I had been.

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This brought back to my mind the reason why I had been thrust into the water, for those terrible feelings which possessed me as I was sucked down into the depths of Hell's Mouth had driven from my mind all thoughts of the purpose which had brought me on the island. And here I must confess, to my shame, that my first definite thought on realising my condition was not thankfulness to God for having saved me from manifold danger, but one of anger and impatience because I had been foiled in my purpose. It seemed to me as though defeat tracked my steps everywhere. Ever and always I was outwitted by more clever brains than my own, and now when I fancied I had wealth and power within my grasp, it was snatched from me in a moment. I did not remember the probability that the supposed treasure was no treasure at all, for the improbability of any one hiding a box of great value at such a place had never occurred to me. To my mind the whole business had been plain enough. Granfer Fraddam knew of such a thing, and had kept its whereabouts a profound secret, and only through the cleverness and affection of Eli had I become possessed of its secret. Evidently, too, Cap'n Jack Truscott's anxiety to possess the directions showed his belief in the reality of hidden riches. Since then, however, I have much doubted it. It seems to me next to impossible that such a place should be chosen to hide great riches. Moreover, what was the reason for hiding it? Why had it not been taken away before? And yet, on the other hand, why had the box been placed there with so much care, and in such a wild, unfrequented place, if it did not contain something of great value? These questions, I suppose, will never be answered now. The box lies at the bottom of "Hell's Mouth," and all the riches of the world would not tempt me to try and drag it from its resting-place. I was saved by the infinite mercy of God, and strong man as I am, I cannot help shuddering even now at the thought of what I felt as I was dragged by unknown powers through the depths of that awful place. I write this that any who may read these lines may not be tempted to venture life and reason to obtain that iron chest. Not even Cap'n Jack Truscott or any of his gang dared to do this, and what they dared not attempt is not for flesh and blood to regard as possible.

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At that time, however, I did not think of these things. To me it contained untold riches; in that grim iron casket lay love, riches, happiness, home. I had failed to obtain it, even although I had dragged it from its resting-place, because of the subtlety of Cap'n Jack's gang. And yet I rejoiced that I had thrown it into the gulf. If they had foiled me, I had also foiled them. All the same, I was enraged because of my failure, especially as I saw no means of getting back Pennington.

Then I thought of Naomi at Mullion Cove, and wondered how she fared. I had told her that when I came to her again I should bring the means whereby all her difficulties would be removed, and the intensity of my love for her made my disappointment the greater. I thought how sorrowful she would be, and yet I rejoiced with a great joy because of her love for me. Ay, even there, clinging to a rock close to that lonely island, with enemies near me, I could have shouted with joy at the memory of her words to me as I left her by the cottage to which I had taken her.

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For love overcometh all things.

All these things passed quickly through my slow-working brain; indeed, they were an impression rather than a series of thoughts. Presently, too, I was able to distinguish the words that were spoken. I could hear Eli pouring forth curses, which I will not here write down, while the stranger seemed to be speaking in my praise. As for Cap'n Jack, he seemed anxious to appease Eli's anger.

"Come now, Soas," I heard him say, "'tes a pity for sure. I be as zorry as can be. I be all for paice, I be. I wos a bit vexed when Jasper thraved un into the say; who wudden be? But I ded'n main to kill un. There now, it ca'ant be 'elped now; and Jasper Pennington ed'n the first good man that's gone to the bottom of the say."

"He's at the bottom of 'Ell's Mouth!'" shrieked Eli. "You thraved un there; but you shall suffer, Jack Fraddam. Ef mawther es a witch, I be a wizard, and you shall suffer wuss than the darkness of thicky plaace. I ded love Jasper, he was kind to me, he was. He loved me, he ded. He tooked little Eli round with un, he ded." And then followed words which I will not write, for, indeed, they were very terrible.

After this many things were said until Cap'n Jack got angry.

"Gab on, you little varmin," he cried, "gab on. You thought you could outwit Jack, ded 'ee? Well, you be quiet now, or you'll folla Jasper."

"You dar'nt tich me!" shrieked Eli—"you dar'nt. I'd maake your flesh shrink up ef you ded. I'd make your eyeballs burn like coals of vire, I wud. Begone from me 'ere now, or I'll summon the devil, I will. He ed'n vur far from 'ere, I tell 'ee." And then he said things which he must have borrowed from his mother, for I know of no other who could think of them.

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Anyhow he frightened Cap'n Jack and his gang, for they cried out to their leader to leave Eli and the madman, because they were afraid. This they did with many terrible oaths and threats. All the same they left, although they tried to seem to try and do so in a brave way.

"Iss," I heard Israel Barnicoat say, "Jasper be out of the way now, sure enough. Ef you can rise un from the dead, Eli, tell un what I knaw 'bout the maid that he took to Mullion, but she ed'n there now, she ed'n. She's where he would never git to 'er ef he was livin'." And he laughed brutally, and yet fearfully I thought.

I believe I should have cried out at this had I not heard a moan of agony, such as I trust I may never hear again. It was the stranger, I was sure, whom I had heard.

"Tell me where she is," he cried, and I knew he had followed them. Then I heard the sound of blows followed by groans.

"Lev us do for thicky little imp, too," I heard a voice say, "and then nobody 'll know nothin'."

"No," cried Cap'n Jack, "Betsey 'll vind out ef we do." And then I heard their footsteps going northward.

All this time I had been lying against the rock, and half of my body being under water, I was chilled to the bone. When I tried to move I found that all my limbs were numb, and again I began to fear of escaping from where I was. But this did not remain long. The words Israel Barnicoat had spoken about Naomi made despair impossible, and quickened my mind and body to action.

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I waited until I judged Cap'n Jack's gang to be out of hearing, then I gave a low whistle, the nature of which was known only to Eli and myself. In an instant I heard an answering cry, and a few seconds later I heard his hoarse, guttural voice overhead.

"Jasper, Jasper, es et you? Thank the Lord!"

"Yes, Eli, that rope you brought."

"Iss, iss, my deear, in a minute."

A few seconds later I saw a rope descending. The cliff was perhaps thirty feet in height just here. I could not judge exactly, but it was about perpendicular, so I could not climb it. After much struggling, however, I reached a point where ascent was possible, and aided by Eli, who pulled like a madman at the rope I had fastened around my body, I at length reached a place of safety.

"Oa, Maaster Jasper, Maaster Jasper!" sobbed Eli, "how glad I be! How I do love 'ee!" And he fondled my wet, clammy hands tenderly.

"Is the madman dead?" I asked.

"I dunnaw. Never mind 'bout he; be you all right? You'n sure et's you?"

"Sure, Eli, safe and sound. Let us go to him."

