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A
SINGER FROM THE SEA

BY

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A SINGER FROM THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.

DENAS PENELLES.

"'Tell me, my old friend, tell me why
You sit and softly laugh by yourself.'
'It is because I am repeating to myself,
Write! write
Of the valiant strength,
The calm, brave bearing
Of the sons of the sea.'"
––French Rowing Song

"And that is why I have written this book
Of the things that live in your noble hearts.
You are really the authors of it.
I have only put into words
The frank simplicity of your sailor life."
––Guillaume de la Laudelle.

FROM Padstow Point to Lundy Race is one of the wildest and grandest portions of the Cornish coast, and on it there is always somewhere a tossing sea, a stiff breeze above, and a sucking tide below. Great cliffs hundreds of feet high guard it, and from the top of them the land rolls away in long ridges, brown and bare. These wild and rocky moors, full of pagan altars, stone crosses, and memorials of the Jew, the Phœnician, and the Cornu-British, are the land of our childhood's fairy-folk––the home of Blunderbore and of Jack the Giant Killer, and the far grander

"Fable of Bellerus old,
And the great vision of the Guarded Mount."

But it is the Undercliff which has the perennial charm for humanity, for all along its sloping face there are bewildering hummocks and hollows, checkered with purple rocks and elder-trees. Narrow footpaths curve in and out and up and down among the fields and farms, the orchards and the glimmering glades, and there the foxgloves grow so tall that they lift their dappled bells level with the eyes.

Further down are queer, quiet towns, hundreds of years old, squeezed into the mouths of deep valleys––valleys full of delicate ferns and small wild roses and the white heath, a flower peculiar to the locality. And still lower––on the very shingle––are the amphibious-looking cottages of the fishermen. They are surrounded by nets and boats and lobster-pots. Noisy children paddle in the flowing tide, and large, brown, handsome women sit on the door-steps knitting the blue guernsey shirts and stockings which their husbands wear.

Such a lonely, lovely spot is the little village of St. Penfer. It is so hidden in the clefts of the rocks that unless one had its secret and knew the way of its labyrinth down the cliff-breast it would be hard to find it from the landward side. But the fishermen see its white houses and terraced gardens and hear the sweet-voiced bells of its old church calling to them when they are far off upon the ocean. And well they know their cottages clustered on the shingle below, and all day they may be seen among them, mending their boats, or painting their boats, or standing with their hands in their pockets looking at their boats, fingering the while the bit of mountain ash which they carry there to keep away ill-luck.

John Penelles was occupied on the afternoon of that Saturday which comes between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. His boat was rocking on the tide-top and he seemed to be looking at her. But his bright blue eyes saw nothing seaward; he was mentally watching the flowery winding way up the cliff to St. Penfer. If his daughter Denas was coming down it he would hear her footsteps in his heart. And why did she not come? She had been away four hours, and who knew what evil might happen to a girl in four hours? When too late to forbid her visit to St. Penfer, it had suddenly struck him that Roland Tresham might be home for the Easter holidays, and he disliked the young man. He had an intuitive dislike for him, founded upon that kind of "I know" which is beyond reasoning with, and he had told Denas that Roland Tresham was not for her to listen to and not for her to trust to.

"But there, then, 'tis dreadful! dreadful! What foolishness a little maid will believe in!" he muttered. "I have never known but one woman who can understand reason, and it isn't often she will listen to it. Women! women! women! God bless them!"

He was restless with his thoughts by the time they arrived at this point, but it still took him a

few minutes to decide upon some action and then put his great bulk into motion. For he was a large man, even among Cornish fishermen, and his feet were in his heavy fishing-boots, and his nature was slow and irresolute until his mind was fully made up. Then nothing could move him or turn him, and he acted with that irresistible celerity which springs from an invincible determination.

His cottage was not far off, and he went there. As he approached, a woman rose from the steps and, with her knitting in her hand, went inside. She was putting the kettle on the fire as he entered, and she turned her head to smile upon him. It was a delightful smile, full of love and pleasure, and she accompanied it with a little nod of her head that meant any good thing he liked to ask of her.

“Aw, my dear,” he said, “I do think the little maid is a sight too long away.”

“She do have a long walk, John dear. St. Penfer isn’t at the door-step, I’m sure.”

“You see, Joan, it is like this: Denas she be what she is, thank God! but Roland Tresham, he be near to the quality, and they do say a great scholar, and can speak langwidges; and aw, my dear, if rich and poor do ride together the poor must ride behind, and a wayless way they take through and over. I have seen that often and often.”

“We mustn’t be quick to think evil, John, must we? I’m sure Denas do know her place and her right, and she isn’t one to be put down below it. You do take a sight of trouble you aren’t asked to take, father.”

“Do I, my dear?”

“To be sure you do. And they that go seeking trouble are very like to find it. Is Roland Tresham home again?”

“Not as I know by certain. I haven’t heard tell so.”

“There, now! How people do go thinking wrong of others instead of themselves! That isn’t the Bible way, is it, father?”

“To be sure it isn’t, Joan. But we aren’t living among Bible people, my dear, are we now?”

“Well, I don’t know that, father. Fisher-folk feature one another all the world over as much as their lines and boats do. I think we could find all those Galilean fishers among the fishers of Penfer. I do, really––plenty of Peters and sons of Zebedee, I’ll warrant. Are not John and Jacob Tenager always looking to be high up in the chapel? And poor Cruffs and Kestal, how they do deny all the week through what they say on Sunday! And I know one quiet, modest Andrew who never grumbles, but is alway content and happy when his brothers are favoured above him.” And she looked and smiled at her husband with such loving admiration that the big fisherman felt the glow of the look and smile warm his heart and flush his cheeks, and he hastened to the tea-table, and was glad to be silent and enjoy the compliment his dear Joan had given him.

For Joan Penelles was not only a good wife, she was a pious, truthful, sensible, patient woman. The days of her youthful beauty were over, but her fine face left the heart satisfied with her. There was room in her eyes, light upon her face, strength and mature grace in her tall figure––the grace of a woman who has grown up like a forest tree in fresh air and winds and liberty––the physical grace that never comes by the dancing-master. And her print dress and white kerchief and neatly braided hair seemed as much a part of her charm as the thatched roof, the yellow stone-wort, and the dainty little mother of millions creeping over the roof and walls were a part of the picturesque cottage. The beauty of Joan Penelles was the beauty of fitness in every part, of health, of good temper, of a certain spiritual perception. Penelles loved her with a sure affection; he trusted in her. In every strait of his life he went to her for comfort or advice. He could not have imagined a single day without Joan to direct it.

For his daughter Denas he had a love perhaps not stronger, but quite different in kind. Denas was his only living child. Denas loved the sea. Penelles could remember her small pink feet in the tide, when they were baby feet scarce able to stand alone. As she grew older she often begged to go to sea with the fishers, and on warm summer nights she had lain in the boat, and talked to him and his mates, and sung them such wild, sweet songs that the men vowed she charmed the fish into the nets. For they had always wondrous takes when Denas leaned over the gunwale, and in sweet, piercing notes sang the old fishing-call:

“Come, gray fish! gray fish!
Come from the gray cold sea!
Fathoms, fathoms deep is the wall of net.
Haddock! haddock! herring! herring!
Halibut! bass! whatever you be,
Fish! fish! fish! come pay your debt.”

And while the men listened to the shrill, imperative voice mingling with the wash of the waves, and watched the child’s long yellow hair catching the glory of the moonlight, they let her lead them as she would. She did not fear storms. It was her father who feared them for her, though never after one night when she was twelve years old.

“You cannot go to-night, Denas,” he said; “the tide is late and the wind is contrary.”

“Well, then,” the little maid answered with decision, “the contrary wind be God’s wind. ’Twas whist poor speed the fishers were once making––toiling and rowing––and the wind contrary, when He came walking on the water and into the boat, and then, to be sure, all was quiet enough.”

There were no words to dispute this position, and Denas went with the fishers, and sat singing like a spirit while the boat kissed the wind in her teeth. And anon the tide turned, and the wind changed, and there was a lull, and so the nets were well shot, and they came back to harbour before the breeze just at cock-light––that is, when the cocks begin to crow for the dawning.

Thus petted and loved, the pretty girl made her way into all hearts, and when she said one day that she wanted to go to the school at St. Penfer and learn all about the strange seas and the strange lands that were in the world, her father and mother were quite thrilled by her great ambition. But she had her desire, and for three years she went to the private school at St. Penfer, and among the girls gathered there made many friends. Chief among these was Elizabeth Tresham, the daughter of a gentleman who had bought, with the salvage of a large fortune, the small Cornish estate on which he lived, or rather fretted away life in vain regrets over an irrevocable past. Elizabeth was his only daughter, but he had a son who was much older than Elizabeth––a handsome, gay young man about whom little was known in St. Penfer.

That little was not altogether favourable. It was understood that he painted pictures and played very finely on the piano, and every one could see that he dressed in the most fashionable manner and that he was handsome and light-hearted. But it could not be hid that he often came for money, which old Mr. Tresham had sometimes to borrow in St. Penfer for him. And business men noted the fact that his visits were so erratic and frequently so long in duration that it was hardly likely he had regular employment. And if a man had no private steady income, then for him to be without steady daily labour was considered in St. Penfer suspicious and not at all respectable. So in general Roland Tresham was treated with a shy courtesy, which at first he resented, but finally laughed at.

“Squire Peverall is afraid of his daughter and barely returns my bow, and the rector has sent his pretty Phyllis to St. Ives while I am here, Elizabeth,” he said one night to his sister. “Phyllis is well enough, but she has not a shilling, and pray who would marry Clara Peverall with only a paltry twenty thousand?”

“Clara is a nice girl, Roland, and if you only would marry and settle down to a reasonable life, how happy I should be.”

“Could I lead a more reasonable life, Elizabeth? I manage to get more pleasure out of a hundred pounds than some men get out of their thousands.”

“And father and I carry the care of it.”

“You are very foolish. Why carry care? I do not. I let the men to whom I owe money carry the care.”

“But father cannot do that––nor can I. And to be in debt, in St. Penfer, is disreputable.”

“Well, Elizabeth, is it reasonable that I should suffer for father’s and your inability to be happy, or for the antiquated notions of such an antiquated town as St. Penfer? I am only twenty-nine, and the pleasures of life are necessities to me.”

“I am only nineteen, Roland.”

“But then you are a girl––that is such a different thing.”

“Yes, it is a different thing,” and Elizabeth laid down the piece of linen she was stitching and looked up at the handsome fellow who was leaning against the open window and puffing his cigar smoke out of it. She had the English girl’s adoration of the eldest son, and likewise her natural submission to the masculine element. Besides which, she loved Roland with all her simple faith and affection. She loved him for his handsome self and his charming ways. She loved him because he had been her mother’s idol, and she had promised her mother never to desert Roland. She loved him because he loved her in his own perfectly selfish way. She was just as willing to bear his troubles, and plan for their relief, and deny herself for his pleasure, as Roland was willing to accept the sacrifice. Of course she was foolish, perhaps sinfully foolish, and it is no excuse for her folly to admit that there are thousands of women in the same transgression.

In one of his visits to St. Penfer, about two years previous to this Easter Eve, Roland Tresham had met Denas Penelles. At that time he had been much interested in her. The little fisher-girl with her piquant face, her strange haunting voice, and her singular self-possession was a charming study. He made several sketches of her, he set her wild, sweet fisher-songs to music, he lent her books to read, he talked to her and Elizabeth of the wonderful London life which Elizabeth could partly remember, but which was like a fairy-tale to Denas.

Fortunately Elizabeth was jealous of her brother and jealous of her friend, and she never gave them any opportunity for private conversation. If Roland proposed to see Denas down the cliff-breast, Elizabeth was always delighted to go also. If Roland asked Denas to go into the garden to gather fruit or flowers, or into the drawing-room to sing her songs to his accompaniments, Elizabeth was faithfully at the side of Denas. She was actuated by a variety of motives. She wished her brother to make a prudent marriage. There were at least three young girls in the vicinity eligible, and Elizabeth believed that Roland had only to woo in order to win. Any entanglement with Denas, therefore, would be apt to delay such a settlement.

She liked Denas, and she did not wish to be the means of giving her a heartache or a disappointment. But she liked her as a friend and companion, not as a probable sister. Mr. Tresham in the days of his commercial glory had once been Lord Mayor of London. Mrs. Tresham had been "presented," and the grand house and magnificent entertainments of the Treshams were chronicled in newspapers, which Elizabeth highly valued and carefully treasured. She had also her full share of that all-pervading spirit of caste which divides English society into innumerable circles, and though she did not dislike the tacit offence she gave to the St. Penfer young ladies by selecting a companion not in their ranks, she was always ready to defend her friendship for Denas by an exaggerated description of her many fine qualities. On this subject she could air the extreme social views which she heard from Roland, and which she always passionately opposed when Roland advocated them; but she was not any more ready to put her ideas of an equality based on personal desert into practice than was the most bigoted aristocrat of her acquaintance.

There was also another motive for her care of Denas, a strong one, though Elizabeth's mind barely recognised its existence. John Penelles, though only a fisher, was a man who had influence and who had saved money. Once when Mr. Tresham had been in a great strait for cash, Penelles, remembering Denas, had cheerfully loaned him a hundred pounds. Elizabeth recollected her father's anxiety and his relief and gratitude, and a friend who will open, not his heart or his house, but his purse, is a rare good friend, one not to be lightly wronged or lost. Besides these reasons, there were many smaller ones, arising out of petty social likes and dislikes and jealousies, which made Miss Tresham determined to keep Denas Penelles precisely in the position to which she had at first admitted her––that of a friend and companion.

To visitors she often used the adjective "humble" before the noun "friend," glossing it with a somewhat exaggerated account of Denas and their relationship, but with Denas herself she never thought of such qualification. Denas had all the native independence of her class––the fisher class, who neither sow nor reap, but take their living direct from the hand of God. She was proud of her father, and proud of his boats, and proud of his skill in managing them. She said, whenever she spoke of him: "My father is an upright man. He is a fine sailor and a lucky fisher. Every one trusts my father. Every one honours him."

Of course Denas recognised the differences in her friend's life and her own. Mr. Tresham's old stone mansion was large and lofty. It had fine gardens, and it had been well furnished from the wreck of the London house. Elizabeth played on the harp and piano in a pretty, fashionable way, and she had jewelry, and silk dresses, and many adornments quite outside of the power of Denas to obtain. But Denas never envied her these things. She looked on them as the accidentals of a certain station, and God had not put her in that station. In her own she had the very best of all that belonged to it. And as far as personal adornment went, she was neither vain nor envious. Her dark-blue merino dress and her wide straw hat satisfied her ideas of propriety and beauty. A shell comb in her fair hair and a few white hyacinths at her throat were all the ornaments she desired. So dressed that Easter Eve, she had stood a moment with her hat in her hand before her mother, and asked, with a merry little movement of her eyes and head, "what she thought of her?" and Joan Penelles had told her child promptly:

"You be sweet as blossoms, Denas."

There was an engagement between her and Elizabeth to adorn the altar for the Resurrection Service, and it was mainly this duty which had delayed her until John Penelles began to worry about her long absence. He did not ask himself why he had all in a moment thought of Roland Tresham and felt a shiver of apprehension. He was not accustomed to reason about his feelings, it was so much easier to go to Joan with them. But this evening Joan did not quite satisfy him. He drank his tea and ate plentifully of his favourite pie, of fresh fish and cream and young parsley, and then said:

"Joan, my dear, I have an over-mind to light my pipe and saunter up the cliff-breast. I may meet Denas."

"I wish you wouldn't go, father. It do look as if you had lost trust in Denas––misdoubting one's own is a whist poor business and not worth the following."

"Aw, my dear, I just want to talk a few words to her quiet-like. If Denas is companying with Roland Tresham she oughtn't to do it, and I must tell her so, that I must. My dear girl, right is right in the devil's teeth."

He said the words so sternly that they seemed to make a gloom in the cottage, but Joan's cheerful laugh cleared it away. "You be such a dear, good, careful father, John," she said, as she tucked in with a caressing movement the long ends of his kerchief. "I was only thinking that if it be good to watch, it is far better to trust––there then, isn't it, father?"

"Why, my dear, I'll watch first and I'll trust after––that's right enough, isn't it, Joan?"

Joan sighed and smiled, and Penelles, with his pipe in his mouth, turned his face landward. Joan thought a moment and then called to him:

"Father! Paul Tynton is very bad to-day. He was taken ill when the moon was three days old; men die who sicken on that day. Hadn't you better call and speak a word with him? He is in your class, you know."

"He was taken when the moon was four days old; he'll have a hard little time, but he'll get up again."

There was nothing else she could think of, and she knit her brows and turned in to her house

duties. Joan did not want any meeting between her husband and Roland Tresham. She did not want anything to occur which would interfere with Denas visiting Miss Tresham, for these visits were a source of great pleasure to Denas and great pride to herself. And Joan could not believe that there was any danger to be feared from Roland; Denas had known him for two years and nothing evil had yet happened. If Roland had said one wrong word to Denas, Joan was sure her child would have told her.

While she was thinking of these things, John Penelles went slowly up the winding path that led to the top of the cliff. It was sweet and bright on either hand with the fragile, delicate flowers of early spring. He stopped frequently to look at them, and he longed to touch them, to hold them in his palm, to put them against his lips. But he looked at his big, hard hands, and then at the flowers, and so, shaking his head, walked on. The blackbird was piping and the missel-thrush singing in one or two of her seven languages, and John felt the spring joy stirring in his own heart to melody. He sat in the singing-pew at St. Penfer Chapel, and he had a noble voice, so he shook the ashes out of his pipe, and clasping his hands behind his back was just going to give the blackbirds and thrushes his evening song, when he heard the rippling laugh of Denas a little ahead of him.

He told himself in a moment that it was not her usual laugh. He could not for his life have defined the difference, but there it was. Before he saw her he knew that Roland Tresham was with her, and in a moment or two they came suddenly within his vision. Denas was walking a little straighter than usual, and Roland was bending toward her. He was gay, laughing, finely dressed; he was doing his best to attract the girl who walked so proudly, so apart, and yet so happily beside him. Penelles went forward to meet them. As they approached Denas smiled, and the young man called out:

“Hello, Penelles! How do you do? And what’s the news? And how is the fishing? I was just bringing Denas home––and hoping to see you.”

“Aw, then, sir, you can see for yourself how I be, and the news be none, and the fishing be plenty.”

“St. Penfer harbour is not much of a place, Penelles. I was just telling Denas about London.”

“St. Penfer be a hard little place, but it do give us a living, sir; a honest living, thank God! Come, Denas, my dear.”

As he spoke he gently took the girl’s hand, and with a perfectly civil “Good-evening, sir,” turned with her homeward.

“Too fast, Penelles; I am going with you.”

“Much obliged; not to-night, sir. It be getting late. Say good-evening, Denas.”

There was something so final about the man’s manner that Roland was compelled to accept the dismissal, but it deeply offended him, and the unreasonable anger opened the door for evil thoughts; and evil thoughts––having a cursed and powerful vitality––immediately began to take form and to make plans for their active gratification. Denas walked silently down the narrow path before her father. He could see by the way she carried herself and by the swing of the little basket in her hand that she was vexed, and he had a sense of injustice in her attitude which he could not define, but which wounded his great loving heart deeply. At last they reached the shingle, and he strode to her side.

“You be in a great hurry now, Denas,” he said.

“I want to speak to my mother.”

“What is it, dear? Father will do as well.”

“No, he won’t. Father is cruel cross to-night, and thinking wrong of his girl and wrong of others who meant no wrong.”

“Then I be sorry enough, Denas. Come, my dear, we won’t quarrel for a bad man like Roland Tresham.”

“He isn’t bad, father.”

“He is cruel bad––worse than an innocent girl can know. Aw, my dear, you must take father’s word for it. How was he walking with you to-night? ’Twas some devil’s miracle, I’ll warrant.”

“No, then, it was not. He came from London on the afternoon train, and Miss Tresham had a bad headache and could not set me home as she always does.”

“You should have come home alone. There was nothing to fear you.”

“’Tis the first time.”

“And, my dear, ’tis the last time. Mind that! ’Twill be a bad hour for Roland Tresham if I see him making love to my girl again.”

“He didn’t say a word of love to me, father.”

“Aw, then, he was looking it––more shame to him, not to give looks words.”

“Cannot a man look at a pretty girl? I call that nonsense, father.”

“Roland Tresham can’t look at you, Denas, any more as I saw him looking at you to-night––bold and free, and sure and laughing to his own heart for the clever he was, and the devil in his eyes and on his tongue. ’Twas all wrong, my dear, or I wouldn’t be feeling so hot and angry about it. I

wouldn't be feeling as if my heart was cut loose from its moorings and sinking down and down as deep as fear can send it."

"You might trust me, father."

"Aw, my sweet girl, there's times an angel can't be trusted, or so many wouldn't have lost themselves. It takes a man to know men and all the wickedness mixed up in their flesh and blood. There's your mother, Denas––God bless her!"

Joan came strolling forward to meet them, her large, handsome face beaming and shining with love and pride. But she was immediately sensitive to the troubled, angry atmosphere in which her husband and child walked, and she looked into John's face with the inquiry in her eyes.

"Denas is vexed about Roland Tresham, mother."

"There then, I thought Denas had more sense than to trouble herself or you, father, with the like of him. Your new frock is home, Denas, and pretty enough, my dear. Go and look at it before it be too dim to see."

Denas was glad to escape to her room, and Penelles turned suddenly silent and said no more until he had smoked another pipe on his own door-step.

Then he went into the cottage and sat down. Joan was by the fire with her knitting in her hand, and softly humming to herself her favourite hymn:

"When quiet in my house I
sit."

Penelles let her finish, and then he told her all that he saw and all that he thought and every word he and Denas had spoken. "And I said what was right, didn't I, Joan?" he asked.

"No words at all are sometimes better than good words, John. When the wicked was before him, even David didn't dare to say good and right words."

"David wasn't a St. Penfer fisherman, Joan, and the wicked men of his day were a different kind of wicked men––they just thought of a bad thing and went and did it. They didn't plot and plan how to make others wicked for them and with them."

"What do you know wrong of Roland Tresham, John?"

"What do I know wrong of Trelawny's little Jersey bull? Nothing. It never hurt me yet. But I see the devil in his eyes and in the lift of his feet and the toss of his horns and the switch of his tail, and I know right well he'd rip me to pieces if I'd only give him the chance. That's the way I know Roland Tresham is a bad one. I see the devil in the glinting of his eyes and the mock of his smile, and I wouldn't have been more sick frightened to-night if I'd seen a tiger purring around Denas than I was when I got the first glimpse of Tresham bending down, coaxing and flattering our little girl. He's a bad man, sent with sorrow and shame wherever he goes, and I know it just as I know the long dead roll of the waves and the white creeping mist––like a dirty thief––which makes me cry out at sea 'All hands to reef! Quick! All hands to reef!'"

"There then, John, if wrong and danger there be, what must be done?"

"Keep the little maid out of it. Don't let her go to Mr. Tresham's. I wouldn't hear tell of it. If Denas would only listen a bit to Tris Penrose, he'd be the man for her––a good man, a good sailor, and he do love the very stones Denas steps on, he do for sure."

"She used to like Tris, but these few months her love has all quailed away."

"'Tis dreadful! dreadful! Why did God Almighty make women so? Here be good love going a-begging to them and getting nothing but a frown and a hard word, while devil's love is fretted for and heart-nursed. Whatever is a woman's love made of, I do wonder?"

As he asked the question he knocked his pipe against the jamb to clean it out, and then quickly turned his head, for an inner door opened and Denas peeped out and then came forward and put her arm around his neck and said:

"Woman's love or man's love, who knows how God makes it, father? And the fisherman's poet––a far wiser man than most men––asks and answers the same troublesome question in his way. What is love? How does it come?

"'Is it sucked with your milk? is it mixed with your
flesh?
Does it float about everywhere like a mesh,
So fine you can't see it? Is it blast? Is it blight?
Is it fire? Is it fever? Is it wrong? Is it right?
Where is it? What is it? The Lord above,
He only knows the strength of love;
He only knows, and He only can,
The root of love that is in a man.'[1]

For a woman; that's harder still, isn't it, father? But never fret yourself, father, for Denas loves you and mother first of all and best of all." And she slipped on to his knee and stretched out her hand to her mother, and so, kissing the tears off her father's face and the smiles off her

mother’s lips, she went happily to her sleep.

And a great trust came into the father’s and mother’s hearts; they spoke long of their hopes and plans for her happiness, and then, stepping softly to her bedside, they blessed her in her sleep. And she was dreaming of Roland Tresham. So mighty is love, and yet so ignorant; so strong, and yet so weak; so wise, and yet so easily deceived.

CHAPTER II.

OH, THE PITY OF IT!

“One love is false, one love is
true:
Ah, if a maiden only knew!”

“It is dear honey that is licked off a
thorn.”

THE thing Elizabeth Tresham had done her best to prevent had really happened, but she was not much to blame. Circumstances quite unexpectedly had disarranged her plans and made her physically unable to keep her usual guard over her companion. In fact, Elizabeth’s own love-affairs that eventful Saturday demanded all her womanly diplomacy and decision.

Miss Tresham had the two lovers supposed to be the lot of most women––the ineligible one, whom she contradictively preferred, and the eligible one, who adored her in spite of all discouragements. The first was the young rector of St. Penfer, a man to whom Elizabeth ascribed every heavenly perfection, but who in the matter of earthly goods had not been well considered by the church he served. The living of St. Penfer was indeed a very poor one, but then the church itself was early Norman and the rectory more than two hundred years old. Elizabeth thought poverty might at least be picturesque under such conditions; and at nineteen years of age poverty has a romantic colouring if only love paint it.

Robert Burrell, the other lover, had nothing romantic about him, not even poverty. He was unpoetically rich––he even trafficked in money. The rector was a very young man; Burrell was thirty-eight years old. The rector wrote poetry, and understood Browning, and recited from Arnold and Morris. Burrell’s tastes were for social science and statistics. He was thoughtful, intelligent, well-bred, and reticent; small in figure, with a large head and very fine eyes. The rector, on the contrary, was tall and fair, and so exceedingly handsome that women especially never perceived that the portal to all his senses was small and low and that he was incapable of receiving a great idea.

On that Saturday morning Robert Burrell resolved to test his fate, and he wrote to Miss Tresham. It was a letter full of that passionate adoration he was too timid to personally offer, and his protestations were honourably certified by the offer of his hand and fortune. It was a noble letter; a letter no woman could easily put aside. It meant to Elizabeth a sure love to guard and comfort her and an absolute release from the petty straits and anxieties of genteel poverty. It would make her the mistress of the finest domestic establishment in the neighbourhood––it would give her opportunities for helping Roland to the position in life he ought to occupy; and this thought––though an after one––had a great influence on Elizabeth’s mind.

After some consideration she took the letter to her father. He was in one of his most querulous moods, ill-disposed to believe in any good thing coming to him. He read the letter under such influence, and yet he could not but be sensible of its importance.

“It is a piece of unexpected good fortune for you, Elizabeth,” he said with a sigh. “Of course it will leave me alone here, but I do not mind that now; all else has gone––why not you? I thought, however, the rector was your choice. I hope you have no entanglement there.”

“He has never asked me to be his wife, but he has constantly shown that he wished it. He is poor––I think he felt that.”

“He has made love to you, called you the fairest girl on earth, made you believe he lived only in your presence, and so on, and so on?”

“Yes, he has talked in that way for a long time.”

“He never intends to ask you to marry him. He asked Dr. Eyre if you had any fortune. Oh, I know his kind and their ways!”

“I think you are mistaken, father. If he knew Mr. Burrell wished to marry me he would venture to–––”

“You think he would? I am sure he would not––but here the gentleman comes. I will speak a few words to him and then he will speak to you, and after that you can answer Mr. Burrell’s letter. Stay a moment, Elizabeth. It is only fair to tell you that I have no money but my annuity. When I die you will be penniless.”

So Elizabeth went out of the room silent and with her head drooping a little. The word “penniless” was a shock to her. She sat down in a large chair with her back to the light and shut her eyes. She wished to set the two men clearly before her. It would be easy to love Robert Burrell if she did not love the other. Did she love the other? She examined her heart pitilessly, and found always some little “if” crouching in a corner. In some way or other it was evident she did not believe “the other” would stand trial.

Mr. Tresham had the same opinion in a more positive form, and he was quite willing to test it. He met the rector with more effusion than was usual with him, and putting on his hat said:

“Walk around the garden with me, sir. I have something to say to you, and as I am a father you must permit me to speak very plainly. I believe you are in love with Elizabeth?”

There was no answer from the young man, and his face was pale and angry.

“Well, sir! Am I right or wrong?”

“Sir, I respect and like Miss Tresham. Everyone must do so, I think.”

“Have you asked her to marry you?”

“Oh, dear, no! Nothing of the kind, sir; nothing of the kind!”

“I thought not. Well, you see, sir, your dangling about my house keeps honest men outside, and I would be obliged to you, sir––in fact, sir, I require you at once to make Miss Tresham understand that your protestations are lies––simple and straightforward lies, sir. I insist on your telling her that your love-making is your amusement and girls’ hearts the pawns with which you play. You will tell her that you are a scoundrel, sir! And when you have explained yourself to Miss Tresham, you had better give the same information to Miss Trelawny, and to Miss Rose Trefuses, and to that poor little sewing-girl you practise your recitations on. Sir, I have the greatest contempt for you, and when you have spoken to Miss Tresham, you will leave my house and come here no more.”

“It will give me pleasure to obey you, sir.”

With these words he turned from the contemptuous old man, and in a hurried, angry mood sought Elizabeth in her usual sitting-room.

She opened her eyes as he opened the door and looked at him. Then she rose and went toward him. He waved her away imperatively and said:

“No, Elizabeth! No! I have no caress for you to-day! I do not think I shall ever feel lovingly to you again. Why did you tell your father anything? I thought our love was a secret, sacred affair. When I am brought to catechism about my heart matters, I shut my heart close. I am not to be hectored and frightened into marrying any woman.”

“Will you remember whose presence you are in?”

“If you wanted to be my wife–––”

“I do not want to be your wife.”

“If you loved me in the least–––”

“I do not love you in the least.”

“I shall come here no more. O Elizabeth! Only to think!”

“I am glad you come here no more. I see that you judge the honour and fulness of my heart by the infidelity and emptiness of your own. Go, sir, and remember, you discard not me––I discard you.”

Thus speaking she passed him haughtily, and he put out his hand as if to detain her, but she gathered her drapery close and so left him. Mr. Tresham heard her footsteps and softly opened the door of his library. “Come in here, Elizabeth,” he said with some tenderness.

“I have seen him.”

“And he brought you the news of his own dishonour. Let him go. He is as weak as a bent flax-stalk, and to be weak is to be wicked. Bury your disappointment in your heart, do not even tell Denas––girls talk to their mothers and mothers talk to all and sundry. Turn your face to Burrell Court now––it is a fair fortune.”

“And it may be a good thing for poor Roland.”

“It may. A respectable position and a certain income is often salvation for a man. Write to Mr. Burrell at once, and send the letter by the gardener.”

That was an easy direction to give, but Elizabeth did not find it easy to carry out. She wrote half-a-dozen letters, and none of them was satisfactory. So she finally asked her lover to call and see her at seven o’clock that evening. And it was very natural that, in the stress of such an important decision, the visit of Denas and their intention of dressing the altar should be forgotten. It was a kind of unpleasant surprise to her when Denas came and she remembered the obligation. Of course she could not now refuse to fulfil it. The offering was surely to God, and no relation between herself and the rector could interfere with it. But it was a great trial.

She said she had a headache, and perhaps that complaint as well as any other defined the hurt and shock she had received.

Denas wondered at Elizabeth's want of interest. She did not superintend as usual the cutting of the flowers, so carefully nursed and saved for this occasion; and though she went to the church with Denas and really did her best to make a heart offering with her Easter wreaths, the effort was evident. Her work lacked the joyous enthusiasm which had always distinguished Elizabeth's church duties.

The rector pointedly ignored her, and she felt keenly the curious, and in some cases the not kindly, glances of the other Easter handmaidens. In such celebrations she had always been put first; she was now last––rather, she was nowhere. It would have been hard to bear had she not known what a triumph she held in abeyance. For Mr. Burrell was the patron of St. Penfer's church; he had given its fine chime of bells and renovated its ancient pews of black oak. The new organ had been his last Christmas gift to the parish, and out of his purse mainly had come the new school buildings. The rector might ignore Miss Tresham, but she smiled to herself when she reflected on the salaams he would yet make to Mrs. Robert Burrell.

Now, Denas was not more prudent than young girls usually are. She saw that there was trouble, and she spoke of it. She saw Elizabeth was slighted, and she resented it. It was but natural under such circumstances that the church duty was made as short as possible; and it was just as natural that Elizabeth should endeavour to restore her self-respect by a confidential revelation of the great matrimonial offer she had received. And perhaps she did nothing unwomanly in leaving Denas freedom to suppose the rector's insolent indifference the fruit of his jealousy and disappointment.

In the midst of these pleasant confidences Roland unexpectedly entered. He had written positively that he was not coming. And then here he was. "I thought I could not borrow for the trip, but I managed it," he said with the bland satisfaction of a man who feels that he has accomplished a praiseworthy action. For once Elizabeth was not quite pleased at his visit. She would rather it had not occurred at such an important crisis of her life. She was somewhat afraid of Roland's enthusiasms and rapid friendships, and it was not unlikely that his first conception of Mr. Burrell's alliance would be "a good person to borrow money from."

Also she wished time to dress herself carefully and solitude to get the inner woman under control. After five o'clock Denas and Roland were both in her way. They were at the piano singing as complacently and deliberately as if the coming of her future husband was an event that could slip into and fit into any phase of ordinary life. It was a strange, wonderful thing to her, something so sacred and personal she could not bear to think of discussing it while Roland laughed and Denas sang. It was not an every-day event and she would not have it made one.

She knew her father would not interfere, and she knew one way in which to rid herself of Denas and Roland. Naturally she took it. A little after six she said: "I have a headache, Roland, and shall not walk to-night. Will you take Denas safely down the cliff?"

Roland was delighted, and Denas was no more afraid of the gay fellow than the moth is of the candle. She was pleasantly excited by the idea of a walk all alone with Roland. She wondered what he would say to her: if he would venture to give voice to the inarticulate love-making of the last two years––to all that he had looked when she sang to him––to all that he meant by the soft, prolonged pressure of her hand and by that one sweet stolen kiss which he had claimed for Christmas' sake.

They walked a little apart and very silently until they came into the glades of the cliff-breast. Then, suddenly, without word or warning, Roland took Denas in his arms and kissed her. "Denas! sweet Denas!" he cried, and the wrong was so quickly, so impulsively committed that for a moment Denas was passive under it. Then with flaming cheeks she freed herself from his embrace. "Mr. Tresham, you must go back," she said. "I can walk no further with you. Why were you so rude to me?"