By the aid of the bright moonlight we found him lying seemingly stark and dead on the ground. I soon discovered to my joy, however, that he was only stunned, and a few minutes later he sat up and spoke to us.

"Jasper Pennington not dead!" he cried.

"No," I said, telling him how I had escaped; "but come, can you walk? Have you any bones broken?"

"No; the fellow tried to stab me, but he failed; I was only stunned."

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"Then let us go."

"Go where?" he said, in a dazed kind of way.

"I must go to Naomi," I said.

"Yes, yes," he cried eagerly, "how could I forget? Yes, we must go this moment, this very moment. I am quite well and strong. Come at once."

He spoke with a kind of dignity, and I looked at him again to assure myself that he was the madman who had saved me by Trevose Head.

"We ca'ant go to-night, ted'n saafe," said Eli, who continued to fondle my hands and to utter all sorts of endearing terms.

"We must," he cried, "we must. There's not a second to lose. We must go straight to the house where you left her, and find her if she is there; if not we must not rest till she is in a place of safety."

He spoke in a tone of authority, and was so peremptory that I wondered.

"Who are you?" I asked; "what is my love's safety to you?"

"Everything, Jasper Pennington," he replied; "I am Naomi Penryn's father."

"What!" I said aghast.

"Yes," he repeated, "I am Naomi Penryn's father. Come hither, Jasper Pennington, and let me tell you."

He led me away from Eli, who uttered strange, low sounds, as he always did when he was excited, and then the man whom I had thought mad spoke to me in low, earnest tones.

"You have heard my story, Jasper Pennington," he said—"heard how I struck my wife when she was in a perilous condition. It is true. I thought I had killed her, and since then I have never had an hour's peace. I will not tell you what I have done since or where I have been, except that I have been in hell. You thought me mad—perhaps I have been; I think I have. A little while ago I was drawn to come back to Trevoze, but I was afraid to ask any questions. I seemed to be followed by the powers of darkness, who forbade me to speak. And yet I was fascinated to the spot. You can guess why. I need not tell you anything else now, you know what I would say. The thought that I have a daughter alive and that I did not kill my wife has made the world new."

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"And you did not commit suicide, then?" I said, in an unmeaning, foolish sort of way.

"No. Coward that I was, I ran away, and for years, years—nearly twenty now—I have been followed by—but never mind, it is gone—all gone. Only let us go! You love my child, Jasper Pennington. Come, let us find her."

"Yes, yes," I replied; "but why did you follow me here?"

"Why? In my madness I felt sure that you had the secret of my life's joy, and because my life has been such that I could not bear you to obtain that which is the price of lost souls. I—I have been—where I have heard the history of that thing which lies under water. It is not a treasure, Jasper Pennington, it is damnation. Perhaps I will tell you more some day, but not now. Let us leave the island."

"But it is not safe to leave it by night."

"Yes; I know the way. I have been here many times—I mean among the islands, I will take you to the sailing-boat which brought me to St. Agnes. Come, I will tell you all that needs telling as we go back."

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"But Cap'n Jack's gang?"

"Their boat is at St. Mary's."

"How do you know?"

"Enough that I have found out their plans."

After this Eli and I followed him to a little cove where a boat rocked, and ere long we were landed at St. Agnes. Here we found a good-sized sailing-boat, and here, too, I dried my clothes in a fisherman's cottage, wondering all the while at the strange things which had befallen me.

As soon as morning came we started for St. Ives, for thither Naomi's father determined to go, for Naomi's father I believed him to be.

He said that we should thus escape Cap'n Jack's gang, and be almost as near Mullion as if we landed at Penzance. We did not, however, land at St. Ives. The men who owned the boat consented to take us on to Hayle, which was five miles nearer Mullion than St. Ives.

During our sail across I reproached myself greatly for placing Naomi in the care of Tamsin Truscott, for I believed that she had been led to be unfaithful, and had told Israel Barnicoat of her whereabouts. I talked much with Mr. Penryn about these things, over whom a very great change had come. He was no longer violent in language or in deed, rather he seemed subdued and very thoughtful. He spoke very calmly and thoughtfully, and suggested many things which would never have occurred to me. Such was the power of what I had told him that all his fears seemed to have gone, the wild, haunted look had passed away from his eyes, while his actions were those of a refined gentleman.

On arriving at Hayle we, after much delay and difficulty, obtained horses, and rode rapidly toward Mullion, my heart sometimes beating high with hope, and at others lying in my bosom as though all joy were gone; for be it known the revelations of the last few hours had made everything appear in a new light. If this man was Naomi's father, and, as I said, I believed he was, I could no longer assume the position of her guardian and protector. She would no longer look to me as her sole helper and friend. Her father would claim to be first. This led to many other surmises, not many of which were pleasant, and which made me oftentimes gloomy and dejected.

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But these were not the matters concerning which I troubled the most. I worried about the words of Israel Barnicoat. What did he mean by saying that Naomi was where I should never be able to get her?

I had had but little sleep for many hours, but I felt no weariness. My strength seemed to increase

with my difficulties, and I did not once droop in my saddle or rub my eyes like a drowsy man. It must have been near a twenty miles' ride from Hayle to Mullion, but we were not long in covering it; indeed, after we had reached Helston, we rode as fast as the horses could carry us.

On coming in sight of Mrs. Crantock's house I left my companions, so eager was I, and thus reached the white house with a green porch some minutes before they came up. Opening the door without knocking I entered, and found Mrs. Crantock, looking pale and anxious, but I could nowhere see Naomi.

"Thank God you have come!" cried the woman.

"Why? Where is she?" I asked.

"She's gone, I know not where."

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"How is that?" I cried angrily. "You promised you would care for her, that you would guard her as if she were your own child."

"Yes, yes. Oh, young man, it is wrong to trust to an arm of flesh."

"Look you," I cried, catching her roughly by the arm, "I want no religious talk! I left a lonesome, helpless maid with you whom you promised to protect. Where is she now?" I said this like one demented, as, indeed, I was.

I heard Eli and Naomi's father enter the room, but I took no heed, neither did I listen carefully to the story the woman told. I had some vague remembrance about her saying she went to hear Mr. Charles Wesley, leaving Naomi with Tamsin, and that on her return that morning both had gone. She had inquired of her neighbours, and had been told that three men had come to the house at daybreak, and that when they went away Tamsin and Naomi rode with them in the carriage they had brought.

It was well Naomi's father was with me, for my mind was too confused to ask the necessary questions. I reproached myself for trusting Tamsin and for not taking better precautions. I felt I had by my own foolishness lost my love and again allowed her to be in the power of my enemies. I thought of a score of things I ought to have done, while Mr. Penryn asked many pointed questions.