"I am not rude, Denas, and I will not go back. After waiting two years for this opportunity, do you think I will give it up? And I will not let you call me Mr. Tresham. To you I am Roland. Say it here in my arms, dear, lovely Denas! Do not turn away from me. You cannot go back without telling Elizabeth, and I swear you shall not go forward until you forgive me. Come, Denas, sweet, forgive me!" He held her hands, he kissed her hands, and would not release the girl, who, as she listened to his rapid, eager pleading, became more and more disposed to tenderness. He was telling the story no one could better tell than Roland Tresham. His eyes, his lips, his smile, his caressing attitudes, all went with his eager words, his enthusiastic admiration, his passionate assertion of his long-hidden affection.

And everything was in his favour. The lovely spring eve, the mystical twilight, the mellow flutings of the blackbirds and the vesper thrushes piping nothing new or strange, only the sweet old tune of love, the lift of the hills, the soft trinkling of hidden brooks, the scent of violets at their feet and of the fresh leaves above them––all the magic of the young year and of young love made the delicious story Roland had been longing to tell and the innocent heart of Denas fearing and longing to hear very easy to interpret––very easy to understand.

Listening, and then refusing to listen; yielding a little, and then drawing back again, Denas nevertheless heard Roland's whole sweet confession. She was taught to believe that he had loved her from their first meeting; taught to believe and half-made to acknowledge that she had not been indifferent to him. She was under almost irresistible influences, and she did not think of others which might have counteracted them. Even Elizabeth's revelation to her of her own

splendid matrimonial hopes was favourable to Roland's arguments; for if it was a thing for congratulating and rejoicing that Elizabeth should marry a man so much richer than herself, where was it wrong for Denas to love one supposed to be socially and financially her superior?

Before they were half-way to the shingle Roland felt that he had won. The conviction gave him a new kind of power––the power all women delight to acknowledge; the sweet dictation, the loving tyranny that claims every thought of the beloved. Roland told Denas she must not dare to remember anyone but him; he would feel it and know it if she did. She promised this readily. She must not tell Elizabeth. Elizabeth was unreasonable, she was even jealous of everything concerning her brother; she would have a hundred objections; she would influence his father unfavourably; she would do all she could to prevent their seeing each other, etc., etc. And where a man pleads, one woman is readily persuaded against another. But Denas was much harder to persuade where the article of secrecy touched her father and mother. Her conscience, uneasy for some time, told her positively at this point that deception was wicked and dangerous. Roland could not win from her a promise in this direction. But he was not afraid––he was sure he could trust to her love and her desire to please him.

One of the cruellest things about a wrong love is that it delights in tangles and hidden ways; that it teaches and practises deceit from its first inception; that its earliest efforts are toward destroying all older and more sacred attachments. Roland was not willing to take the hand of Denas in the face of the world and say: "This is my beloved wife." Yet for the secret pleasure of his secret love, he expected Denas to wrong father-love and mother-love and to deceive day by day the friend and the companion who had been so kind and so fairly loyal to her.

No wonder John Penelles hated him instinctively. John's soul needed but a glimpse of the lovers sauntering down the narrow cliff-path to apprehend the beginning of sorrows. Instantaneous as the glimpse was, it explained to him the restless, angry, fearful feeling that had driven him from his own cottage to the place appointed by destiny for the revelation of his child's danger and of his own admonition.

He was glad that he had obeyed the spiritual order; whatever power had warned him had done him service. It is true the fond assurances of Denas had somewhat pacified his suspicions, but he was not altogether satisfied. When Denas declared that Roland had not made love to her, John felt certain that the girl was in some measure deceiving him––perhaps deceiving herself; for he could not imagine her to be guilty of a deliberate lie. Alas! lying is the vital air of secret love, and a girl must needs lie who hides from her parents the object and the course of her affections. Still, when he thought of her arms around his neck, of her cheek against his cheek, of her assertion that "Denas loved no one better than her father and mother," he felt it a kind of disloyalty to his child to altogether doubt her. He believed that Denas believed in herself. Well, then, he must try and trust her as far and as long as it was possible.

And Joan trusted her daughter––she scouted the idea of Denas doing anything that was outside her mother's approval. She told John that his fear was nothing but the natural conceit of men; they thought a woman could not be with one of their sex and not be ready to sacrifice her own life and the lives of all her kinsfolk for him. "It be such puddling folly to start with," she said indignantly; "talking about Denas being false to her father and mother! 'Tis a doleful, dismal, ghastly bit of cowardice, John. Dreadful! aw, dreadful!"

Then John was silent, but he communed with his own heart. Joan had not seen Roland and Denas as he had seen them; no one had troubled Joan as he had been troubled. For something often gives to a loving heart a kind of prescience, when it may be used for wise and saving ends; and John Penelles divined the angry trend of Roland's thoughts, though it was impossible for him to anticipate the special form that trend would take.

Roland had indeed been made furiously angry at the interference between himself and Denas. "I spoke pleasantly to the old fisher, and he was as rude as could be. Rude to me! Jove! I'll teach him the value of good manners to his betters."

He sat down on a lichen-covered rock, lit a cigar, and began to think. His personal dignity had been deeply wounded; his pride of petty caste trod upon. He, a banker's son, had been snubbed by a common fisherman! "He took Denas from me as if I was going to kill her, body and soul. He deserves all he suspected me of." And as these and similar thoughts passed through Roland's mind he was not at all handsome; his face looked dark and drawn and marked all over with the characters sin writes through long late hours of selfish revelry and riot.

But however his angry thoughts wandered, they always came back to the slight of himself personally––to the failure of Penelles to appreciate the honour he was doing him in wooing his daughter. And if the devil wishes to enter easily a man or a woman, he finds no door so wide and so easy of access as the door of wounded vanity and wounded self-esteem.

Roland's first impulse was to make Denas pay her father's debt. "I will never speak to her again. Common little fisher-girl! I will teach her that gentlemen are to be used like gentlemen. Why did she not speak up to her father? She stood there without a word and let him snub me. The idea!" These exclamations were, however, only the quick, unreasoning passion of the animal; when Roland had calmed himself with tobacco, he felt how primitive and foolish they were. His reflections were then of a different character; they began to flow steadily into a channel they had often wandered in, though hitherto without distinct purpose.

"After all, I like the girl. She has a kind of nixie, tantalising, bewitching charm that would drive a crowd mad. She has a fresh, sympathetic voice, penetrating, too, as a clarion. Her folk-songs and her sea-songs go down to the bottom of a man's heart and into every corner of it. Now, if I

could get her to London and have her taught how to manage her voice and face and person, if I had her taught how to dance––Jove! there is a fortune in it! Dressed in a fancy fisher costume, singing the casting songs and the boat songs––the calls and takes she knows so well––why, she would make a gas-lit theatre seem like the great ocean, and men would see the white-sailed ships go marching by, and the fishing cobbles, and the wide nets full of gleaming fish, and––and, by Jove! they would go frantic with delight. They would be at her feet. She would be the idol of London. She would sing full pockets empty. I should have all my desires, and now I have so few of them. What a prospect! But I'll reach it––I'll reach it, and all the fishers in St. Penfer's shall not hinder me!"

He thought his plans over again, and then it was dark and he rose up to return home; but as he shook himself into the proper fit of his clothes and settled his hat at the correct angle, he laughed vauntingly and said:

"I shall be even with you, John Penelles, before next Easter. I was not good enough for Denas, was I not? Well, she is going to work for me and for my pleasure and profit, John Penelles; going to make money for me to spend, John Penelles. My beautiful fisher-maid! I dare be bound she is dreaming of me now. Women! women! women! What dear little fools they are, to be sure!"

He was quite excited and quite good-tempered now. A new plan was like a new fortune to Roland. He never took into consideration the contrariness of circumstances and of opposing human elements. His plans were perfect from his own standpoint; the standpoint of other people was out of his consideration. Never before had he conceived so clever a scheme for getting a livelihood made for him. There was really nobody but Denas to interfere with any of his arrangements, and Denas was under his control and could be made more so. This night he felt positive that he had "hit the very thing at last."

He reached home late, but in exuberant spirits. Elizabeth was waiting for him. She was beautifully dressed, and in a moment he saw upon her hand the flash of large and perfect diamonds. "They were mother's, I suppose, and I have as much right––yes, more right––to them than she has." This was his first thought, but he did not express it. There was an air about Elizabeth that was quite new to him; he was curious and full of expectation as he seated himself beside her. She shook her head in a reproving manner.

"You have been making love to Denas. I see it in your eyes, Roland. And you promised me you never would."

"Upon my honour, Elizabeth. We met the old fisher Penelles a long way up the cliff and he took her from me. Talking of making love––pray, what have you been doing? I thought you had a headache."

"Roland, I am going to be married––June the 11th."

"Is that your engagement ring?"

"It is. Mr. Burrell says it was his mother's engagement ring; but, then, gems are all second-hand––a hundred-hand––a thousand-hand for that."

"Burrell! You take my breath away! Burrell! The man who has a bank in Threadneedle Street?"

"The same."

"Good gracious, Elizabeth! You have made all our fortunes! You noble girl! I did not know he was thinking of you."

"He was waiting for me. Destiny, Roland. But he is a noble-hearted man, and he loves me and I intend to be a good wife to him. I do indeed. He is going to make a great settlement on me, and I shall have an income of my own from it––all my own, to do what I like with."

"Elizabeth, dear, I always have loved you better than anything else in the world. You will not forget me now, will you, dear?"

"Why, Roland, I thought of you when I accepted Mr. Burrell. When I am married, Roland, I shall manage things for you as you wish them, I daresay. The man loves me so much that I could get not the half, but the whole of his kingdom from him."

"You are the dearest, noblest sister in the world."

"I could not bear to go to sleep without making you as happy as myself. Now, Roland, there is something you must not do, and that is, have any love nonsense with Denas Penelles. At Burrell Court you will meet rich girls and girls of good birth, and your only chance is in a rich marriage––you know it is, Roland."

"Oh, I do not quite think that, Elizabeth."

"Roland, you know it. How many situations have you had and lost? If Mr. Burrell gave you a desk in his bank to-morrow, you would hand back its key before my wedding-day."

"Perhaps; but there are other ways."

"None for you but a rich marriage. Every other way supposes work, and you will not work. You know you will not."

"I have some objections."

"Now, any trouble with a fisherman's daughter would be bad every way. There is the dislike rich girls have for low amours, and, worse still, the dreadfully Cornish habit fishers have of standing together. If you offend John Penelles or wrong him in the least, you offend and wrong every man

in St. Penfer fishing quarter. Do not snap your fingers so scornfully, Roland; you would be no match for a banded enmity like that."

"All this about Denas?"

"Yes; all this about Denas. The girl is a vain little thing, but I do not want to see her breaking her heart about your handsome face."

She drew the handsome face down to her lips and kissed it; and Roland used every charm he possessed in order to deepen his influence over his going-to-be-rich sister. He was already making plain and straight his paths for a certain supremacy at Burrell Court. He was already feeling that a good deal of Robert Burrell's money would come, through Elizabeth's hands, into his pocket. That would be a perfectly legitimate course for it to take. Why should not a loving sister help a loving brother?

And oh, the pity of it! While brother and sister talked only of themselves, Robert Burrell sat silent and happy in his study, planning magnificent generosities for his bride; thinking of her youth, of her innocence, her ignorance of fashionable society, of her affection for and her loyalty to her father and brother, and loving her with all his great honest heart for these very things. And Denas lay dreaming of Roland. And Roland, even while he was talking with Elizabeth about Burrell Court, was holding fast to his intention to degrade Denas. For the singing, dancing, fiddling life which he was to lead with her suited his tastes exactly; he felt it would be the absolutely necessary alterative to the wealthy decorum of Burrell Court.

O Love! what cruelties are done in thy name! We think of thee as coming with a rose, and a song, and a smile. Nay, but the Calydonian Maidens were right when they cried bitterly: "Death should have risen with Love, and Grief, and visible Fear; and there should have been heard a voice of lamentation and mourning, as of many in prison."[2]

CHAPTER III.

THE COTTAGE BY THE SEA.

"O blesséd sounds of wiser life
Contented with its day,
How ye rebuke the inner strife
That wears the soul away."

"The Eden we live in is our own heart,
And the first thing we do of our free choice
Is sure to be sin."

––Festus.

JOHN PENELLES was one of those strong religious characters whose minds no questions disturb, whose spiritual aspirations are never put out of breath. He had not yet been a yoke-fellow with sorrow. Hard work, the cruelty of the elements, the self-denials of poverty, these things he had known; but love had never smitten him across the heart.

When he rose that Easter Sunday he rose singing. He sang as he put on his chapel broadcloth; he was trying over the different metres and the Easter anthem as he walked about the sanded floor of his cottage, and thought over the heads of his sermon. For he was to preach that night in the little chapel of St. Swer, a fishing hamlet four miles to the northward; indeed, John preached very often, being a local preacher in the circuit of St. Penfer, and rather famous for his ready, short sermons, full of the breath of the sea and of the savour of the fisher's life upon it.

Denas had gone to a neighbouring farm for milk. He heard her quick step on the shingle, and he stood still in the middle of the floor to meet her. She had on a short dress of pink calico and a square of blue-and-white-plaided flannel thrown over her head. She came in like the breath of the spring Sabbath. Her face was rosy, her lovely lips slightly apart, her blue eyes dewy and soft and bright and brimming with love. She lifted her face to her father's face, and he forgot in a moment all his fears. He saw only Denas, and not any of her faults; if she had faults, he buried them that moment in his love, and they were all put out of memory.

Roland and the Treshams were not spoken of. John and Joan both had the fisher's dislike to name a person or a thing they considered unlucky or unpleasant. "If you name evil you do call

evil" was their simple creed; and it saved many a household worry. They sat down to their breakfast of tea, and fresh fish, and white loaf, and the wide-open door let in the sea wind, and the sea smell, and the soft murmur of the turning tide. John's heart was full of holy joy; he could feel it singing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" And though he was only a poor Cornish fisher, he was sure that the world was a very good world and that life was well worth the living.

"Joan, my dear," he said, "the Bible do tell us that there shall be a new earth. Can it be a sweeter one than this is?"

"Aw, John, it may be a sight better, for we be promised 'there shall be no sea there,' thank God! no freezing, drowning men and no weeping wives. I do think of that when you are out in the frost and storm, John, and the thought be heaven itself."

"My dear, the sea be God's own highway. There be wonders by the sea. Was not St. John sent to the sea-side for the Revelations? 'Twas there he heard the angels, whose voices were like the sound of many waters. Heaven will be wonderful! wonderful! if it do make us forget the sea. Aw, my dear Joan, 'twill be something added to this earth, not something taken away, and the good thing added will make both the sea and the 'bounds of the everlasting hills' to be blessed."

"John, who told you that? And if the cruel, hungry, awful sea is not to be taken away, nor yet the 'everlasting hills,' what will make it a new earth?"

"God's tabernacle will be in it. Aw, my dear, that will make everything new––sea and land, men and women; and then there will be no more tears. My dear, when I think of that I love this old world, not only for what it is, but also for what it is going to be."

"Father, you are preaching and not eating your breakfast; and I want to get breakfast over and the cups washed, for I have to dress myself yet, and a new dress to put on, too," and Denas smiled and nodded and touched her father's big hand with her small one, and then John smiled back, and with a mighty purpose began to eat his fish and bread and drink his tea.

The whole day took its colour from this happy beginning. In after-years John often spoke of that Easter Sabbath; of their quiet walk all together up the cliff to St. Penfer Chapel; of the singing, and the sermon, and the Sunday-school in the afternoon for the fisher children; of the walk to St. Swer with Denas by his side and the walk back, singing all the way home; of the nice supper ready for them, and how they had eaten and talked till the late moon made a band of light across the table, and John said hurriedly:

"Well, there now! The tide will be calling me before I do have time to get sleep in my eyes."

Then Joan rose quickly and Denas began to put away the bread and cheese and milk, and though none recognised the fact at the time, the old life passed away for ever when the three rose from that midnight supper.

Yet for several days afterward nothing seemed to be changed. John went to his fishing and had unusual good fortune; and Joan and Denas were busy mending nets and watching the spring bleaching. It was the duty of Denas to take the house linen to some level grassy spot on the cliff-breast and water and watch it whiten in the sunshine. Monday she had gone to this duty with a vague hope that Roland would seek her out. She watched all day for him. She knew that she was looking pretty, and she felt that her employment was picturesque.

As she stood over the breadths of damask, with the water-can making mimic rain upon them, she was well aware that all her surroundings added charm to her charm. The soft winds blowing her hair and her pink skirt; the green leaves whispering above and around her; the rippling of the brook running down the hillside––all these things belonged as much to her as the frame belongs to the picture. Why did not Roland come to see her thus? Was he afraid for the words he had said to her? Were they not true words? Did he intend, by ignoring them, to teach her that he had only been playing with her vanity and her credulity?

Tuesday was too wet and blowy to spread the linen, and Denas felt the morning insufferably long and tedious. Her father, who had been on the sea all night, dozed in his big chair on the hearthstone. Joan was silent, and went about her duties in a tiptoeing way that was very fretful to the impatience of Denas. Denas herself was knitting a guernsey, and as she sat counting the stitches Tristram Penrose came to the door and, after a moment's pause, spoke to her. He was a fine young fellow with an open-air look on his brown face and an open-love look in his brown eyes.

"My dear Denas," he said, "is your father in?"

"Tris, who gave you license to call me dear? and my father is asleep by the fireside."

"Aw, then, the One who gave me license to live gave me the license to love; and dear you be and dear you always will be to Tris Penrose. The word may be shut in my heart or I may say it in your ear, Denas; 'tis all the same; dear you be and dear you always will be."

She shrugged her shoulders petulantly, and yet could not resist the merry up-glance which she knew went straight to the big fellow's heart. Then she began to fold up her knitting. While Tris was talking to her father, she would ask for permission to go and see Elizabeth. While Tris was present, she did not think he would refuse her request, for if he did so she could ask him for reasons and he would not like to give them.