We were about to take to the saddle again when Tamsin Truscott rushed into the house. The poor girl's face was as pale as that of a ghost, and she trembled from head to foot.

"Forgive me, Jasper," she cried.

I did not speak, for I knew not how to control my words.

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"Oh, Jasper, I—I could not help it. It was so hard, so terribly hard. I—I loved you, and I thought that when she was gone you would forget her, and then—"

She did not finish her sentence, but sobbed bitterly, as though she was in sore straits and truly contrite, as, indeed, I thought she was.

She went on to utter many words of self-accusation. She confessed that she had betrayed Naomi's hiding-place, with many other things which I need not here write down.

"Where is she now?" I cried angrily.

"She is being taken to Padstow," she said. "You know why."

"Is it the priest?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, "and the Tresidders."

"Let us get to our saddles," I cried, "we may get there before they."

"Yes, you can if you ride hard."

"What about horses?" said Mr. Penryn; "these are poor nags; they were the best I could get, but they are spent with a twenty miles' ride."

"They will last to Falmouth," I cried, "we must get fresh ones there."

"God forgive me, but I have no more money," he said, and at this I, too, hung my head, for I was penniless.

I looked to Eli, but before the dwarf could speak Tamsin had caught my hands.

"I have plenty, Jasper," she cried. "Oh, let me help you! It was all my fault, let me do what I can now."

"Where is your money, girl?" asked Mr. Penryn.

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"It is at Kynance, Jasper," she said, not noticing him; "father is not yet home, and we can get there before he returns."

"It is scarcely out of our way," I said to Mr. Penryn, and it seemed our only hope. And so we went thitherward, although I had grave doubts as to whether Cap'n Jack had not returned.

HOW WE WENT TO PENNINGTON, AND HOW THE TRESIDDERS WON
THE VICTORY

On looking over what I have just written, it has struck me that I have told this part of my story hastily, scarcely relating enough to tell how matters stood. I ought to have said that it took us fifteen hours to sail from St. Agnes Island to Hayle. Thus having left the island at daybreak—that is, about eight o'clock in the morning—we did not arrive at Hayle till the following midnight, and such was our difficulty in getting horses at Hayle, that we did not leave there until morning, thus arriving at Mullion just before noon. We were there, I should imagine, something over an hour, and as Porth Mullion is only some seven or eight miles from Kynance, I had hopes of getting to Captain Jack's house an hour or two before dark. I discovered, too, that Tamsin had ridden from Kynance to Mullion on horseback. She had, in a fit of jealousy, betrayed our secret to Israel Barnicoat, and this had led to Naomi being taken away; and anxious, so she said, to atone, she had come to Mullion to tell her story.

It may seem foolish in me to have trusted her again after she had once betrayed me, but I have always been one who yielded to the promptings of the heart rather than to the conclusions of reason, so I rode toward Kynance without demur, and even Mr. Penryn made no objection. Eli, however, grumbled greatly, and said we were going to a nest of adders; but indeed our horses were useless, and I knew not how we could get fresh ones, except through Tamsin's offer of money.

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There was no sign of life at Captain Jack's house when we came to it, so I concluded that he had not yet returned from the Scilly Isles. I was very thankful for this, because I knew his presence would mean great danger to me. He fancied that I was dead, and but for the mercy of God I should have been—murdered, as it were, by his hand, and by that of Israel Barnicoat. I knew he was as cunning as Satan himself, and when he found out that I was alive would, I believed, stop at no means to end my life. And thus nothing but sore necessity would have taken me to Kynance at that time. But as Mr. Penryn had said, the horses we rode, which were but little better than farm beasts, were sore spent with a ride of twenty miles or so, and as it was fully fifty to Padstow—nay, nearer sixty, taking into consideration the nature of the road—it was useless to think of trying to ride them thither.

"This way, Jasper," cried Tamsin; "this way to father's chest. No one knows where it is but him and me. Oh, you do forgive me, don't you? I did it because I wanted you so! You believe me, don't you, Jasper?" and the poor girl sobbed piteously.

I did not speak, for my heart felt very bitter, even though I thought she was trying to atone for what she had done.

She had led me to a little outhouse, cunningly hidden among the rocks, and which could not be reached save by going through the kitchen, owing to a precipice behind. Arrived here she opened a box, and took from it a bag heavy with gold.

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"Here's money enough, Jasper," she said eagerly. "Oh, Jasper, if you only knew!"

"Knew what, Tamsin?" I said, for the girl's sorrow made me gentle toward her, even although my heart was torn with anxiety about Naomi.

"Knew how hard it is," she cried. "Oh, Jasper, are you sure you love that maid so? She does not care for you as I do. Could you not think of me and forget her?" and the girl held my hand tightly in hers.

Now I am, and always shall be awkward in my ways toward women. A woman's tears always unman me, and make me soft-hearted. So I knew not what to say to her, and for the life of me I could not be angry. In the providence of God all men love all women, only there must be one especially to stir the depths of each man's heart. And, verily, had not mine heart been taken captive, I should have taken Tamsin in my arms and kissed her, so piteous was her cry, and so full of love was the light which shone from her eyes.

"Look you, Tamsin," I said, "I cannot help it, but that maid hath taken all my love. But for her I might have been different; now I can only love you as a brother should love a sister."

Then her eyes became hard, and I knew I had spoken wrongly.

"I must go now," I continued, "for she is in danger; and if we ride not hard, I may not see her again."

"Yes, go," she said with an angry laugh; "overtake her, rescue her, if you can."

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This aroused my suspicions. "Tamsin," I said, "have you told me truly? Are these men taking her to Padstow? I am trusting you implicitly. It is hard for a man to threaten a woman, but if you have told me wrongly, may God have mercy upon you, for I will not."

"I have spoken the truth, Jasper; only be careful to inquire at Penryn if the *Golden Cross* has been

seen in the harbour. I know they talked about it being there. If it has been seen, they have gone on to Padstow."

"How do you know?"

"I heard the priest say so," said Tamsin. "He said if the *Golden Cross* is lying at Penryn, we can get to Bristol without going to Padstow; if it isn't, we ride to Padstow."

"You swear this, Tamsin? My heart is very sore," I cried.

"Yes; this is truth, Jasper, this is what they said;" but she did not look me in the face as she spoke.

I pushed the bag of money in my pocket and turned to go, but she caught my arm again.

"Won't you kiss me, Jasper?" she said, "just to show you forgive me. Just kiss me once; it will be the only time in this world."