Denas had all the natural diplomacy of a clever woman, and she knew the power of a fond word and a sunny smile. "Father"––is there any fonder word?––"Father, I want to go and see Miss Tresham. She told me a very important secret on Saturday, and I know she was expecting me

yesterday to talk it over with her;" then she went close to his side and put her hand on his shoulder and snuggled her cheek in his big beard, and called poor Tris' soul into his face for the very joy of watching her.

John was not insensible to her charming. He hesitated, and Denas felt the hesitation and met it with a bribe: "You could come up the cliff to meet me before you go to the boats––couldn't you, father?"

"Nay, my dear, I'll not need to look for you on the cliff, for you will stay at home, Denas; it rains––it blows."

"Miss Tresham was expecting me all through yesterday, but it was so fine I took the linen to bleach. She will be so disappointed if I do not come to-day. We have a secret, father––a very particular secret."

It was hard to resist the pretty, pleading, coaxing girl, but John had a strength of will which Denas had never before put to the test.

"My dear girl," he answered, "if Miss Tresham be longing to talk her secrets to you, she can come to you. There be nothing in the world to hinder her. Here be a free welcome to her."

"I promised, father."

"'Tis a pity you did."

"I must go, father."

"You must stay at home. 'Twould be like putting my girl through the fire to Baal to send her into the company there be now at Mr. Tresham's."

"I care nothing for the company. I want to see Miss Tresham."

"Now, then, I am in earnest, Denas. You shall not go. Take your knitting and sit down to your own work."

She lifted her knitting, but she did not lift a stitch. Where there is no positive compulsion the hand is only handmaid to the heart, and it does the work only which the heart wishes. At this hour Denas hated her knitting, and there being no necessity on her to perform it, her hands lay idle upon her lap. After a few minutes' conversation John went out with Tris Penrose, and then Denas began to cry with anger and disappointment.

"My father has insulted me before Tris Penrose," she said, "and I will never speak to Tris again. Many a time and oft he has let me go to St. Penfer when it was raining and blowing. He is very cross, cruel cross! Mother, you give me leave––do! I will tell you a secret. Elizabeth is going to be married, and she wants me to help in getting her things ready. Mother, let me go; it is cruel hard to refuse me!"

The news of an approaching marriage can never be heard by any woman with indifference. Joan stayed her needle and looked at Denas with an eager curiosity.

"'Tis to the rector, I'll warrant, Denas," she said.

"No, it is not; but the rector is fine and angry, I can tell you. It was too much for him to speak to Miss Tresham on Saturday afternoon at the church. But won't he be sorry for his disknowledging her when he knows who is to be the bridegroom? He will, and no mistake."

"I don't understand you, Denas. Who is going to marry Miss Tresham? Say the man's name, and be done with it."

"'Tis a great secret, mother; but if you will let me go to St. Penfer I will tell you."

"Aw, my dear, I can live without Miss Tresham's secrets. And I do know she can't be having one I would go against your father to hear tell of, not I."

"Father is unjust and unkind. What have I done, mother?"

"Your father is afraid of that young jackanapes, Roland Tresham, and good reason, too, if all be true that is said to be true."

"Mr. Roland is a gentleman."

"Gentleman and gentleman––there be many kinds, and no kind at all for you. You be a fisher's daughter, and you must choose a husband of your own sort––none better, thank God! The robin would go to the eagle's nest, and a poor sad time it had there. Gentlemen marry gentlemen's daughters, Denas, and if they don't, all sides do be sorry enough."

"Am I to go no more to Miss Tresham's?"

"Not until the young man is back in London."

"Then I wish he would hurry all and be off."

"So do I, my dear. I would be glad to hear that he was far away from St. Penfer."

Joan rose with these words and went out of the room, and Denas knew that for this day also there was no hope of seeing Roland. Her heart was hot with anger, and she began to lay some of the blame upon her lover. He was a man. He could have braved the storm. And there was no open quarrel between her father and himself; it would have been easy enough to make an excuse for calling. Elizabeth might have written a letter to her. Roland might have brought it. Sitting there, she could think of half-a-dozen things which Roland might have accomplished. How long the hours were! How would she ever get the days over? Her mother singing in the

curing-shed made her angry. The ticking of the big clock accentuated her nervous irritability, and when John returned silent and with that air about him which indicated the master of the house, Denas felt surely that all was over for the present between her and Roland Tresham.

The night became blustery after John and the men had gone to the fishing, and by midnight there was a storm. Joan's white, anxious face was peering through the windows or out of the open door into the black night continually. And the presence of Denas did not comfort her, as it usually did; the mother felt that her child's thoughts were with strangers, and not with her father out on the stormy sea.

It was ten o'clock next morning before John got home. He had made a little harbour some miles off, and glad to make it, and had been compelled to lay there until daybreak. He was weary and silent. He said it would have gone hard with him had not Tris been at his right hand. Then he looked anxiously at Denas, and when she did not give him a smile or a word, he sat down by the fire much depressed and exhausted. For he saw that his child had a hard, angry heart toward him, and he felt how useless it was to try and explain or justify his dealings with her.

It was now Wednesday, and Denas burned with shame when she thought how readily she had listened to so careless a lover. No word of any kind came from Elizabeth, who indeed was not to blame under the circumstances. Mr. Burrell was much with her; they had a hundred delightful arrangements to make about their marriage and their future housekeeping. And if in these days Elizabeth was a little proud and important and very much interested in her own affairs, she was innocently so. She was only exhibiting the natural parade of a lovely bud spreading itself into a perfect flower.

She had not the slightest intention of being unkind to Denas; indeed, she looked forward to many pleasant hours with her and to her assistance in all the preparations for her marriage. And Roland had introduced the subject quite as frequently as he felt it to be prudent. Finally Elizabeth had plainly told him that she did not intend to have Denas with her until he returned to London. "I see you so seldom, Roland," she said, "and we will not have any stranger intermeddling when you are at home."

"Come, Elizabeth," he answered, "you are putting up your disapprovals in the shape of compliments. My dear, you are afraid I will fall in love with Denas."

"I am afraid you will make love to her, which is a very different thing."

"Do you want Denas here?"

"I shall be glad to have her here. I have a great deal of sewing to do, and she is a perfect and rapid needlewoman."

"Then go to-morrow and ask her to come. I am off to London to-night. In this world no one has pleasure but he who gives himself some. You were my only pleasure at St. Penfer, and I do not care to share your society with Robert Burrell."

"I will go and see Denas. I must ask her parents to let her stay with me until my marriage."

But as Denas did not know of this intention, that weary Wednesday dragged itself away amid rain and storm and household dissatisfaction; but by Thursday morning the elements had blustered their passion away and the world was clear-skied and sunshiny. Not so Denas; she sat in a dark corner of the room, cross and silent, and answering her father and mother only in monosyllables. John's heart was greatly troubled by her attitude. He stood leaning against the lintel of the door, watching his boat rocking upon the tide, for he was thinking that until Denas and he were "in" again he had better stop at home.

"I do leave my heart at home, and then I do lose my head at sea;" and with this unsatisfactory thought John turned to his daughter and said softly: "Denas, my dear, 'tis a bright day. Will you have a walk? But there––here be Miss Tresham, I do know it is her."

Denas rose quickly and looked a moment at the tall, handsome girl picking her way across the pebbly path. Then she threw down her knitting and went to meet her, and Elizabeth was pleased and flattered by her protégée's complaints and welcomes. "I thought you would never send me a message or a letter," almost sobbed Denas. "I never hoped you would come. O Elizabeth, how I have longed to see you! Life is so stupid when I cannot come to your house."

"Why did you not come?"

"Father was afraid of your brother."

"He was right, Denas. Roland is too gay and thoughtless a young man to be about a pretty girl like you. But he has gone to London, and I do not think he will come back here until near the wedding-day."

Then they were at the door, and John Penelles welcomed the lady with all the native grace that springs from a kind heart and from noble instincts which have become principles. "You be right welcome, Miss Tresham," he said. "My little maid has fret more than she should have done for you. I do say that."

"I also missed Denas very much. I have no sister, Mr. Penelles, and Denas has been something like one to me. I am come to ask you if she may stay with me until my marriage in June. No one can sew like Denas, and now I can afford to pay her a good deal of money for her work––for her love I give her love. No gold pays for love, does it, sir?"

John was pleased with her frankness. He knew the value of money, he knew also the moral value of letting Denas earn money. He answered with a candour which brushed away all pretences:

“We be all obliged to you, Miss Tresham. We be all glad that Denas should make money so happily. It will help her own wedding and furnishing, whenever God do send her a good man to love her. It be a great honour to Denas to have your love, but there then! your brother is a fine, handsome young man, and––no offence, miss––it would not be a great honour for my little maid to have his love or the likelihood of it––and out of temptation is out of danger, miss, and if so be I do speak plain and bluff, you will not put it down against me, I’ll warrant.”

“I think, Mr. Penelles, that you are quite right. I have felt all you say for two years, and have shielded the honour and the happiness of Denas as if she was in very deed my sister. Can you not trust her with me now?”

“’Tis a great charge, miss.”

“I am glad to take it. I will keep it for you faithfully.”

“’Tis too much to ask, miss; ’twould be a constant charge, for wrong-doing is often a matter of a few moments, though the repentance for it may last a lifetime.”

“Roland is in London. He went yesterday. I do not expect him to come to St. Penfer again until the wedding. I assure you of this, Mr. Penelles.”

“Then your word for it, Miss Tresham. Take my little maid with you. She be my life, miss. If Denas was hurt any way ’twould be like I got a shot in my backbone; ’twould be as bad for her mother, likewise for poor Tris Penrose.”

Elizabeth smiled. “I am glad to hear there is a lover; Denas never told me of him. Is he good and brave, and handsome and young, and well-to-do?”

“He be all these, and more too; for he do love the ground Denas treads on––he do for sure.”

Denas was in her room putting on her blue merino and her hat, and while she made her small arrangements and talked to her mother, Elizabeth set herself to win the entire confidence of John Penelles. It was not a hard thing to do. Evil and sin had to be present and palpable for John’s honest heart to realize them. And Miss Tresham’s open face, her frank assurances, her straightforward understanding of the position were a pledge John never doubted.

Certainly Elizabeth meant all she promised. She was as desirous to prevent any love-making as John Penelles was. And when interest and conscience are in the same mind, people do at least try to keep their promises. Denas went gayly back with her to St. Penfer. It was something to be in Roland’s home; she would hear him spoken of, and she would exchange the monotonous common duties of her own home for the happy bustle and the festive preparations of a house where a fine wedding was to be celebrated.

Her expectations in this respect were more than gratified. Every hour of the day brought something to discuss, to exclaim over, to wonder about, to select, to try on. Notes and flowers, and sweetmeats, and presents of all kinds were continually reminding Elizabeth of her lover; and she grew beautiful and generous in the sunshine of such a magnificent love. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday passed like a happy dream. On Saturday evening Denas was to return home until after the Sabbath. For Saturday night and Sunday were John’s holiday, and a poor one indeed it would be to him without his daughter. Nor was Denas averse to go home. She looked forward to the pleasure of telling her mother everything she had seen and done; she looked forward to going to chapel with her father, and showing a pretty hat and collar and a pair of kid gloves which Elizabeth had given her.

About five o’clock she started down the cliff. Her heart was light in spite of Roland’s silence. Indeed, she had begun to feel a contempt for him and greater contempt for herself because she had for a moment believed in a man so light of love and so false of heart. Elizabeth’s affairs were full of interest to her. Elizabeth had been so sisterly and kind. She had paid her well and promised her many things that made life seem full of hope to the ambitious fisher-girl. How the birds did sing! How still the green glades were! In that one week of rain and sunshine, how the leaves had grown!

She went gayly forward, humming softly to herself––none of the songs Roland sang with her, but a little love-song Elizabeth had learned from Robert Burrell. Her foot had that spring to its lift and fall that shows there is a young innocent heart above it. In and out among the glades she went, almost as brightly and musically as the brook whose sparkling and darkling course she followed. When but a few hundred yards down the path, someone called her. She thought it was a fancy and went onward, nevertheless feeling a sudden silence and trouble. Immediately she heard footsteps and the rustling swish of parting leaves and branches.

Then she stood still and looked toward the place of disturbance. A moment afterward Roland Tresham was at her side. He took her hand; he said softly, “This way, darling!” and before she could make the slightest resistance he had drawn her into a little glade shut in by large boulders and lofty trees. Then he had his arms around her, and was laughing and talking a thousand sweet, unreasonable things.

“Oh, Mr. Tresham, let me go! Let me go!” cried Denas.

“Not while you say ‘Mr. Tresham.’”

“Oh, Roland!”

“Yes, love, Roland. Say it a thousand times. Did you think I had forgotten you?”

“You were very cruel.”

“Cruel to be kind, Denas. My love! they think I am in London. Everyone thinks so. I did go to London last Wednesday. I left London this morning very early. I got off the train at St. Claire and walked across the cliff, and found out this pretty hiding-place. And I am going to be here every Saturday night––every Saturday night, wet or fine, and if you do not come here to see me, I will go to Australia and never see St. Penfer again.”

He would talk nothing but the most extravagant nonsense, and finally Denas believed him. He gave her a ring that looked very like Elizabeth’s betrothal ring, and was even larger than Elizabeth’s, and he told her to wear it in her breast until she could wear it on her hand. And for this night, and for many other Saturday nights, he never named the plot in his shallow head and selfish heart; he devoted himself to winning completely the girl’s absorbing love––not a very difficult thing to do, for the air of romance and mystery, at once so charming and so dangerous, enthralled her fancy; his eager, masterful, caressing wooing made her tremble with a delicious fear and hope; and in the week’s silence and dreaming, the folly of every meeting grew marvellously.

Nor was the loving, ignorant girl unaffected by the apparently rich gifts her lover brought her––brooch and locket and bracelet, many bright and sparkling ornaments, which poor Denas hid away with joy and almost childish delight and prideful expectations. And if her conscience troubled her, she assured it that “if it was right for Elizabeth to receive such offerings of affection, it could not be wrong for her to do likewise.”

Alas! alas! She did not remember that the element of secrecy made the element of sin. If she had only entertained this thought, it would have made her understand that the meeting which cannot be known and the gift which cannot be shown are wicked in their essence and their influence, and are incapable of bringing forth anything but sorrow and sin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEED OF CHANGE.

“I love thee! I love thee!
’Tis all that I can say;––
It is my vision in the night,
My dreaming in the day.”

––Hood.

“Ah, if the selfish knew how much they lost,
What would they not endeavour, not endure,
To imitate as far as in them lay
Him who His wisdom and His power employs
In making others happy.”

––Cowper.

ALL fashionable wedding ceremonies are similar in kind and effect, and Elizabeth would not have been satisfied if hers had varied greatly from the highest normal standard. Her dress was of the most exquisite ivory-white satin and Honiton lace. Her bridesmaids wore the orthodox pink and blue of palest shades. There was the usual elaborate breakfast; the cake and favours, the flowers and music, and the finely dressed company filling the old rooms with subdued laughter and conversation. All things were managed with that consummate taste and order which money without stint can always command; and Elizabeth felt that she had inaugurated a standard of perfection which cast all previous affairs into oblivion, and demanded too much for any future one to easily attain unto.

In the arrangements for this completely satisfactory function, the position which Denas was to occupy caused some discussion. Mr. Tresham had hitherto regarded her with an indifference which sometimes assumed a character of irritability. He was occasionally jealous of his daughter’s liking for the girl; he knew men, and he was always suspicious of her influence on his son Roland. Proud and touchy about his own social position, he never forgot that Denas was the child of poor fisher people, and he could not understand the tolerant affection Elizabeth gave to a girl so far beneath her own standing.

When Elizabeth included her in the list of bridesmaids, he disputed the choice with considerable temper. He said that he had long endured a companionship not at all to his taste, because it gave Elizabeth pleasure; but that on no account would he compel his guests to receive Denas as their equal. His opposition was so determined that Elizabeth gave up her intention, though she had to break an oft-repeated promise. But, then, promises must be dependent on circumstances for their redemption, and all the circumstances were against Denas.

“Mr. Burrell has two sisters,” said Elizabeth to her, “and if I do not ask Cousin Flora I shall never be forgiven; and father insists upon Georgia Godolphin, because of his friendship with Squire Godolphin; and I cannot manage more than four bridesmaids, can I? So you see, Denas,” etc., etc., etc.

Denas saw quite clearly, and with a certain pride of self-respect she relegated herself to a position that would interfere with no one’s claims and offend no one’s social ideas.

“I am to be your real bridesmaid, Elizabeth,” she said. “Miss Burrells, and your cousin Flora, and Miss Godolphin are for show. I shall be really your maid. I shall lace your white satin boots, and fasten your white satin dress, and drape the lace, and clasp the gems, and make your bride-bouquet. I shall stay upstairs while you are at church and lay ready your travelling costume and see that Adèle packs your trunks properly; and when you go away I shall fasten your cloak, and tie your bonnet, and button your gloves, and then go away myself; for there will be no one here then that likes me and nothing at all for me to do.”

And this programme, made with a little heartache and sense of love’s failure, Denas faithfully carried out. It cost her something to do it, but she did not permit Elizabeth to see that she counted her faithless in her heart. For she did not blame her friend; she understood the force of the reasons not given––Mr. Tresham’s latent dislike, her humble birth, her want of fine clothes and fine polish and rich connections––and she felt keenly enough that there was nothing about her, personally or socially, to make Mr. Tresham’s guests desire her.

And when the day drew near and they began to arrive, Denas shrank more and more from their society. She saw that Elizabeth’s manner with them was quite different from her manner to herself, and in spite of much kindness and generosity she felt humiliated, alone, outside, and apart. She wondered why it was. These rich girls came in little companies to Elizabeth’s room, and with soft laughter and exclamations of delight examined the bride’s pretty garments and presents. They were never haughty with her; on the contrary, they were exceedingly pleasant. They called her “Miss Denas” and carefully avoided anything like condescension in their intercourse. Yet Denas knew that between them and herself there was a line impalpable as the equator and just as potent in its dividing power.