So I kissed her as a brother might kiss a sister, and not as a lover kisses a maid. This I swear by my love for the only maid I ever loved, and by my faith as a Christian man. But she clung to me, and would not let me go, and even as she did so I heard the sound of many voices in the house adjoining, and then Captain Jack and Israel Barnicoat came to the little hut in which we were. [Pg 341]

"Jasper Pennington!" they both cried together with terrible oaths, and then both of them sprang upon me. I had thrown off Tamsin as I heard their cry, and so in a degree was able to defend myself; at the same time I was greatly at a disadvantage, so much so that they mastered me, and held me so that I could not put forth my strength. Then I saw Israel Barnicoat lift a knife to strike me, and for the life of me I could make no defence, and could only hold my breath and await his blow.

It fell, but not on me, for Tamsin had thrown herself between us and had received it.

"My God," cried Israel, "I have killed Tamsin!" and the thought so frightened them both that they loosened their hold on me, and so in a moment I was free. I knew, too, at that moment that few men are loved as Tamsin loved me, for she herself had voluntarily received the blow that would perchance have killed me.

But so great was their evident hatred for me, that for the moment neither took notice of Tamsin, but sprang upon me again. This time, however, I was ready for them, so I met Israel with a blow so heavy that he fell to the floor like a log of wood. I would have spared Captain Jack if I could, for he was past his prime, but he came upon me so savagely that I dared not.

"Go, Jasper, go!" gasped Tamsin. "They will kill you. Don't wait; go, only—"

"Are you much hurt, Tamsin?" I said. "Tell me if I can help you."

"No, no; you cannot help me. Go—go to Pennington; go to Pennington!"

"Why?" I cried; "you said Penryn." [Pg 342]

"Pennington!" she repeated. "Go at once."

I grieved at leaving her there, but it seemed my duty; besides, I could not help her.

So I went to her. "Good-bye, Tamsin; I will send Betsy Fraddam to you. She knows more than any doctor. Good-bye. You have told me the truth this time. God bless you; you have saved my life."

"Forgive my telling you lies. Oh, I wanted you so, but I think I am dying now. Go quickly to Pennington, and forgive me, Jasper."

I left her then, much bewildered and troubled, for I felt it hard to leave her there without knowing whether she would live or die, and remembering all the time that if she died, she died for love of me.

When I got to the front of the house I found Mr. Penryn and Eli in the custody of Billy Coad and another man, but they let them free as I came. Then I told Billy to go to a doctor who lived at Lizard Town.

I told Mr. Penryn many of the things which I have here written down, and then we rode rapidly away toward Pennington, Eli also coming with us.

"Eli, are you afraid of Captain Jack's gang?" I said presently.

"No, I be'ant."

"Would they hurt you?"

"No, they wudden; not waun ov 'em."

"Then go to Lizard Town yourself, and take the doctor to Tamsin, then come back to your mother's house and tell me how Tamsin is."

"No," said Naomi's father; "you will come to Pennington and ask for him there." This he said looking at me steadily.

"You do not know Richard Tresidder," I said. [Pg 343]

"He will have me to deal with," he said quietly. "Jasper, that girl told you the truth at the last. My child is taken there."

"I believe she is," I replied.

"I have felt it might be so all the day," he continued, "only the girl seemed so sincere. Truly the heart of a woman is a strange thing."

Then we both fell to silence as we rode along, for I had much to think about, and so, indeed, had he. At the time I did not think how eager he must be to see his daughter, so filled was my own heart with longing, but as I look back now I feel how little I understood his heart at that time.

Just as daylight was dying we arrived at Pennington Gates. I must confess to a strange feeling as I rode through them, for many things had happened since I last rode to Pennington. Then I had come from Kynance, and then, too, I had come to see my love.

"I will go first, Jasper," said Naomi's father quickly. "I would we were more presentable, but up to a few days ago I had no hope of—but never mind that. Our errand must explain the nature of our attire. You stand behind me, and the servant may admit us."

He seemed to have forgotten all about the past, and spoke as though he had a right to enter the house from which my father had been ejected.

On coming to the door I could hear that something of importance was going on within. I heard the noise of many footsteps and the sound of many voices. When the servant came to the door he did not seem to regard us with surprise; nay, rather, he seemed to expect us. I afterward discovered that he mistook us for some one else. The day had now nearly gone, and thus in the shades of evening he did not see who we were.

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"Will you come this way?" he said. "Mr. Tresidder is in the library, and is expecting you."

Had I been alone I should have acted foolishly, so great was my surprise at his words. But Mr. Penryn saw in a moment how things stood.

"Is she safe?" he asked the servant in a whisper, which I thought a very foolish question, but a second later I saw how wise it was.

"The escaped nun?" said the man. "Yes, sir. She was carried from the carriage to the snugery. She's there now."

"Is she ill?"

"No, sir. She's kept quiet, that is all, sir."

"Thank you. Take us to your master."

The servant led the way without a word, and a few seconds later we stood in the library, the servant closing the door behind us.

There were six people in the room. Richard Tresidder's mother was there, the woman whom my grandfather had married, and who had been the cause of all our trouble. She was an old woman, but evidently strong and agile. I could not help noticing even then how brightly her eyes shone, and how grimly her lips were pressed together. Richard Tresidder was there, too, looking, I thought, much worried and careworn, while young Nick stood by his side, his face very pale, and his arm in a sling. The other three men I did not know, although I fancied I had seen one of them before. Richard Tresidder turned to us as if to tell us something, then seeing me, he cried out angrily, and with great astonishment.

Now, not until that moment did I realise that we had come into a place of danger. Instinctively I measured the men who stood before us. Leaving out Nick Tresidder, we were but two to four, besides which we were in the house of a man who had servants to do his bidding. Still I feared nothing; nay, rather a great joy came into my heart that at last I should meet the Tresidders in this way face to face.

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"Jasper Pennington!" cried Richard Tresidder, and then both Nick and his grandmother started up as though they had been attacked by a great evil.

"And John Penryn." This Naomi's father said.

"What?"

"John Penryn. Do you remember me, Dick Tresidder?"

"No, no. John Penryn committed suicide. He killed his wife and committed suicide." It was my grandfather's second wife who spoke.

"He did not kill his wife, he did not commit suicide," replied John Penryn quietly. "True, I struck my wife in a fit of madness. Of the provocation I will say nothing. I thought I had killed her, and then, like a coward, I ran away from my home, afraid to face what would follow. But in the mercy of God I did not kill her. In the mercy of God, too, a child was born to us; and you became her guardian, Richard Tresidder. Where is she now?"

For a moment silence fell upon the company. All awaited the outcome of the strange scene. I

watched Richard Tresidder's face, and saw how frightened he was. I was sure, too, that his mind was seeking some way out of the difficulty in which he was placed.

"You are an impostor. We cannot speak to you. Leave the house!" Again it was my grandfather's second wife who spoke. [Pg 346]

"If you wish," replied Naomi's father, "it shall be taken to a court of law. It would be painful for me to have the past recalled, but it shall be so if you will. You are my daughter's legal guardian, and until my identity is established you can exercise a certain amount of control. But remember this, if my past is made public, so will yours be. I shall want many things explained which will not be creditable to you, neither will you be free from the law's just punishment. My child will be placed in the witness-box, and she will have to tell many things which, I should judge, will not be pleasant to you."

In saying this he never raised his voice, although I knew his excitement was great, and that he had much difficulty in restraining his passion.

For a few seconds there was a deathly silence, for neither Richard Tresidder nor his mother spoke a word. Both seemed stunned by what was said. I saw, however, that presently they looked at the men who stood near, and who as yet had not spoken a word.

"I do not think you will find physical force of much use," went on Mr. Penryn quietly, "for even if Jasper Pennington could not fell an ox with one blow of his arm, and you could get rid of us by the means you are considering, it would be of no use. Think you we have come here without precautions? I knew better than that."

Then I remembered that he had spoken to Eli Fraddam when I had sent him away. I saw what he meant now, although at the time I wondered what he had to say to the dwarf.

Then Richard Tresidder's mother rose to her feet, and came up close to where we stood. [Pg 347]

"Let me look at you, and see if you be John Penryn," she said, and he stood still while the woman gazed steadily at him, as though she would read the secrets of his heart.

Presently her eyes flashed as though she had come to a decision.

"There is no doubt, Richard," she said, "this is John Penryn. I remember his face, I can recall his voice now. You must give up your ward, my son. We have guarded her in many trying times, we have shielded her from great danger. But now it is at an end. Of course there must be many formalities to go through, but there need be no trouble, no publicity. All our actions can be explained. All we have done has been for the child's good. You are welcome, John, and Pennington must be your home until your claim to Trevoise is made good, as it will be, for we shall raise no barriers."

This she said with many other things which I will not here write down. She spoke pleasantly and plausibly, too, until for a moment I forgot who she was, and thought her to be truly a lovable and motherly old lady.

But this was only for a moment, and I must confess I was not at all pleased at the turn things were taking, especially as she seemed to impress Mr. Penryn favourably.

"Where is my child now?" he asked eagerly.

"She is here, John; here in this very house. You shall see her anon. We have been obliged to be careful for her, for she has had an enemy in that man by your side. He, a penniless scoundrel, has dogged her footsteps, and sought to ruin her life, and out of love for her we have been obliged to take steps that may have seemed harsh, but which, believe me, John, were for the good of the child whom we thought an orphan, and wholly dependent on us." [Pg 348]

"And who is this enemy?" asked Naomi's father.

"It is Jasper Pennington," she cried, "the man by your side, a cowardly ruffian, a drunken swaggerer, and the companion of the vilest people in the country. We have sought to save her from him, John Penryn; and now, thank God, our work is done."

This she said with a tremor in her voice, as though she had been an injured woman.

"You know it is a lie!" I cried vehemently. "You know it to be a base lie!"

And this was all I could say, for the wily woman seemed to take all words from my mouth, save those of a blank denial to her wicked lies. Besides my heart sunk like lead as I saw how her words weighed with Naomi's father, and as though he saw everything in a new light.

"Let me see my child," he said at length, and after both Richard Tresidder and his mother had made themselves out to be the guardian angels of Naomi's life, while I had been plotting her destruction.

"You shall see her when he is gone," she said, pointing to me. "I can never consent for her to come here while that wretch is in the room." Whereupon John Penryn asked many questions, which they answered so cunningly that I was tongue-tied, and could say nothing except foolish, wild ejaculations.

"Go, Jasper Pennington," he said at length, "leave me here."

"No," I said; "I came to find Naomi, my love. I will see her before I go. She has promised to be my wife." [Pg 349]

"His wife!" cried Richard Tresidder's mother. "Think of it. He possesses not one stick. He is a wild vagabond, a terror wherever he goes. How can Naomi Penryn become his wife?"

"Pennington should be mine!" I cried, like one demented. "You robbed it from my father."

"You know the history of Pennington, John," cried the old woman; "it is held in trust for my son. It should have been given to him outright, but my poor husband was mad at the time, and he made a madman's will. But can this fellow buy it back? Has he wealth sufficient to pay half the worth of the estate?"

"Go, Jasper Pennington," said Naomi's father again; "I will do what is right. This woman says you are an evildoer. Well, it shall be my work to guard my child against evildoers."

Then all the heart went out of me, and I, who had hoped so much, left the house of my fathers without so much as seeing Naomi or knowing whether I should ever behold her again. Ay, I left it a beaten man, without a hope, without one bright spot in the sky of my life.

I saw that Naomi's father had been dragged into the Tresidders' net, and that he would be the creature of their wills, the tool to help them to fulfil their purposes.

Except for this my mind was a perfect blank. Slow as I always was to think, I saw no way out of my difficulties. That which I had hoped for came not, and my worst fears were realised.

In this state of mind I, forgetful of the horse on which I rode to the house, walked until I came to the gates, where, in the light moonlight, I thought I saw Eli Fraddam coming toward me. [Pg 350]

CHAPTER XXVI

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TELLS OF MY FORTUNES IN WINNING BACK MY BIRTHRIGHT, AND FINISHES THE TALE

"She ed'n killed," was his first greeting. "She'll get better." Then I remembered that he had come from Kynance Cove, and spoke of Tamsin Truscott.

"I did ride vast," he grunted again presently, but I spoke not.

"What's the matter?" he continued presently. "Tell poor little Eli; he do love Jasper."

So while we walked to his mother's cottage I told him all that had been said at Pennington. I told it in more fulness than I have related it here, for it was then fresh in my memory. The dwarf chuckled much as though he vastly enjoyed the cleverness of the Tresidders, but he made no remark for a long time after I had finished my story; then he said quietly:

"We must watch thicky maazed man, Jasper."

"Why?" I asked.

"To zee no 'arm do come to un. Iss, and we must keep our peepers oppen fur the purty maid, too. Watch night and day."

"You think they are in danger?" I said.

"They Tresidders be slippery," he grunted.

"But how can we watch?"