It saddened her beyond reason, and when Roland arrived two days before the wedding and she saw him wandering in the garden, riding, driving, playing tennis, chatting and chaffing, singing and dancing with these four girls of his own circle, she divined a difference, which she could not explain but which pained and angered her.

Still, that last week of Elizabeth’s maiden life was a wonderful week. It was like living in the scenes of a theatre––there was no talk but of love. All that everyone said or did referred to the great passion. The house was in the hands of decorators; the aroma of all kinds of delicious things to eat was in the air. There was a constant tinkling of the piano and harp. Snatches of song, ripples of laughter, young voices calling through the house and garden, light footsteps going everywhere, the flutter of pink and blue and white dresses, the snowy ribbons and massed roses in every room, the exciting atmosphere of love and expectation––who could escape it? And who, when in the midst of it, was able to prevent or to deny its influence?

Denas gave herself freely to the moment. The presence of Roland made all things easy to her. He contrived many an unseen meeting; her lips never lost the sense of his stolen kisses; her hands were constantly pink with the passing clasp or the momentary pressure. No one could have supposed he was planning anything, for he was continually with someone or with all of the four bridesmaids; yet there was not an hour in which he did not manage to give Denas her part, though it were but an upward glance at the open window where she sat sewing, or a kiss flung backward to her; or a lifted hat, or a rose left where she alone could find it; or a little love-letter crushed into her hand in passing.

Such a week to stir a young heart to love’s sweet fever! It passed like a dream, and went finally with the clashing of wedding-bells and the trampling of horses carrying away the bride. Then the guests followed one by one until the house was lonely and deserted; and the servants began to remove the remnants of the feast and to take down the fading wreaths and roses.

Mr. Tresham took Roland with him to Burrell Court. He seemed determined to keep his son by his side, and the drive to Burrell was an effectual way. No one thought of Denas. She had now no place nor office in the house. But she remained until near sundown, for she trusted that Roland would find out a way to meet her at their usual trysting-place. And just when she had given him up he came. Then he told her that he was going to London in the morning, because his father had suddenly resolved upon a short pleasure-trip, and he had promised to go with him as far as Paris. But he had provided for their correspondence.

“There is a man in St. Clair called Pyn, a boatman living in the first cottage you come to, Denas,” he said. “I have given him money, and my letters to you will go to him. Can you walk to St. Clair for them?” It was a foolish question; Roland knew that Denas would walk twenty miles for a letter from him. He then gave her some addressed envelopes in which to enclose her letters to him. “Pyn will post them,” he said, “and the handwriting will deceive everyone. And I

shall come back to you, Denas, as soon as I can get away from my father; and Pyn will bring a message to St. Penfer and let you know, in some way, when I get home."

These particulars being fully arranged and understood, he talked to her of her own loveliness. He told her she was more beautiful in her plain white frock than the bride in her bride-robes. He said all that lovers have said from the beginning of time; all that lovers will say until time ends. Denas believed him, believed every word, for the nature of true love is to be without doubt or fear. And Roland thought he loved her quite well enough for their future life together. If she was to become a public singer, it would not be wise for him to have too exclusive and jealous affection for her. Roland had always been prudent for himself; he thought of everything which might affect his own happiness. This night, however, he gave up all for love. He kept Denas by his side until the gloaming was quite gone, and then he walked with her down to the very shingle. They parted with tears and kisses and murmured protestations of fidelity. And Denas watched her lover until he reached the first bend in the upward path. There he turned, and she stretched out her arms to him, and Roland lifted his hat and kissed his hand, and then vanished among the thick trees.

The moon was just rising. She made the air silver, and Denas could see the fishing-boats on the horizon swimming in her quivering beams. She knew, then, that her father was at sea. As she approached the cottage she saw her mother sitting on the door-step. Her arms were folded across her knees, she stooped forward, she had an air of discontent or anxiety. There was also a dumb feeling of resentment in her heart, though she did not actually know that there was reason for it. She tried to meet her child pleasantly, but could not, and she was almost angry at the stubborn indifference which she was unable to conquer.

"You be long in getting home, Denas. Father went to sea quite put out. Jane Serlo says the bride did go away at two o'clock. Well, then, it be long after nine now, Denas!"

"I had a lot to do after Mrs. Burrell left, mother––things she would not trust anyone else to look to."

"Hum-m! 'Tis no good way, to take such charge. Who knows what she may be saying after-times? I do feel glad she be married at last, and done with. Mayhap we may see a bit of comfort ourselves now."

"She gave me twenty pounds before she left, mother."

"There be things twenty pound can't buy nor pay for; I tell you that, Denas. And to see your father go off with the boat to-night, without heart in him and only care for company! I do not feel to like it, Denas. If your lover be dear to you, so be my old husband to me."

"What lover are you talking about, mother?"

"The lover that kept you on the cliff-breast––Roland Tresham, he be the lover I mean."

"Who told you I was with Roland?"

"I know that you were not at Mr. Tresham's, for one called there to put you safely home."

"I suppose Tris Penrose has been spying me and telling tales to father and you."

"There be no need for Tris nor for anyone else to speak. Say to me, plain and straight, that you were not with Roland Tresham to-night. Say that to me, if you dare."

"I have had such a happy day, mother, and now you have taken all the pleasure out of it––a mean thing to do! I say that."

"Your father and I had a happy day, thinking of your happiness. And then to please that bad young man, who is not of your kind and not of your kin, you do stay out till bad birds and night creatures are prowling; till the dew be wetting you; till you have sent your father off to the deep sea with a heart heavy enough to sink his boat––a mean thing that to do! Yes! yes! cruel mean thing!"

"Mrs. Burrell gave me twenty pounds. I had to do something to earn it."

"My faith! I'd fling the twenty pound to the fishes. Aw, then, 'tis a poor price for my girl's love, and her innocent heart, and the proud content she once had in her own folk. Only fishers! but God's folk, for all that! But there! What be the use of talking? After Mr. Tresham's flim-flams, my words be only muddling folly."

"I am going to bed, mother."

"To be sure. Go your ways."

Then Joan also rose, and went to the fireside, and drew the few coals together, and lit a lamp. For a moment she stood still, looking at the closed door between her and her child; then she lifted a large book from the window-sill, laid it on the small round table, opened it wide, and sat down before it. It was a homely, workaday-looking book, and she did not read a word of it, though her eyes were upon the page. But it was the Bible. And the Bible is like the sunshine, it comforts and cheers us only to sit down in its presence.

And very soon Joan lifted her hand and laid it across the open page. It was like taking the hand of a friend. God knows what strength, what virtue, there was in that movement! For she immediately covered her face with her other hand and tears began to fall, and anon mighty whispered words parted her lips––words that went from the mother's heart to the heart of God! How can such prayer ever fail?

In the morning John Penelles met his daughter, not with the petulant anger of a wounded woman, but with a graver and more reasonable reproof. “Denas, my dear,” he said, and he gently stroked her hair as he spoke, “Denas, you didn’t do right yesterday; did you now? But you do be sorry for it, I see; so let the trouble go. But no more of it! No more out in the dark, my girl, either for bride-making or for corpse-waking, and as for the man who kept you out, let him ask God to keep him from under my hand. That is all about it. Come and give father his tea, and then we will mend the nets together; and if Saturday be fair, Denas, we will go to St. Merryn and see your Aunt Agnes. ‘You don’t want to go?’ Aw, yes, my dear, you do want to go. You be vexed now; and not you that should be vexed at all, but your mother and I. There, then! No more of it!”

He spoke the last words as if he was at the end of his patience, and then turned sharply toward the broiled fish and hot tea which Joan was placing on the table. The face of Denas angered him, it was so indifferent and so wretched. He could have laughed away a little temper and excused it, for he was not an unjust nor even an unsympathetic man; and he realized his daughter’s youth and her natural craving for those things which youth considers desirable.

But the utter hopelessness of her attitude, her refusal to eat, her silence, her sighs, the unsuitableness of the dress she wore to the humble duties of her station, her disinclination to talk of what troubled her, or indeed to talk at all––both John and Joan felt these things to be a wrong, deliberate and perpetual, against their love and their home and their daily happiness.

It was certainly a great and sudden change in the life of Denas. For the past eight weeks she had been in an atmosphere of excitement, tinctured with the subtle hopes and expectations of love. In it she had grown mentally far beyond the realization of her friends. She had observed, assimilated, and translated her new ideas through her own personality as far as her means permitted. If her mother and father had looked carefully at their daughter, they would have seen how much more effectively her hair was arranged; what piquancy of mode had been observed in the making of her new dresses; what careful pride had dictated the fashion and fit of her high-heeled shoes; what trouble was systematically taken to preserve her delicate skin and to restore the natural beauty of her hands––in short, they must have noticed that their child’s toilet and general appearance was being gradually but still rapidly removed from all fitness with her present surroundings.

And just after Elizabeth’s marriage came on the hardest and most distinctive part of the fisher’s year. All along the rocky coast the “huers” were standing watching for the shoals of pilchard, and the men were in the boats beneath, waiting for their signal to shoot the seines. Every fisher had now, in an intense degree, the look which always distinguishes him––the look of a man accustomed to reflect and to be ready for emergencies. This year the shoals were so large that boat-loads were caught easily in fifty feet of water.

Then every wife in the hamlet had her hands full and busy from dawn till dark; and Joan went to the work with an exuberant alacrity and good nature. In former years Denas had felt all the enthusiasm of the great sea harvest. This year she could not endure its clamour and its labour. What had happened to her that the sight of the beautiful fish was offensive and the smell of its curing intolerable? She shut her eyes from the silvery heaps and would gladly have closed her ears against the jubilant mirth, the shouting and laughing and singing around her.

Her intense repugnance did really at last breed in her a low fever, which she almost gladly succumbed to. She thought it easier to lie in bed and suffer in solitude than to put her arms to her white elbows in fresh fish and bear the familiar jokes of the busy, merry workers in the curing-sheds. Denas was not really responsible for this change. It had grown into her nature, day by day and week by week, while she was unconscious of any transforming power. The little reluctances which had marked its first appearance had been of small note; her father and mother had only laughingly reproved them, telling her “not to nourish prideful notions.” She had not even been aware of nourishing anything wrong. Was it wrong? She lay tossing on her bed in the small warm room, and argued the question out while fever burned in her veins and gave to all things abnormal and extravagant aspects.

She was really ill, and she almost wished she could be more ill. No one quite believed she was suffering much. The headache and languor incident to her condition did not win much sympathy until their ravages became apparent. Then Joan honestly believed that a little exercise in the fresh salt air would have cured, perhaps even prevented, the illness. So that at this time Denas thought herself very unkindly used.

This apparent lack of interest in her condition added greatly to that dissatisfaction with her life which she now constantly dwelt upon. She felt that she must do something to escape from an existence which repelled her; and yet what could she do? Somehow she had suddenly lost faith in Elizabeth. Elizabeth changed before she went away; who could say how much greater the change would be when she returned after four months’ travel?

Denas at this time pitied herself greatly, and taking women as they are, and not as they ought to be, she deserved some pity. For though it may not be a lofty ambition to long after a finely appointed house, and delicate food delicately served, and elegant clothing and refined society, and, with all and above all, a lover who fits into such externals, yet Denas did long for these things; and the circumstances of her own life were common, and vulgar, and hateful to her.

True, she had her father and mother, and she loved them dearly; but, then, she could undoubtedly love them quite as well if she were rich, while they would not love her any the less. As for Tris Penrose and his tiresome devotion, what was Tris to Roland? Tris did not even know

how to woo her. He never told her how beautiful she was, and how he adored her, and longed for her, and thought all women wearisome but her. He never kissed her hands and her hair, her cheeks and her lips, as Roland did. He never said to her, “You are fit to be a duchess or a queen; you sing like a nightingale and charm my soul out of me, and you have hands and feet like a fairy.” Poor Tris! He was stupid and silent. He could only look and sigh, or, if he did manage to speak, he was sure to plunge into such final questions as, “Denas, will you marry me? When will you marry me?” Or to tell her of his stone cottage, and his fine boat, and the money he had in the St. Merryn’s Savings Bank.

For three weeks this silent conflict went on in the mind and heart of Denas, an unsatisfactory fight in which no victory was gained. At the end she was no more mistress of her inclinations than at the beginning, and her returning health only intensified her longings for the things she had not. One morning she awoke with the conviction that there was a letter for her at St. Clair. She determined to go and see. She said to her mother that she felt almost well and would try to take a walk. And Joan was glad and encouraged the idea.

“Go down to the sea-shore, Denas, and breathe the living air; do, my sweetheart!”

“No, mother. There are crowds there and the smell of fish, and––I can’t help it, mother––it turns me sick; it makes me feverish. I want to go among the trees and flowers.”

“Aw, my dear, you will be climbing and climbing up to St. Penfer; and you be weak yet and not able to.”

“I will not climb at all. I will walk near the shingle; and I will take a bit of bread with me and a drink of milk; then I can rest all day on the grass, mother.”

“God bless you, dear! And see now, come home while the sun is warm––and take care of yourself, Denas.”

Then Joan went to the curing-sheds. She had a light heart, for Denas was more like her old self, and after going a hundred yards she turned to nod to her girl, and was glad that she was watching her and that she waved her kerchief in reply. Something heavy slipped from Joan’s heart at that moment and her work went with her all day long.

It was two miles to St. Clair, but Denas walked there very rapidly. She remembered that Pyn’s cottage was the first cottage; and as she approached it the boatman came to the door. He looked at her with a grave curiosity, and she went straight up to him and said: “Have you a letter for me?”

“I do think I have. You be John Penelles’ little girl?”

“Yes.”

“I knew John years ago. We sat in the same boat. I like John––he is a true man. Here be three letters. At first I thought these letters be going to bring a deal of potter and bother––maybe something worse––and I will put them in the fire. Then I thought, they bean’t your letters, Pyn, and if you want to keep yourself out of a mess, never interfere and never volunteer. So here they be. But if you will take an old man’s advice, I do say to you, burn the letters. It will be better far than to be reading them.”

“Why will it be better?”

“There be letters worse than death drugs. If you do buy a bottle of arsenic, the man will put its character on the bottle. You see ‘poison’ and you be warned. But young men do write poison, and worse than poison, to young women, and no warning outside the letter. It isn’t fair, now, is it?”

“Why did you take charge of the poison?”

“To be sure! Why did I? Just because it was for John Penelles’ little girl, and I thought mayhap she’d take a warning from me. Don’t you read them letters, my dear. If you do, let the words go in at one ear and out of the other. Roland Tresham! he be nothing to trust to! Aw, my dear––a leaky boat––a boat adrift; no man at the helm; no helm to man; no sail; no compass; no anchor; no anything for a woman to trust to! There, then, I have had my say; if this say be of no ’count, twould be the same if I talked my tongue away. If you come again and there be any letters, you will find them under the turned boat––slip your hand in––so. Dear me! You be fluttering and wuttering like a bird. Poor dear! Step into my boat and I’ll put you back home. You look as quailed as a faded flower.”

Thus Pyn talked as he helped Denas into the boat and slowly settled himself to the oars. Afterward he said nothing, but he looked at Denas in a way that troubled her and made her thankful to escape his silent, pitiful condemnation. Her mother was still absent when she reached the cottage, and she was so weary that she was very grateful for the solitude. She shut her eyes for a few minutes and collected her strength, and then opened Roland’s letters.

They were full of happiness––full of wonders––full of love. He was going to Switzerland with his father. Elizabeth was there, and Miss Caroline Burrell, and a great many people whom they knew. But for him, no one was there. “Denas was all he longed for, cared for, lived for!” Oh, much more of the same kind, for Roland’s love lay at the point of his pen.

And he told her also that he had heard many singers, many famous singers, and none with a voice so wildly sweet, so enthralling as her voice. “If you were only on the stage, Denas,” he wrote, “you could sing the world to your feet; you could make a great fortune; you could do anything you liked to do.”

The words entered her heart. They burned along her veins, they filled her imagination with a thousand wild dreams. She put the fatal letters safely away, and then, stretching her weary form upon her bed, she closed her eyes and began to think.

Why should she cure fish, and mend nets, and clean tables and tea-cups, if she possessed such a marvellous gift? Why should her father go fishing with his life in his hand, and her mother work hard from dawn to dark, and she herself want all the beautiful things her soul craved? And how would Elizabeth feel? Perhaps they might be glad enough yet if she married Roland. And as the possibility of returning social slights presented itself, she remembered many a debt of this kind it would be a joy to satisfy. And then Roland! Roland! Roland! He had always believed in her; always loved her. She would repay his trust and love a thousand-fold. What a joy it would be!

So she permitted herself to grasp impossibilities, to possess everything she desired. Well, in this life, what mortals know is but very little; what they imagine––ah, that is everything!

CHAPTER V.

WHAT SHALL BE DONE FOR ROLAND?

"When, lulled in passion's dream, my senses slept,
How did I act?––E'en as a wayward child.
I smiled with pleasure when I should have wept,
And wept with sorrow when I should have smiled."

––Moncrieff.

"Love not, love not! O warning vainly said
In present years, as in the years gone by;
Love flings a halo round the dear one's head,
Faultless, immortal––till they change or die."

––Hon. Mrs. Norton.

HOPE has a long reach, and yet it holds fast. So, though Roland's return was far enough away, Denas possessed it in anticipation. The belief that he would come, that he would give her sympathy and assistance, helped her through the long sameness of uneventful days by the witching promise, "Anon––anon!"

There was little to vary life in that quiet hamlet. The pilchard season went, as it had come, in a day; men counted their gains and returned to their usual life. Denas tried to accept it cheerfully; she felt that it would soon be a past life, and this conviction helped her to invest it with some of that tender charm which clings to whatever enters the pathetic realm of "Nevermore."

Her parents were singularly kind to her, and John tried to give a little excitement to her life by coaxing her to share with him the things he considered quite stirring. But visits to her aunt at St. Merryn, and Sunday trips to hear some new preacher, and choir practisings with Tris dangling after them wherever they went, were not interesting to the wayward girl. She only endured them, as she endured her daily duties by keeping steadily in view the hope Roland had set before her. However, as she sang nearly constantly, Joan's mind was easy; she was sure Denas could not be very discontented, for it never entered Joan's thought that people could sing unless there was melody in their heart. And undoubtedly Denas was cheered by her own music, for if song is given half a chance it has the miraculous power of turning the water of life into wine.

Only two more letters repaid her for many walks to the turned boat, and she did not see Pyn again. She was sure, however, that he knew of her visits and wilfully avoided her. The last of these letters contained the startling intelligence of Mr. Tresham's death. He had foolishly insisted upon visiting Rome in the unhealthy season and had fallen a victim to fever. Roland wrote in a very depressed mood. He said that his father's death would make a great difference to him. In a short time the news arrived by the regular sources. Lawyer Tremaine had been advised to take charge of Mr. Tresham's personal estate, and the newspaper of the district had a long obituary of the deceased gentleman.

John said very little on the subject. He had not liked Mr. Tresham while living, but he was

particularly careful to avoid speaking ill of the dead. He said only that he had heard that “the effects left would barely cover outstanding debts, and that Mr. Tresham’s income died with him. ’Tis a good thing Miss Tresham be well married,” he added, “else ’twould have been whist hard times for her now.”

Denas did not answer. Her sudden and apparently unreasonable indifference to her former friend was one of the many mental changes which she could not account for. But she waited impatiently for some word about Roland. John appeared to have nothing to say. Joan hesitated with the question on her lips, and at last she almost threw it at her husband.

“What did you hear about young Mr. Tresham?”

“I asked no questions about him. People do say that he will have to go to honest work now. ’Twill do him no harm, I’m sure.”

“Honest work will be nothing strange to him, father. He has been in a great many offices. I have heard Elizabeth speaking of many a one.”

“I’ll warrant––many a one––and he never stays in any. He has a bad temper for work.”

“Bad temper! That is not true. Mr. Roland has a very good temper.”

“Good temper! To be sure, after a fashion, a kind of *Hy-to-everybody* fashion. But a good business temper, Denas, be a different thing; it be steady, patient, civil, quiet, hard-to-work temper, and the young man has not got it. No, nor the shadow of it. If he was worth thousands this year he wouldn’t have a farthing next year unless he had a guider and a withholder by his side constantly.”

“You ought not to speak of Mr. Roland at all, father, you hate him that badly.”

“Right you be, Denas. I ought not to speak of the young man. I will let him alone. And I’ll thank every one in my house to do the same thing.”

For some weeks John’s orders were carefully observed. Denas got no more letters, and the summer weather became autumn weather; and then the leaves faded and began to fall, and the equinoctial storm set the seal of advancing winter on the cliff-breast. Yet through all these changes the clock ticked the monotonous days surely away, and one morning when Denas was standing alone in the cottage door a little lad slipped up and put a letter into her hand.

He was gone in a moment, and Denas, even while answering a remark of her mother’s, who was busy at the fireside, hid the message in her bosom. Of course it was from Roland. He said that they had all returned to Burrell Court and that he could not rest until he had seen her. Wet or fine, he begged she would be at their old trysting-place that evening.

Then she began to consider how this was to be managed, and she came to the conclusion that a visit to St. Penfer was the best way. She knew well how to prepare for it––the little helps, and confidences, and personal chatter Joan was always pleased and flattered by were the wedge. Then as they washed the dinner dishes and tidied the house together, Denas said:

“Mother, it is going to storm soon, and then whole days to sit and sew and nothing to talk about. Priscilla Mohun promised me some pretty pieces for my quilt, and Priscilla always knows everything that is going on. What do you think? Shall I go there this afternoon? I could get the patches and hear the news and bring back a story paper, and so be home before you would have time to miss me.”

“Well, my dear, we do feel to be talked out.”

“Priscilla will tell me all there is to hear, and if I get the patches, a few days’ sewing and the quilt will be ready for you to cross-stitch; and a story paper is such a comfort when the storm is beating you back to house every hour of the day.”

“You say right––it be a great comfort. But you will have to be busy all, for it is like enough to rain within an hour––the tide will bring it, I’ll warrant.”

“I will wear my waterproof. Mother, dear, I do want a little change so much––just to see some new faces and hear tell of the St. Penfer people.”

“Well, then, go your way, Denas, a wetting will do you no harm; and I do know the days be long days, and the nights do never seem to come to midnight and then wear to cock-crow. ’Twould be a whist poor life, my dear, if this life were all.”

Denas was now very anxious to get off before her father came back from his afternoon gossip at the boats. With a gay heart she left her home and hastened to St. Penfer to execute the things that had been her ostensible reason for the visit. As it happened, Priscilla Mohun was full of news. The first thing she said to Denas related to the return of the Burrells, and then followed all the gossip about the treasures they had brought with them and changes to be made in the domestic life of the Court.

“Mrs. Burrell be going to turn things upside down, I can tell you, Denas. They do say four new servants are hired, two men and two women; and the horses brought down are past talking about, with silver trimmings on their harness––that, and no less––and carriages of all kinds, and one kind finer than the other! I do suppose Mrs. Burrell’s gowns will be all London or Paris bought now; though to be sure poor Priscilla did make her wedding-dress––but there, then! what be the use of talking?”

“How long have they been at home?” asked Denas.

“La! I thought if anybody knew that it would be you. I was just taking a walk last Wednesday, and I happened to see them driving through the town; Mr. Burrell and his sister, and Mrs. Burrell and her handsome brother––how happy they looked, and everyone lifting their hats or making a respectful move to them.”

Last Wednesday! and it was now Monday. Denas was dashed by the news. But she chattered away about everyone they knew, and got her patches, and her story paper, and then, just as the gloaming was losing itself in the fog from the sea, she started down the cliff. Roland was waiting for her. He took her in his arms and kissed her with an eager and delighted affection; and though the fog had changed to a soft rain, neither of them appeared to be uncomfortably aware of the fact. Denas drew the hood of her waterproof over her head and Roland the heavy collar of his coat about his ears, and they sat close together on the damp rock, with Roland’s umbrella over them.

There was so much to say that they really said nothing. When they had but half finished repeating “Sweet Denas!” and “Dear Roland!” Denas had to go. It was only then she found courage to intimate, in a half-frightened way, that she had been thinking and wondering about her voice, and if she really could learn to sing. Roland flushed with delight to find the seed he had sown with so much doubt grown up to strength and ripeness.

“My lovely one!” he answered, “you must go to London and have lessons; and I will take care of you. I will see that you have justice and that no one hurts you.”

“But where could I live? And how? I have one hundred pounds of my own. Will that be enough?”

“You little capitalist! How did you get a hundred pounds?”

“Father has put a few pounds in the bank at St. Merryn every year since I was born for me, and I have put there all the money your sister paid me. Father said it was to furnish my home when I got married, but I would rather spend it on my voice.”

“I should think so. Well, Beauty, you are to come and see Elizabeth off Wednesday; then I shall have something sweet and wonderful to say to you.”

“Will Elizabeth send for me? That would make it easy.”

“I do not think Elizabeth will send for you. I have been hoping for that. She has not named you at all. For my sake, come to the Court on Wednesday.”

“It is a long way to walk, but for your sake I will come.”

Then they parted, and she hastened back and reached home just as John and Joan were beginning to be uneasy at her delay. The sight of her happy face, the charming little fuss she made about her dripping waterproof and her wet shoes, the perfectly winning way in which she took possession of her father’s knee and from it warmed her bare rosy feet at the blaze scattered all shadows. She took their fears and nascent anger by storm; she exhibited her many-coloured bits of cloth, and showed John the pictures in the story paper, and coaxingly begged her mother for a cup of tea, because she was cold and hungry. And then, as Joan made the tea and the toast, Denas related all that Priscilla had told her. And Joan wondered and exclaimed, and John listened with a pleased interest, though he thought it right to say a word about speaking ill of people, and was snubbed by Joan for doing so.

“Mrs. Burrell is putting on grand airs, it seems, so then it will go that people of course will speak ill of her,” said Joan.

“Aw, my dear,” answered John, “few are better spoken of than they deserve.”

“I do think Denas ought to call on the bride,” said Joan. “It would only be friendly, and many will make a talk about it if she does not go.”

“She must find out, first, if the young man be there.”

“No,” said Denas warmly, “I will not find out. If you cannot trust your little maid, father, then do not let her go at all. If people could hear you talk they would say, ‘What a bad girl John Penelles has! He dare not let her go to see her friend if there be a young man in the house.’ ’Tis a shame, isn’t it, mother?”

“I think it be, Denas. Father isn’t so cruel suspicious as that, my dear. Are you, father?”

And what could John answer? Though sorely against his feeling and his judgment, he was induced to agree that Denas ought perhaps to call once on the bride. There were so many plausible arguments in favour of such a visit; there was nothing but shadowy doubts and fears against it.

“Go to-morrow, then,” said John, a little impatiently; “and let me be done with the fret of it.”

“The day after-to-morrow, or Wednesday, father. To-morrow it will be still raining, no doubt, and I have something to alter in my best dress. I want to look as fine as I can, father.”

“Look like yourself and your people, Denas. That be the best finery. If roses and lilies did grow on the dusty high-road, they would not be as fitly pretty as blue-bells and daisies. I do think that, Denas; and it be the very same with women. Burrell Court is a matter of two miles beyond St. Penfer; ’tis a long walk, my dear, and dress for the walk and the weather. Do, my dear!”

Then the subject was changed, and Denas, having won her way, was really grateful and disposed to make the evening happy for all. She recollected many a little bit of pleasantry; she mimicked Priscilla to admiration, merrily and without ill-will, and then she took the story paper

and read a thrilling account of some great shipwrecks and a poem that seemed to John and Joan's simple minds "the sweetest bit of word music that could be."

At the same hour Elizabeth and Roland were playing an identical rôle under different circumstances. Roland had hoped to slip away to his room unobserved. He knew Miss Burrell had gone to a friend's house for a day or two, and he thought Robert and Elizabeth would be sufficiently occupied with each other. But some gentlemen were with Robert on parish business, and Elizabeth was alone and well inclined to come to an understanding with her brother.

"Caroline had to go without an escort, Roland. It was too bad," she said reproachfully as she stood in the open door of a parlour and waited for his approach.

"You see I am wet through, Elizabeth. I will change my clothing and come to you. Where is Robert?"

"With the churchwardens. I want to talk to you seriously. We shall be alone for an hour. Come as soon as you can."

"In five minutes. It will be delightful to have you all to myself once more."

He came back quickly and placed his chair close to hers, and lifted her face to his face and kissed her, saying fondly, "My dear little sister."

"Where have you been, Roland?"

"I could have bet on the words 'Where have you been?' That is always a woman's first question."

"Have you been with Denas?"

"I have been at the Black Lion and at Tremaine's. We will suppose that I wished to see Denas––is this pouring rain a fit condition? Do think of something more likely, Elizabeth."

"Say to me plainly: 'I have not seen Denas.'"

"If you wish me to say the words, consider that I have done so. Why have you taken a dislike to Denas? You used to be very fond of her."

"I have not taken any dislike to the girl. I have simply passed out of the season of liking her. In the early spring we find the violet charming, but when summer comes we forget the violet in the rose and the lily and the garden full of richer flowers. The time for Denas has passed––that is all, Roland. What are you going to do about Caroline? When will you ask her to marry you?"

"I have asked her twice already; once in Rome, when she put me off; and again in London, when she decidedly refused me."

"What did she say?"

"That she believed she could trust herself to my love, because she did not think I would be unkind to any woman; but she was sure she could not trust me with her fortune, because I would waste it without any intention of being wasteful. Caroline wants a financier, not a lover."

"The idea!"

"She talked about the responsibilities of wealth."

"How could she talk to you in that way?"

"She did––really."

"Then Caroline is out of reckoning."

"Between ourselves, I think she was right, Elizabeth. I am positive I should spend any sum of money. What I need is a wife who can make money week by week, year by year––always something coming in; like an opera-singer, for instance. Do you understand?"

"Could you expect me to understand such nonsense? I asked Robert to-day about poor father's estate. He thinks there may be four or five hundred pounds after paying all debts. Of course you will receive it all. Robert is very kind, but I can see that he would prefer that you were not always at the Court."

"I daresay he put Caroline up to refuse me."

"I have no doubt of it. He would consider it a brotherly duty; and to tell the truth, Roland, I fear you would give any woman lots of heartache. I cannot tell what must be done. You have had so many good business chances, and yet never made anything of them."

"That is true, Elizabeth. If I take to a business, it fails. If I dream of some fine prospect, the dream does not come true. In fact, my dear sister,

"'I never had a piece of toast
Particularly long and wide,
But it fell on the sanded floor,
And always on the buttered side.'

Still, there is one thing I can do when all else fails: I can take the Queen's shilling and go in for glory."

"Roland, you break my heart with your folly. Why will you not be reasonable? How could I ever

show my face if you were a common soldier? But the army is a good thought. Suppose you do try the army. I daresay Robert can get you a commission––at the right time, of course."

"Thanks! I do not think the army would agree with me; not, at any rate, until I had played my last card. And if I have to make a hero of myself, I shall certainly prefer the position of a full private. It is the privates that do the glory business. I would join the army as Private Smith; for though

"'Some talk of Alexander,
And some of Hercules,
And of many a great commander
As glorious as these;
If you want to know a hero
Of genuine pluck and pith,
It's perfectly clear that none come near
The full British private Smith.'"

And he declaimed his mock heroics so delightfully that Elizabeth not only succumbed to his charm, but also wondered in her heart why everyone else did not.

"You see, sweet sister, that wealth is not exactly the same thing as shining virtue, or else Caroline would have been generous. I am sure I should be particularly grateful to any woman who made me rich."

"Why woman, Roland?"

"Well, because if a man puts any money in my way he expects me to work for it and with it; to invest it and double it; to give an account of it; to sacrifice myself body and soul for it. But a dear little darling woman would never ask me questions and never worry me about interest. She would take love and kisses as full value received––unless she was a girl like Caroline, an unwomanly, mercenary, practical, matter-of-money creature."

"Do not talk in that way of Caroline."

"I am talking of her money, and it is no impeachment of its value to say that it is mortal like herself. Still, I am ready to acknowledge

"'How pleasant it is to have money,
heigho!
How pleasant it is to have money!'

and as much of it as possible, Elizabeth."

"We come to no definite results by talking in this way, Roland. When you get to singing snatches of song I may as well be quiet. And yet I am so unhappy about you. O Roland! Roland! my dear, dear brother, what can I do for you?"

She covered her face with her hands, and Roland took them away with gentle force. "Elizabeth, do not cry for me. I am not worth a tear. Darling, I will do anything you want me to do."

"If I get Robert to give you a desk in the bank?"

"Well, love, anything but that. I really cannot bear the confinement. I should die of consumption; besides, I have a moral weakness, Elizabeth, that I am bound to consider––there are times, dear, when I get awfully mixed and cannot help

"'Confounding the difference 'twixt *meum* and
tuum
By kindly converting it all into *suum*.'"

"O Roland, I really do not know what you are fit for!"

"If I had been born three or four centuries ago I could have been a knight-errant or a troubadour. But alas! in these days the knight-errants go to the Stock Exchange and the troubadours write for the newspapers. I am not fitted to wrestle with the wild beasts of the money market; I would rather go to Spain and be a matador."

"Roland, here comes Robert. Do try and talk like a man of ordinary intelligence. Robert wants to like you––wants to help you if you will let him."

"Yes, in his way. I want to be helped in my own way. Good-evening, Robert! I am glad you were not caught in the rain."

The grave face brightened to the charm of the young man, and then for an hour Roland delighted his sister by his sensible consideration, by his patient attention to some uninteresting details, by his prudence in speaking of the future; so that Robert said confidentially to his wife that night:

"Roland is a delightful young man. There must be some niche he can fill with honour. I wonder that Caroline could resist his attentions. Yet she told me to-day that she had refused him twice."

“Caroline is moved by her intellect, not by her heart. Also, she is very Vere-de-Vereish, and she has set her mark for a lord, at least.”

“What can be done for Roland?”

“He talked of going into the army.”

“Nonsense! Going into the army means, for Roland, going into every possible temptation and expense––that would not do. But he ought to be away from this little town. He will be making mischief if he cannot find it ready-made.”

“I am very uneasy about that girl from the fishing village, the girl whom I used to have with me a great deal.”

“Denas––the girl with the wonderful voice?”

“Yes. Did you think her voice wonderful?”

“Perhaps I should say haunting voice. She had certainly some unusual gift. I do not pretend to be able to define it. But I remember every line of the first measure I heard her sing. Many a time since I have thought my soul was singing it for its own pleasure, without caring whether I liked it or not; for when mentally reckoning up a transaction I have heard quite distinctly the rhythmical rolling cadence, like sea wave, to which the words were set. I hear it now.”

“Upon my word, Robert, you are very complimentary to Denas. I shall be jealous, my dear.”

“Not complimentary to Denas at all. I hardly remember what the girl looked like. And it is not worth while being jealous of a voice, for I can assure you, Elizabeth, a haunting song is a most unwelcome visitor when your brain is full of figures. And somehow it generally managed to come at a time when the bank and the street were both in a tumult with the sound of men’s voices, the roll of wagons, and the tramp of horses’ feet.”