"Little Eli will zee to that. Fust thing in the morning you must go to Lawyer Trefy into Turo, and tell 'im everything. And I must watch—iss, as I will, too. Little Eli ed'n a vool." [Pg 352]

Presently we came to Betsy Fraddam's cottage, and the old dame welcomed her son warmly, but she said little to me, although she prepared food for me. For a long time I sat quietly in the chimney corner, and watched the flames leap upward and tried to think of my position. By and by, however, nature asserted herself, and, in spite of my anxiety, I felt myself going to sleep. So I lay down on the couch which Eli prepared for me, and slept long and soundly. The next day I walked to Truro, and told my story to Lawyer Trefy, but he gave me little or no satisfaction, neither would he give me his opinion concerning the behaviour of Naomi's father. He asked many questions—keen, searching questions, such as only a lawyer can ask, but he left me entirely in the dark concerning his own thoughts. And so I came back to St. Eve, having made no step forward; and only one piece of advice did Lawyer Trefy give me, and that was to go to a tailor and get some new clothes, also to a barber and let him dress my hair. This I did, and, in spite of the dreariness of my prospect, I must confess I was pleased at the change made in my appearance; for youth, I suppose, always loves finery; and thus, although I could see no meaning in his advice, I was glad the lawyer had given it.

The next day I tried to get admission into Pennington House, but in this I was unsuccessful. The

servant told me I could not be admitted, although I thought he spoke respectfully to me. This fact I attributed to my fine attire. As for Eli, he was constantly watching the house, and although I asked him many questions concerning his investigations, he was silent as the Sphinx, neither would he communicate to me his thoughts. Indeed, at this time I began to doubt the loyalty of Eli. He knew that my heart was almost breaking with disappointment, and yet he was cheerful and gay. He did not sympathise with me in my sorrows, neither did he speak one helpful word.

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Altogether at this time my condition was deplorable. My love was cut off from me, and my sky was black from horizon to horizon.

This went on for several days, and then I found that Naomi's father had made his home at Pennington, and that he had been visited by lawyers and others interested in the Trevoze Estate. I learnt, too, that no objections whatever had been raised as to his assuming the proprietorship, and that all legal forms had been satisfactorily complied with. And yet neither he nor Naomi sent me one word of cheer; nay, they did not even recognise my existence, which, it must be admitted, was hard to bear. Then, as if to add another drop to the filled goblet of my sorrow, I one day met the Pennington carriage, in which was seated Richard Tresidder and Nick, together with John Penryn and my love, but none of them noticed me; nay, not even Naomi gave me as much as a nod. This, as may be imagined, made my prospects darker than ever, for I felt that my love's father had taken the Tresidders' part against me.

And yet I could not drive away from my heart the feeling that my love loved me. I remembered our meeting in the summer-house in Lanherne Garden, I remembered the words she spoke; nay, more, I felt the joy of her kisses, and so I could not wholly despair. On the other hand, however, I felt that she was now under the control of her father, and if his mind had been poisoned against me my case was indeed hopeless.

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Indeed, within a week from the time when I took Mr. Penryn to Pennington, it was rumoured that Naomi had overcome her objection to Nick Tresidder, and that, owing to her father's wishes, she had consented to be his wife.

There seemed nothing that I could do, yet I would not go away; nay, I could not. I was chained to St. Eve; and although I knew I was in danger from Captain Jack and his gang, I heeded not. Tamsin Truscott, I discovered, was slowly recovering, and it was to her, I suspect, that I owed my safety.

I tried many times to gain an audience with Naomi's father, and in this also I was unsuccessful. He refused to hold any intercourse with me, and this embittered me all the more, because, even if he regarded me as the merest stranger, I had tried to be a friend to him and his. I tried to excuse him, and thus gain hope by saying that he was busily engaged in the affairs of his estate; but all the same my heart was very weary and sad in those days, especially as every one seemed to shun me. No one would befriend me; no one gave me a kind or helpful word.

At that time all hopes of getting back Pennington died out of my heart. Up to now I had comforted myself with the idea that I should at some time obtain the means to fulfil the conditions of my grandfather's will. Pennington was a valuable estate, and ignorant as I was, there seemed no way of getting the money; for be it known, in those days money was scarce in the country, none of the families for many miles around had more than they needed, and even had I many friends among the so-called wealthy, and had they been willing to advance the necessary money, I doubt whether they could have done so. But I had no friends. Richard Tresidder had poisoned the minds of all against me, so that the possibility of my raising many thousands of pounds was out of the question.

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And what almost maddened me was the thought that John Penryn should have so willingly played into the hands of my enemies, that he should so easily have been deceived by those who were using him only as a means to their own safety and aggrandisement.

Then one day a light came into my sky in the shape of a message from Naomi's father, asking me to meet him in the copse above Granfer Fraddam's cave. At first I suspected treachery, but I determined to go. If any one had wanted to do me bodily harm plenty of chances had been offered since I returned from my perilous adventure to the Scilly Isles. Indeed, I did not much care what became of me, for when hope is gone all is gone.

So I went to the copse before the time mentioned, and this was at ten o'clock in the morning. As I have before stated, this was a lonely place, only one cottage being near, and altogether shielded from the gaze of men. As I said, I was early at the meeting-place, and I looked eagerly around for Naomi's father, but no one was there. I waited until after ten o'clock, and still no one came.

"This is but a ruse," I said bitterly; "this message came only to mock me as others have come;" but even as this thought flashed through my mind I heard the sound of footsteps on the frozen leaves, and turning I saw, not John Penryn, but my love.

At first I was almost overcome at the sight of her, for I feared lest something terrible should have happened to bring her instead of her father, so I stood looking at her like one bereft of his senses.

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"Won't you speak to me, Jasper?" she said, and then my heart jumped so that I was less able to speak than before; but I opened my arms, wondering all the time if I were not dreaming a beautiful dream.

Yes, she came to me, my darling, whom I despaired of ever seeing again—she came shy and coy, I

thought, but love was shining from her eyes for all that.

"My little love!" I cried; "and so you have come at last," and I took her in my great arms, my Naomi, the only maiden I ever did love, or ever can love. For love comes but once—that is, such a love as mine. And her head was nestled on my heart, just as a mother nestles the babe she loves, and a joy, such as even I had never felt before, came to me that wintry morning as the sun shone on the ice crystals.

There be men in these days who laugh at such a love as mine, but they who do this have never entered into the secret of life's joy. I do not expect to be understood by such, and my words to them will be but as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; but to those whose hearts have been filled with a great absorbing love, I know that my tale will have a meaning, simple as it may be, and badly, as I am afraid, it has been told.

For some seconds my heart was too full to speak. After the weary days of hopeless waiting, thus to enter into joy seemed to make words too poor to tell what was in my heart.

Presently, however, I asked her questions as to what had happened since I parted with her at the cottage by Mullion Sands, and she told me her story. There was but little to tell however—that is, from the time she had been left alone with Tamsin and Mrs. Crantock. She had been taken from the cottage to the carriage, and although to a degree forced, she had been treated kindly. Indeed, she had not been long there before I came with her father. Then I asked her concerning him, what she thought of him, and whether he had not brought her great joy.

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"Everything seems so strange, Jasper," she said. "I had never dreamed of such a thing, you know; and sometimes I can hardly believe it is true."

"And is he not kind to you?"

"Oh, very kind, and he has made me love him. He has had so much sorrow, such a terrible past, you know; and he is now so gentle, so loving, that I cannot help pitying him and loving him. And yet I cannot understand him. He must know that the Tresidders are my enemies, and yet he insists on my staying at Pennington; he knows I hate Nick Tresidder, and yet he encourages him in the thought that I shall wed him."

"But you never will?" I cried.

"How can I, Jasper?" she answered.

"And if the worst comes to the worst," I said, "you will come to me, and we will fly together."

She did not speak, but she lifted her eyes to mine, and I saw them become dim with tears.

Then she told me that her father had spent days with men of business, but he had never told her one word as to what he had done. Indeed, the Tresidders had seemed to be disappointed at his having so many private interviews with lawyers, although they made much of him, especially Richard Tresidder's mother, who seemed to mould him at her will.

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"If he is in her power, all hope is gone," I said sadly; and yet hope was not gone, for had she not told me that she would never go to the altar with Nick Tresidder?

Then I asked her how she had come to me that day instead of her father, for up to now my joy had been so great at being with her, that I had forgotten that it was not her that I had expected to see.

"That, too, is strange," she answered. "He gave this letter to a servant in my hearing, and bade him take it to you; so I asked the man to give it to me, and he made no objection."

I puzzled greatly at this, and I could think of no answer to the puzzle, save that Naomi must have won the servant's heart, as she won all hearts. Or, perhaps, he knew what it was to love, and had guessed her secret.

I opened the letter, and this was what I read:

"Will Jasper Pennington meet John Penryn, Lawyer Trefy, and the family of Tresidders at Pennington on Thursday at six o'clock in the evening?"

"That must mean to-day," I said. "What can they want of me at Pennington?"

But I did not trouble much about the matter then, for was not Naomi with me? Neither did she seem in a hurry to return to Pennington. Her father was in Truro, she said, and had given no orders as to her conduct. So we left the copse and wandered away into Pennington Woods, my love and I.

I shall never forget that day. How can I when I think of the days that followed? It was one of those glorious winter days, when the air was crisp and frosty, and when the blood of healthy people surges through their veins with richness and fulness of life. The merle and the mavis sung their love-songs, even although it was winter, the squirrels climbed the bare branches of the trees, while even the rabbits besported themselves gaily. And Naomi and I, because we loved each other, were as gay as any lambs that frolic on the warm days of May. Ay, we were young; and I, even although I was almost penniless, was happy in my strength and my youth. Thus is God kind to His children. As for Naomi, I, who am but poor at stringing words together, can never tell

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how beautiful she was. Ay, even Mr. William Shakespeare, great man as he was, could never have done justice to such beauty as that of my love.

She was proud of me, too, although I was poor and friendless. She admired my finery greatly, and told me that I looked all a man should look. "Whenever I have seen you before," she said, "you have been strangely attired; and sometimes I have been almost afraid of you, you have looked so fierce and strong."

"But you are glad I am strong, my little one?"

"Glad, ay; but I am not little," and indeed she was not little as maidens go, but she seemed little to me.

"Yes; but you are little," I said laughingly. "You are but a feather's weight."

At this she pretended to be offended, so I caught her up and held her at arm's length, just as I have seen mothers hold their children, and I laughed all the time in my joy.

Then she called me names, although I could see she rejoiced in my strength—the strength which had saved her when she was in peril.

I will write no more concerning that joyful morning, much as I love to think about it, for it was the sunshine of summer which precedes the black night of winter. [Pg 360]

I was not late that night at Pennington, you may be sure, for if I was puzzled as to why I should be asked to be there, I was also eager to know the reason; besides, hope came into my life that day—hope of the great unknown future.

Besides, I should be near my Naomi, for such I felt she was whatever might happen.

I was admitted without a word, and ushered into the library, where a great many people were. I saw that the Tresidders were greatly puzzled, especially Richard Tresidder's mother, whose bright old eyes went searchingly from face to face. Although I had kept my time to the minute, I was the last to arrive. The Tresidders did not speak to me, and seemed to regard my presence as an unpardonable intrusion, and yet they said nothing. Lawyer Trefy nodded to me, but his face revealed no more than a sealed book. There were many strange men there, too, and among them was Jonathan Cowling, the old man who had acted as my gaoler at Trevoise. Naomi stood by her father's side, and seemed to wonder much at the strange scene. John Penryn's eyes shone brightly, but he was perfectly self-possessed, and so great was the change in his appearance, that none would have thought him to have been the man who had been with me at the cave by Bedruthen Steps, unless they had looked at him closely.

There was a great silence in the room, as though every one was on the tiptoe of expectation, as, indeed, we all were; and when Naomi's father rose to speak we all held our breath. He spoke very quietly and very collectedly, yet I saw he had difficulty in restraining himself. I saw then, too, how great was his resemblance to Naomi, and carefully as he was dressed at that time, he looked the picture of what a gentleman ought to look. [Pg 361]

"I have taken the liberty to arrange this meeting in the house of Richard Tresidder, because he has acted as my daughter's guardian," he said, "and because of certain family connections which naturally link us together, and which he hopes may link us together in the future."

At this my heart sank, for I remembered that he had spoken no word to me; nay, he had not noticed me in any way.

"If this is so," said Richard Tresidder, who looked nervously toward Naomi's father, "I should like to know why Jasper Pennington is here. It is, to say the least, strange in a family meeting like this that an outsider is admitted."

"I have arranged for Jasper Pennington to be here because he has been associated with my child under peculiar circumstances. When you consented—gladly consented, Richard Tresidder, for certain family matters to be settled to-night, you did not mention any one to whose presence you might object. Besides, you will presently see that I have not asked him to come without a purpose."

After this many things were said which confused me greatly, but which the men of law who were present seemed to understand perfectly, and so did the Tresidders, for that matter.

Then Naomi's father spoke again: "You have asked me, Richard Tresidder," he said, "that I should give your son my daughter in marriage, and have, moreover, told me that the marriage settlements can easily be arranged."

At this all the Tresidders nodded eagerly, although they seemed sadly puzzled. [Pg 362]

"I have also told you," he went on, "that I did not believe Jasper Pennington to be so evilly disposed as you thought, and that on one or two occasions he exposed himself to danger in seeking to render service to my child."