“A song of the sea in the roar of the city! How strange! I am curious to hear it: I have forgotten most of the songs Denas sang.”

“The roar of the city appeared to provoke it. When it was loudest I usually heard most clearly the sweet thrilling echo, asking

“‘What is the tale of the sea, mother?
What is the tale of the wide, wide sea?’
‘Merry and sad are the tales, my darling,
Merry and sad as tales may be.
Those ships that sail in the happy mornings,
Full of the lives and souls of men,
Some will never come back, my darling;
Some will never come back again!’”

And as Elizabeth listened to her husband half singing the charmful words, she took a sudden dislike to Denas. But she said: “The song is a lovely song, and I must send for Denas to sing it again for us.” In her heart she resolved never to send for Denas; “though if she does come”––and at this point Elizabeth held herself in pause for a minute ere she decided resolutely––“if she does come I will do what is right. I will be kind to her. She cannot help her witching voice––only––only I must step between her and Roland––that is for the good of both;” and she fell asleep, planning for this emergency.

CHAPTER VI.

ELIZABETH AND DENAS.

“There is no hate in a woman which is not born of love.”

“Ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to slacken and decay,
It uses an enforced ceremony:
There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.”

–JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE rain was over on Wednesday morning, but the day was gray and chill and the crisping turf and the hardening road indicated a coming frost. There was nothing, however, to prevent the contemplated visit to Burrell Court, and a painful momentary shadow flitted over John's face when Denas came to breakfast in her new ruby-coloured merino dress. She was so pretty, so full of the importance of her trip, so affectionate, that he could not say a word to dash her spirits or warn her carelessness, and yet he had a quick spasm of terror about the danger she was going so gayly into. Of what use, alas! are our premonitions if they do not bring with them the inexorable moral courage necessary to enforce their warnings?

Denas had been accustomed to go to Elizabeth's very early in the morning, and it did not come into her mind to make any change in this respect because of Elizabeth's marriage. So after she had taken her breakfast she put on her hat and ulster and her warm wool gloves and took the cliff road. John, with his pipe in his mouth, leaned against the door lintel and watched her. Joan stood by his side for a moment, following with her eyes the graceful figure of her child, but she quickly went back to her work. John's work was over for the day; he had come in on the dawn tide with a good take. So he stood at the door, in spite of the frosty air, and watched his little maid climb the hilly road with the elastic step and untiring breath of happy youth.

It was then only eight o'clock. No one at her home had thought the hour too early. But when she reached Burrell Court Elizabeth had not come downstairs and breakfast was not yet served. She was much annoyed and embarrassed by the attitude of the servants. She had no visiting-card, and the footman declined to disturb Mrs. Burrell at her toilet. "Miss could wait," he said with an air of familiarity which greatly offended Denas. For she considered herself, as the child of a fisherman owning his own cottage and boat and lord of all the leagues of ocean where he chose to cast his nets, immeasurably the superior of any servant, no matter how fine his livery might be.

She sat down in the small reception-room into which she had been shown and waited. She heard Elizabeth and her husband go through the hall together, and the pleasant odours of coffee and broiled meats certified to the serving of breakfast. But no one came near her. As the minutes slipped away her wonder became anger; and she was resolving to leave the inhospitable house when she heard Roland's step. He came slowly down the polished oak stairs, went to the front door, opened it and looked out into the frosty day; then turning rapidly in from the cold, he went whistling softly through the hall to the breakfast-room.

Just as he entered the footman was saying: "A young person, ma'am. She had no card, and when I asked her name she only looked at me, ma'am."

"Where did you put her?" asked Elizabeth.

"In the small reception-room."

"Is the room warm?"

"Not very cold, ma'am."

At this point Robert Burrell looked at his wife and said: "It is perhaps that little friend of yours, called Denas."

"Jove!" ejaculated Roland. "I should not wonder. You know, Elizabeth, she was always an early visitor. Shall I go and see?"

"Frederick will go. Frederick, ask the young person her name." In a few moments Frederick returned and said, "Miss Penelles is the name."

Then Robert Burrell and Roland both looked at Elizabeth. She had a momentary struggle with herself; she hesitated, her brows made themselves into a point, her colour heightened, and the dead silence gave her a most eloquent chance to listen to her own heart. She rose with leisurely composure and left the room. Mr. Burrell and Roland took no notice of the movement. Mr. Burrell had his watch in his hand; Roland was directing Frederick as to the particular piece of fowl he wanted. Then there was a little laugh and the sound of voices, and Elizabeth and Denas entered together. Elizabeth had made Denas remove her hat and cloak, and the girl was exceedingly pretty. Roland leaped to his feet and imperatively motioned Frederick to place a chair beside his own, and Robert Burrell met her with a frank kindness which was pleasantly reassuring.

Denas had been feeling wronged and humiliated, but Elizabeth by a few kind words of apology had caused a reaction which affected her inexperienced guest with a kind of mental intoxication. Her countenance glowed, her eyes sparkled, her hair appeared to throw off light; her ruby-coloured dress with its edges of white lace accentuated the marvellous colouring of her cheeks and lips, the snow-white of her wide brows and slender throat, and the intense blue of eyes that had caught the brightest tone of sea and sky.

She talked well, she was witty without being ill-natured, and she described all that had happened in the little town since Elizabeth's wedding-day with a subdued and charming mimicry that made the room ring with laughter. Also, she ate her breakfast with such evident enjoyment that she gave an appetite to the others. All took an extra cup of coffee with her, and it seemed only a part of the general conversation and delightful intercourse.

After breakfast Robert Burrell said he would delay his visit to London for a train if Denas would sing for him once more; and they went together to the parlour, and Roland fell at once into the

rocking measure of Robert's favourite, and in the middle of a bar Denas joined her voice to it, and they went together as the wind goes through the trees or the song of the water through its limpid flow.

As she finished, Roland looked at her with a certain intelligence in his eyes, and then struck a few wild, startling chords. They proved to be the basis of a sea-chant. Denas heard them with a quick movement of her head and an involuntary though slight movement of the hands, as she cried out in a musical cadence:

"Here beginneth the sea,
That ends not until the world ends.
Blow, westerly wind, for me!
When the wind and the tide are friends,
Westerly wind and little white star,
Safe are the fishermen over the bar."

She would sing no more when the chant was finished. She had seen a look on Elizabeth's face, not intended for her to see, which took the music out of her heart. Yet she had sung enough, for she had never before sung so well. She was astonished at her own power, and Robert Burrell thanked her with a sincerity beyond question.

"My brain will be among figures all the way to London, Miss Penelles," he said, "but I am quite sure my soul will be wandering on the shingle, and feeling the blowing winds, and hearing the plash of the waves, and singing with all its power:

"'Here beginneth the sea,
That ends not till the world ends.'"

Then he went away, and Elizabeth took her embroidery and sat down with Denas. A great gulf suddenly opened between them. There was no subject to talk about. Elizabeth had sent Roland away on the double pretence of wanting him to take a message to Caroline and of wanting to have Denas all to herself. And she watched Roland so cleverly that he had no opportunity to say a word to Denas; and yet he had, for in bidding her good-bye he managed, by the quick lift of his brows and the wide-open look in his eyes, to give her assurance that he would be at their usual place of meeting. Elizabeth was a clever woman, but no match for a man who has love in his heart and his eyes to speak for him.

So she had Denas all to herself, and then, in spite of everything she could do, her manner became indifferent and icy. She asked after John and Joan and more pointedly after Tris. And Denas thought there could be no harm in talking of Tris and his affection for her. She chattered away until she felt she was not being listened to. Then she tried to talk of the past; Elizabeth said it was so associated with poor papa she would rather not talk of it. It was very painful to her, and she had promised Mr. Burrell not to indulge in painful thoughts. So Denas felt that the past was a shut and clasped book between them for ever.

Nothing remained but to ask Elizabeth about her wedding-trip. She answered her, but not as she would have answered an acquaintance of her own circle. In her heart she felt it to be a presumption in Denas. Why should this girl question her about her opinions and doings? Her conscience had continually to urge her to justice, and she felt the strife of feeling to be very uncomfortable.

Denas had hoped to be shown all the pretty dresses and cloaks and knick-knacks of fine wearing apparel that Elizabeth had bought in London, Paris, and other European capitals. These things had been much talked of in the town, and it would have been a little distinction to Denas to have seen and handled them. Perhaps, also, there had been, in her deepest consciousness, a hope that Elizabeth had brought her some special gift––some trinket that she could be proud of all her life and keep in memory of their early friendship.

But Elizabeth showed her nothing and gave her nothing; moreover, when Denas spoke of the beautiful morning robe she wore, Elizabeth frowned slightly and answered with an evident disinclination to discuss the subject, "Yes, it is beautiful." For though Elizabeth did not analyse the feeling, she was annoyed at even a verbal return to a time when gowns of every kind had been a consideration worth while discussing with one whose taste and skill would help to fashion them. Poverty casts only shadows on memory, and few people like to stand voluntarily again in them.

About noon there was a visitor, and Elizabeth received her in another room. She made an apology to Denas, but the girl, left to herself, began to be angry with herself. She could hear Elizabeth and her caller merrily discussing the affairs of their own set, and Elizabeth had quite a different voice; it was sympathetic, ready to break into laughter, full of confidential tones. Denas remembered this voice well. She had once been used to hear it and to blend her own with it. Her heart burned when she called to mind her old friend's excessive civility; her hardly concealed weariness; the real coldness of feeling which no pleasant words could warm. There was no longer any sympathy between them; there was not even any interest which could take

the place of sympathy. Elizabeth did not really care whether Denas was offended or not, but she had a conscience, and it urged her to be kind and just. And she did try to obey the order, but when orders perversely go against inclination they do not obtain a cheerful service.

Denas felt and thought quickly: “I am not wanted here. I ought to go away, and I will go.” These resolutions were arrived at by apprehension, not by any definable process of reasoning. She touched a bell, asked for her hat and cloak, left a message for Elizabeth, and went away from Burrell Court at once.

The rapid walk to St. Penfer relieved her feelings. “I have been wounded to-day,” she sobbed, “just as really as if Elizabeth had flung a stone at me or stabbed me with a knife. I am heart-hurt. I am sorry I went to see her. Why did I go? She is afraid of Roland! Good! I shall pay her back through Roland. If she will not be a friend to me, she may have to call me sister.” Then she remembered what Roland had said about her voice and her face was illumined by the thought, and she lifted her head and stepped loftily to it. “She may be proud enough of me yet. I wonder what I have done?”

To such futile questions and reflections, she walked back to St. Penfer. She had not yet found out that the sum of her offending lay in her ability to add the four letters which spelled the word fair to her name. If she had been strikingly ugly and dull, instead of strikingly pretty and bright, Elizabeth would have found it easier to be kind and generous to her.

Denas went to Priscilla Mohun’s. Reticence is a cultivated quality, and Denas had none of it; so she told the whole story of her ill-treatment to Priscilla and found her full of sympathy. Priscilla had her own little slights to relate, and if all was true she told Denas, then Elizabeth had managed in a week’s time to offend many of her old acquaintances irreconcilably.

Denas remained with Priscilla until three o’clock; then she walked down the cliff to the little glade where she hoped to find Roland. He was not there. She calculated the distance he had to ride, she made allowance for his taking lunch with Caroline Burrell, and she concluded that he ought to have been at the trysting-place before she was. She waited until four o’clock, growing more angry every moment, then she hastened away. “I am right served,” she muttered. “I will let Roland Tresham and Elizabeth Burrell alone for the future.” The tide of anger rose swiftly in her heart, and she stepped homeward to its flow.

She had gone but a little way when she heard Roland calling her. She would not answer him. She heard his rapid footsteps behind, but she would not turn her head. When he reached her he was already vexed at her perverse mood. “I could not get here sooner, Denas,” he said crossly. “Do be reasonable.”

“You need not have come at all.”

“Denas, stop: Listen to me. If you walk so quickly we shall be seen from the village.”

“I wish father to see us. I will call him to come to me.”

“Denas, what have I done?”

“You! You are a part of the whole. Your sister has taught me to-day the difference between us. I am glad there is a difference––I intend to forget you both from this day.”

“Will you punish me because Elizabeth was unkind?”

“Some day you also will change just as she has done. I will not wait for that day. No, indeed! To be sure, I shall suffer. Father, mother, everybody suffers in one way or another. I can bear as much as others can.”

“You are an absurd little thing. Come, darling! Come back with me! I want to tell you a very particular secret.”

“Do you think you can pet, or coax, or tell me tales like a cross child? I am a woman, and I have been hurt in every place a woman can be hurt by your sister. I will not go back with you.”

“Very well, Denas. You will repent this temper, I can tell you, my dear.”

“No, I shall not repent it. I will go to my father and mother. I will tell them how bad I have been and ask them to forgive me. I shall never repent that, I know.”

She drew her arm from his clasp and, without lifting her eyes to him, went forward with a swift, purposeful step. He watched her a few moments, and then with a dark countenance turned homeward. “This is Elizabeth’s doing,” he muttered. “Elizabeth is too, too detestably respectable for anything. I saw and felt her sugared patronage of Denas through all her soft phrases; she treats me in the same way sometimes. When women get a husband they are conceited enough, but when they get a husband and money also they are––the devil only knows what they are.”

He entered Elizabeth’s presence very sulkily. Robert was in London and there was no reason why he should keep his temper in the background. “There is Caroline’s answer,” he said, throwing a letter on the table, “and I do wish, Elizabeth, you would send me pleasanter errands in the future. Caroline kept me waiting until she returned from a lunch at Colonel Prynne’s. And then she hurried me away because there was to be a grand dinner-party at the Pullens’.”

“At the Pullens’? It is very strange Robert and I were not invited.”

“I should say very strange indeed, seeing that Caroline is their guest. But Lord and Lady Avonmere were to be present, and of course they did not want any of us.”

“Any of us? Pray, why not?”

“Father’s bankruptcy is not forgotten. We were nobodies until you married Robert Burrell, and even Robert’s money is all trade money.”

“You are purposely trying to say disagreeable things, Roland. What fresh snub has Caroline been giving you?”

“Snubs are common to all. Big people are snubbed by lesser people, and these by still smaller ones, and so *ad infinitum*. You are a bit bigger than Denas, so you snub her, and Denas, of course, passes on the snub. Why should she not? Where is Denas?”

“She has gone home, and I do hope she will never come here again. She behaved very impertinently.”

“That I will not believe. Put the shoe on your own foot, Elizabeth. You were rude before I left, and I dare swear you were rude, ruder, rudest after you were alone with the girl. For pure spite and ill-nature, a newly married woman beats the devil.”

“Who are you talking to, Roland?”

“To you. I have to talk plainly to you occasionally––birds in their little nests agree, but brothers and sisters do not; in fact, they cannot. For instance, I should be a brute if I agreed with you about Denas.”

“I say that Denas behaved very rudely. She went away without my knowledge and without bidding me good-bye. I shall decline to have any more to do with her.”

“I have no doubt she has already declined you in every possible form. As far as I can judge, she is a spirited little creature. But gracious! how she did sing this morning! I’ll bet you fifty pounds if Robert Burrell had heard her sing a year ago you would not have been mistress of Burrell Court to-day.”

“Either you or I must leave the room, Roland. I will not listen any longer to you.”

“Sit still. I am very glad to go. I shall take a room at the Black Lion to-morrow. The atmosphere of the Court is so exquisitely rarefied and refined that I am choking in it. I only hope you may not smother Robert in it. Good-night! I notice Robert goes to London pretty often lately. Good-night.”

Then he closed the door sharply and went smiling to his room. “I think I have made madame quite as uncomfortable as she has made me,” he muttered, “and I will go to the Black Lion to-morrow. From there I can reach Denas without being watched at both ends. John Penelles to the right and Elizabeth Burrell to the left of me are too much and too many. For Denas I must see. I must see her if I have to dress myself in blue flannels and oil-skins to manage it.”

In the morning Elizabeth ate her breakfast alone. She had determined to have a good quarrel with Roland, and make him ashamed of his speech and behaviour on the previous evening. But before she rose Roland had gone to the Black Lion, and moreover he had left orders for his packed traps and trunks to be sent after him. He had a distinct object in this move. At the Court he was constantly under surveillance, and he was also very much at Elizabeth’s commands. He had little time to give to the pursuit of Denas, and that little at hours unsuitable for the purpose. But at the Black Lion his time was all his own. He could breakfast and dine at whatever hour suited his occupation; he could watch the movements of Denas without being constantly suspected and brought to book.

Her temper the previous evening, while it seriously annoyed, did not dishearten him. He really liked her better for its display. He never supposed that it would last. He expected her to make a visit to St. Penfer the next day; she would hope that he would be on the watch for her; she would be sure of it.

But Denas did not visit St. Penfer that week, and Roland grew desperate. On Saturday night he went down the cliff after dark and hung around John’s cottage, hoping that for some reason or other Denas would come to the door. He had a note in his hand ready to put into her hand if she did so. He could see her plainly, for the only screen to the windows was some flowering plants inside and a wooden shutter on the outside, never closed but in extreme bad weather. Joan was making the evening meal, John sat upon the hearth, and Denas, with her knitting in her hands, was by his side. Once or twice he saw her rise and help her mother with some homely duty, and finally she laid down her work, and, kneeling on the rug at her father’s feet, she began to toast the bread for their tea. Her unstudied grace, the charm of her beauty and kindness, the very simplicity of her dress, fascinated him afresh.

“That is the costume––the very costume––she ought to sing in,” he thought. “With some fishing nets at her feet and the mesh in her hands, how that dark petticoat and that little scarlet josey would tell; the scarlet josey cut away just so at the neck. What a ravishing throat she has! How white and round!”