"Naomi was never in danger," was the reply. "All that he has done has been for evil purposes."

"Be that as it may, I have come to the conclusion that he deserves some kind of recognition for his services. Besides, I was at one time acquainted with his father, and so I do not wish to forget

him. Mr. Trefy, will you state what I am prepared to do?"

Then Lawyer Trefy read something which he had evidently carefully prepared, and yet which I was too excited to properly understand; yet I know it was to the effect that he had placed in his hands an order to arrange with five representatives of county families to value the Pennington estates, and to pay the said amount to Richard Tresidder, according to the conditions of the will made by Jasper Pennington in the year 17—.

"What!" cried Richard Tresidder, like one mad, while his son Nick moved the arm which I had broken, and still hung in a sling, and cried out with pain.

"I give this to Jasper Pennington," said Naomi's father, "as the dowry of my child, who will, I trust, shortly become his wife."

Now at this my heart seemed to stop, but when I saw the light shining in my love's eyes, it beat again so joyously, and swelled so with joy, that my bosom seemed too small to contain it. Then, unable to restrain myself, I rushed to her side and caught her hands.

As I did so, however, I heard a great noise of angry voices, and then my darling cried so fearfully that I turned my head, only to see Richard Tresidder leap upon me, and by the murderous gleam in his eyes I knew that he would do me harm. But I felt to laugh at this, for at that moment I seemed to have the strength of ten, and I flung him from me as I would have flung a yelping cur who sought to bite me. So quickly, indeed, did I throw him from me that no one in the room sought to interfere, and even when, with the yell of a wild beast, he came upon me again, I think no one thought it worth while to stop him; but even as he came I saw my grandfather's second wife speaking to Nick, and then I beheld, as it were, a thousand points of light flash before my eyes, and felt as though a piece of burning steel were thrust into my side. This was followed by wild cries of confusion, among which I thought I heard the voice of my love saying, "Oh, Jasper, my love, speak to me!" and then I seemed to sink away into the silence and gloom of night.

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When next I opened my eyes to the light of reason and of day, I lay in a large, old-fashioned room which I had never seen before. The bed was soft and easy, and a delicious languor seemed to possess me. I felt no pain, but I was as helpless as a baby. Perfect stillness prevailed, and, like a tired child, I dropped off into a deep sleep. How long I lay thus I know not, but presently, when I woke to consciousness again, the air seemed to be soft and balmy, and much of the weariness seemed to have left me. I moved my limbs, and again looked around the room.

"Where am I, I wonder?" I said to myself.

Just then the door opened and I saw old Betsy Fraddam enter.

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Without knowing why, I closed my eyes, while the old dame felt my hands and my forehead.

"He's better," she chuckled; "ould Betsy is better than the doctors. 'Ee'll git better now. Jasper Pennington ed'n a-goin' to die so aisy for oal the Tezidders."

She moved my pillow and made my bed comfortable, then she left the room again.

When she had gone I recalled the incidents which I have recorded—the meeting in the copse, the walk through the woods, then the scene in Pennington library, which ended in silence and darkness. What did it all mean? My mind was not very clear, but presently I was able to explain everything. But where was I? Why was everything so quiet? And why had Betsy Fraddam come to me?

I listened, and heard the cawing of rooks, the neighing of horses, and the lowing of cattle. If I only possessed sufficient strength I would make my way to the window, but I was not able to do this.

Then I heard a voice which set every nerve in my body a-quivering. It was the voice of my Naomi outside the door.

She entered all alone. She looked pale and thin; this I saw dimly, for my eyes were partly closed. She looked at me long and tenderly, as though she wanted, by looking, to see if I were better. Then she sat down by my bedside.

"Are you ill, my little one?" I asked.

She started up like one frightened.

"Oh, Jasper!" she cried; "do you know me? Are you so much better? Oh, my love, my love!"

Somehow, I know not how it was, but strength came back to me then, so I lifted my arms, and my little maid nestled her head on me and sobbed her joy.

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"You are sure you will get better, Jasper?"

"Yes, sure."

Presently we fell to talking, for I wanted to know what had taken place, and she told me little by

little, as I could take it in.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"Where? why, at Pennington, your home."

"Yes; and the Tresidders?"

A cloud came over her face. "Richard Tresidder's mother is dead," she said. "That night when you were shot there was a great commotion. She had what the folks call a seizure, and she never spoke again. In her hand she held a pistol, but it is not believed that she shot you. My father thinks it was Nick, and that she pulled the pistol from him. She only lived a few hours, and was buried three days later."

I heaved a sigh of relief. Thank God I had been saved from this. All the same, I felt sad that my little maid suffered it all.

"And Nick?" I asked presently.

"He left Pennington that night. No one knows where he is now, except his father."

"And he?"

"My father knows where he is. I do not."

"And so I am at Pennington all alone?"

"My father is here. I would not leave you; I could not, you know, Jasper."

Thus while the rooks cawed in their joy and the dogs barked I lay, while my little maid sat by my side, and told me the things which my heart yearned to know.

Presently her father came, and when he knew how well I was, he said he must return to Trevoise as soon as possible and take my Naomi with him. [Pg 366]

"But what am I to do without her?" I asked woefully.

"You must get well, Jasper, and come to Trevoise to see her."

After that he told me many things which I need not write here concerning the Tresidders, and of the way they had acted—told me why he had behaved so strangely to me; and how to deceive them, and thus gain his rights without difficulty, he had pretended to fall in with their wishes.

A little later he went with my Naomi to Trevoise, and my love made me promise to come to her quickly. I did this, as you may be sure; nevertheless, springtime had come and the leaves were bursting forth from the trees ere I was strong enough to go to Trevoise. But I did not go in vain, neither did I return to Pennington again without the sweet maid for whom I would willingly have laid down my life.

We were wedded at St. Eval by the jolly parson who had told me about Lanherne House, and that very same day we posted to Pennington, the home of the Penningtons for long generations.

And now I have told my tale, told it truly in spite of evil reports and foul lies. Let Richard Tresidder and his son Nick, who are both alive, and who, I trust, will read what I have written, point to one wrong statement. This they cannot do.

It may be that I have acted foolishly, but let God be the judge whether I have ever struck an unfair blow. I have written these things that the truth might be known, and that no shadow should rest on her who is near me even now; ay, and who is more beautiful than when I first saw her in Truro: she the pure maid with pity shining from her eyes, and I the outcast, the vagabond. [Pg 367]

I sit in the library at Pennington as I write this, while my love is romping with the grandest lad in the world, save my eldest son Jasper, whom I hear shouting to his sister Naomi in the garden, while Eli, the dwarf, watches over them as tenderly as if they were his own.

THE END.

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