At this point in his reverie he heard footsteps, and he walked leisurely aside. His big ulster in the darkness was a sufficient disguise; he had no fear of being known by any passer-by. But these footsteps stopped at John’s door and then went inside the cottage. That circumstance roused in Roland’s heart a tremor he had never known before. He cautiously returned to his point of observation. The visitor was a young and handsome fisherman. It was Tris Penrose. Roland saw with envy his welcome and his familiarity. He saw that Joan had placed for him a chair on the hearth opposite John; Denas, therefore, was at his feet also. Tris could feed his eyes

upon her near loveliness. He could speak to her. He did speak to her, and Denas looked up with a smile to answer him. When the toast was made Tris helped Denas to her feet; he put her chair to the table, he put his own beside it. He waited upon her with such delight and tender admiration that Roland was made furiously angry and miserable by his rival's happiness. The poor ape jealousy began meddling in all his better feelings.

He hung around the cottage until he was freezing with cold and burning with rage. "And this is Elizabeth's doing," he kept muttering as he climbed the cliff to the upper town. He could not sleep all night. He thought of everything that could add to his despairing uncertainty. The next day was the Sabbath. Denas would go to chapel with her father and mother. Tris would be sure to meet her there, to return home with her, to sit again at her side on that bright, homelike hearthstone.

"I wish I were a fisher," he cried passionately. "They know what it is to live, for their boats make their cottages like heaven." He could not deny to himself that Tris was a very handsome fellow and that Denas smiled pleasantly at him. "But she never smiled once as she smiles at me. He never once drew her soul into her face, as I can draw it. She does not love him as she loves me." With such assertions he consoled his heart, the while he was trying to form some plan which would give him an opportunity to get Denas once more under his influence.

On Monday morning he went to see Priscilla Mohun. He had a long conversation with the dressmaker, and that afternoon Priscilla walked down to John's cottage and made a proposal to Denas. It was so blunt and business-like, so tight in regard to money matters, that John and Joan, and Denas also, were completely deceived. She said she had heard that Denas and Tris Penrose were to be married, and she thought Denas might like to make some steady money to help the furnishing. She would give her two shillings a day and her board and lodging. Also, she could have Saturday and Sunday at her home if she wished.

Denas, who was fretted by the monotony of home duties really too few to employ both her mother and herself, was glad of the offer. John, who had a little vein of parsimony in his fine nature, thought of the ten shillings a week and of how soon it would grow to be ten pounds. Joan remembered how much there was to see and hear at Miss Priscilla's, and Denas was so dull at home! Why should she not have a good change when it was well paid for? And then she remembered the happy week-ends there would be, with so much to tell and to talk over.

She asked Priscilla to stay and have a cup of tea with them, and so settle the subject. And the result was that Denas went back to St. Penfer with Priscilla and began her duties on the next day. That evening she had a letter from Roland. It was a letter well adapted to touch her heart. Roland was really miserable, and he knew well how to cry out for comfort. He told her he had left his sister's home because Elizabeth had insulted her there. He led her to believe that Elizabeth was in great distress at his anger, but that nothing she could say or do would make him forgive her until Denas herself was satisfied.

And Denas was glad that Elizabeth should suffer. She hoped Roland would make her suffer a great deal. For Denas had not yet reached that divine condition in which it is possible to love one's enemies. She was happy to think that Roland was at the Black Lion with all his possessions; for she knew how the gossip on this occurrence would annoy all the proprieties in Mrs. Burrell's social code.

Her anger served Roland's purpose quite as much as her love. After the third letter she wrote a reply. Then she agreed to meet him; then she was quite under his influence again, much more so, indeed, than she had ever been before. In a week or two he got into the habit of dropping into Priscilla's shop for a pair of gloves, for writing paper, for the *Daily News*, for a bottle of cologne––in short, there were plenty of occasions for a visit, and he took them. And as Priscilla's was near the Black Lion and the only news depot in town, and as other gentlemen went frequently there also for the supply of their small wants, no one was surprised at Roland's purchases. His intercourse with Priscilla was obviously of the most formal character; she treated him with the same short courtesy she gave to all and sundry, and Denas was so rarely seen behind the counter that she was not in any way associated with the customers. This indeed had been the stipulation on which John had specially insisted.

One morning Roland came hurriedly into the shop. "My sister is coming here, I am sure, Miss Mohun," he said. "Tell Denas, if you please, she said she wished to meet her again. Tell her I will remain here and stand by her." There was no time to deliberate, and Denas, acting upon the feeling of the moment, came quickly to Roland, and was talking to him when Mrs. Burrell entered. They remained in conversation a moment or two, as if loth to part; then Denas advanced to the customer with an air of courtesy, but also of perfect ignorance as to her personality.

"Well, Denas?" said the lady.

"What do you wish, madam?"

"I wish to see Miss Priscilla."

Denas touched a bell and returned to Roland, who had appeared to be unconscious of his sister's presence. Elizabeth glanced at her brother; then, without waiting for Priscilla, left the shop. The lovely face of Denas was like a flame. "Thank you, Roland!" she said with effusion. "You have paid my account in full for me."

"Then, darling, let me come here to-night and say something very important to us both. Priscilla will give me house-room for an hour, I know she will. Here she comes. Let me ask her."

Priscilla affected reluctance, but really she was prepared for the request. She had expected it before and had been uneasy at its delay. She was beginning to fear Roland's visits might be noticed, might be talked about, might injure her custom. It pleased her much to anticipate an end to a risky situation. She managed, without urging Denas, to make the girl feel that her relations with Roland ought either to be better understood or else entirely broken off.

So Roland went back to his inn with a promise that made him light-hearted. "Elizabeth has done me one good turn," he soliloquized. "Now let me see. I will consider my plea and get all in order. First, I must persuade Denas to go to London. Second, the question is, marriage or no marriage? Third, her voice and its cultivation. Fourth, the hundred pounds in St. Merryn's Bank. Fifth, everything as soon as can be––to-morrow night if possible. Sixth, my own money from Tremaine. I should have about four hundred pounds. Heigho! I wish it was eight o'clock. And what an old cat Priscilla is! I do not think I shall give her the fifty pounds I promised her. She does not deserve it––and she never durst ask me for it."

CHAPTER VII.

IS THERE ANY SORROW LIKE LOVING?

"For love the sense of right and wrong confounds;
Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds."

––Dryden.

"The fate of love is such
That still it sees too little or too much."

––Dryden.

"Fate ne'er strikes deep but when unkindness joins.
But there's a fate in kindness,
Still to be least returned where most 'tis given."

––Dryden.

LOVERS see miracles, or think they ought to. Roland expected all his own world to turn to his love. The self-denying, forbearing, loyal affection Elizabeth had shown him all her life was now of no value, since she did not sympathize with his love for Denas. John and Joan Penelles were the objects of his dislike and scorn because they could not see their daughter's future as he saw it. He thought it only right that Priscilla Mohun should risk her business and her reputation for the furtherance of his romantic love affair. He had easily persuaded himself that it was utterly contemptible in her to expect any financial reward for a service of love.

Denas had more force of character. She was offended at Elizabeth because Elizabeth had wounded her self-respect and put her into a most humiliating position. She was too truthful not to admit that Elizabeth had from the first hour of their acquaintance openly opposed anything like love-making between Roland and herself. She understood and acknowledged the rights of her parents. In trampling on them she knew that she was sinning with her eyes open. And if Roland spent the day in arranging his plans for the future, she spent it in facing squarely the thing she had determined to do.

For she was aware that Roland was coming that night to urge her to go to London and become a public singer. She did not know how much money would be required, but she knew that whatever the sum was it must come from Roland. Then, of course, she must marry Roland at once. Under no other relationship could she take money from him. Yet on carefully questioning her memory she was sure that the subject of marriage had been avoided, or, at any rate, not spoken of in any discussion of her future.

"But," she said, with a swift motion of determination, "that is the first subject, and the one on which all others depend."

At eight o'clock Roland was with her. He came with his most irresistible manner, came prepared to carry his own desires in an enthusiasm of that supreme selfishness which he chose to designate as "love for Denas."

“You have only to learn how to manage that wonderful voice of yours, Denas,” he said, “and a steady flow of money will be the result. You must have read of the enormous sums singers receive, but we will be modest at first and suppose you only make a few hundreds a year. In the long run that will be nothing; and you will be a very rich woman.”

“You have often said such things to me, Roland. But perhaps you do not judge me severely enough. I must see a great teacher, and he will tell me the truth.”

“To be sure. And you must have lessons also.”

“And for these things there must be money.”

“Certainly. I have upward of five hundred pounds and you have one hundred at least.”

“I have nothing, Roland.”

“The money you told me of in St. Merryn’s Bank.”

“I cannot touch that.”

“Why?”

“Because I will not. Father has been saving it ever since I was born. If he is sick it is all he has to live upon. It is bad enough to desert my parents; I will not rob them also.”

“You must not look at things in such extreme ways. You are going to spend money in order to make a fortune.”

“I will not spend father’s money––the fortune may never come.”

“Then there is my money. You are welcome to every penny of it. All I have is yours. I only live for you.”

“To say such things, Roland, is the way to marry me––if you mean to marry me––is it not? Among the fishermen it is so, only they would say first of all, ‘I do wish to be your husband.’”

“I am not a fisherman, Denas. And it would really be very dishonourable to bind your fortune irrevocably to mine. In a couple of years you would be apt to say: ‘Roland played me a mean trick, for he made me his wife only that he might have all the money I earn.’ Don’t you see what a dreadful position I should be in? I should be ashamed to show my face. Really, dearest, I must look after my honour. My money––that is nothing.”

“Roland, if honour and money cannot go together, there is something wrong. If I went to London alone and you were also in London and paying for my lessons, do you know what everyone would say in St. Penfer? Do you know what they would call me?”

“Why need you care for a lot of old gossips––you, with such a grand future before you?”

“I do care. I care for myself. I care a thousand times more for father and mother. A word against my good name would kill them. They would never hold up their heads any more. And then, however bad a name the public gave me, I should give myself a worse one; I should indeed! Night and day my soul would never cease saying to me: ‘Denas Penelles, you are a murderess! Hanging is too little for you. Get out of this life and go to your own place’––and you know where that would be.”

“You silly, bigoted little Methodist! People do not die of grief in these days, they have too much to do. You would soon be able to send them a great deal of money, and that would put all right.”

“For shame, Roland! Little you know of St. Penfer fishermen, nothing at all you know of John and Joan Penelles, if you think a city full of gold would atone to them for my dishonour. What is the use of going around about our words when there are straight ones enough to say? I will go to London as your wife, or I will not go at all.”

There was a momentary expression on Roland’s face which might have terrified Denas if she had seen it, but her gaze was far outward; she was looking down on the waves and the boats of St. Penfer and on one little cottage on its shingle. And Roland’s hasty glance into her resolute face convinced him that all parleying was useless. He was angry and could not quite control himself. His voice showed decided pique as he answered:

“Very well, Denas. Take care of your own honour, by all means; mine is of no value, of course.”

“If you think marrying me makes it of no value, take care of your own honour, Roland. I will not be your wife; no, indeed. And as for London, I will not go near it. And as for my voice, it may be worth money, but it is not worth my honour, and my good name, and my father’s and mother’s life. Why should I sing for strangers? I will sing for my father and the fishers on the sea; and I will sing in the chapel––and there is an end of the matter.”

She rose with such an air of decision and wounded feeling that Roland involuntarily thought of her attitude when Elizabeth offended her. From the position taken at that hour she had never wavered; she was still as angry at Mrs. Burrell as she had been when she left the Court in the first outburst of her indignation. And she was so handsome in her affected indifference and her real indignation that Roland was ready to sacrifice everything rather than lose her. He let all other considerations slip away from him; he vowed that his chief longing, his most passionate desire, was to marry her––to make her his and his only; and that nothing but a chivalric sense of the wrong he might be doing her future had made him hesitate. And then he eloquently praised himself for such a nicety of honour, and tried to make her understand how really noble he had been in his self-denial, and how hard it was for him to be accused of the very thing he was trying to avoid. And he looked so injured, with his beautiful eyes full of tears, that Denas was privately

ashamed of herself, and fearful that she had in defence of her modesty gone beyond proper boundaries.

Then the subject of their marriage was frankly discussed. Roland was now honest and earnest enough, and yet Denas felt that the charm of the great question and answer had been lost in considering it. Spontaneity––that subtle element of all that is lovely and enchanting––had flown away at the first suspicion of constraint. Some sweet illusion that had always hung like a halo over this grand decision evaded her consciousness; the glorious ideal had become a reality and lost all its enchantments in the change.

After a long discussion, it was finally arranged that Roland should meet Denas at a small way-station about four miles distant on the following Monday evening. From there they could take a train to Plymouth, and at Plymouth there was a Wesleyan minister whom Denas had seen and who she felt sure would marry them. From Plymouth to Exeter, Salisbury, and London was a straight road, and yet one which had many asides and not too easy to follow; though as to any fear of interruptions, they were hardly worth considering. Denas would leave her home as usual on Monday morning, and her parents would have no expectation of seeing her until the following Friday night. By that time she would be settled in London––she would have been Roland's wife for nearly four days.

These arrangements were made on Friday night, and on the following morning Denas went home very early. As she took the cliff-road she felt that the spirit of change had entered into her heart and her imagination. The familiar path had become monotonously dreary; she had a kind of pity for the people who had not her hope of a speedy escape from it. The desolate winter beach, the lonely boats, the closed cottages––how inexorably common they looked! She felt that there must be something in the world better for her than such mean poverty. Roland's words had indeed induced this utter weariness and contempt for the conditions of her life, but the conditions themselves were thus made to give the most eloquent sanction to his advice and entreaties.

And when a girl has set her face toward a wrong road, nothing is sadder in life than the general certainty there is that every small event will urge her forward on it. Usually the home-coming of Denas was watched for and seen afar off, and some special dainty was simmering on the hob for her refreshment. There was all the pleasant flurry that belongs to love's warm welcome. But she had delayed her return in order to spend the evening with Roland, and the environments of the morning had not the same air of easy happiness that attaches itself to the evening hours.

Joan was elbow-deep in her week's cleaning and baking. John had the uncomfortable feeling of a man who knows himself in the way. He had only loitered around in order to see Denas and be sure that all was well with his girl. Then he was a trifle disappointed that she had not brought him his weekly paper. He went silently off to the boats, and Denas was annoyed and reproved by his patient look of disappointment. Women who are cleaning and baking are often, what is called by people less troublesomely employed, cross. Denas was sure her mother was cross and a little unreasonable. She had not time to listen to the village gossip; "it would keep till evening," she said.

Then she bid Denas hurry up and get her father's heavy guernsey mended and his bottle of water filled, ready for the boat. "They be going out on the noon ebb," she said, "and back with the midnight tide, and so take thought for the Sabbath; for your father, he do have to preach over to Pendree to-morrow, and the sermon more on his mind than the fishing––God help us!"

"Will father expect me to walk with him to Pendree to-morrow, mother? It is too far; I cannot walk so far."

"Will he expect you? Not as I know by, Denas––if you don't want to go. There be girls as would busy all to do so. But there! it is easy seen you are neither fatherish or motherish these days."

"I wish father was rich enough to stay at home and never go to sea again."

"That be a bit of nonsense! Your father has had a taking to the sea all his life; and he never could abide to be boxed up on land. Aw, my dear, John Penelles is a busker of a fisherman! The storm never yet did blow that down-daunted him! Tris says it is a great thing to see your father stand smiling by the wheel when the lightning be flying all across the elements and the big waves be threatening moment by moment to make a mouthful of the boat. That be the Penelles' way, my dear; they come from a good old *haveage*;[3] but there, then, it be whist poor speed we make when our tongues tire our hands."

"'Tis like a storm as it can be, mother."

"Aw, then, a young girl should say brave words or no words at all. 'Tis not your work to forespeak bad weather, and I wish you wouldn't do it, Denas; I do for sure."

In an hour John came back and had a mouthful of meat and bread, but he was hurried and anxious, and said he had not come yet to his meat-list and would be off about his business. Then Joan asked him concerning the weather, and he answered:

"The gulls do fly high, and that do mean a breeze; but there be no danger until they fly inland. The boats will be back before midnight, my dear."

"If the wind do let them, John. Denas says it be on its contrary old ways again."

"My old dear, we be safest when the storm-winds blow; for then God do be keeping the lookout for us. Joan, my wife, 'tis not your business to be looking after the wind, nor mine either; for just as long as John Penelles trusts his boat to the Great Pilot, it is sure and certain to come into

harbour right side up. Now, my dear, give me a big jug of milk, with a little boiling water in it to take off the edge of the cold, and then I'll away for the gray fish––if so be God fills the net on either side the boat for us."

"Hark, father! The wind has turned to a north-easter––a bad wind on this coast."

"Not it, Denas. What was it you read me in that story paper? Some verses by a great and good man who have been in a stiff north-easter, or else he never could have got the true grip of it:

"'Welcome, wild north-easter!
Come, and strong within us
Stir the seaman's blood,
Bracing brain and sinew;
Come, thou wind of God!'"

"That is not right, and that is not the whole of it, father."

"Aw, 'tis enough, my dear; all that the soul wants, the memory can hold to––'tis enough. Good-bye, and God's keeping."

He drank his warm milk, buttoned close his pilot coat, and went off toward the boats. Denas had no fear for him, but Joan had not learned trust from her husband's trust; the iron ring of the wind, the black sea, the wild sky with its tattered remnants of clouds, made her full of apprehension. She hurried her work and was silent over it; while Denas sat in the little window sewing, and occasionally letting her eyes wander outward over the lonely beach and the homely "cob" cottages of the fishers.

It was a solitary, lonesome, dreary-looking spot on that bleak winter day; and life inside those tiny houses was restricted and full of limitations. Denas thought of them all, but she weighed and measured the life without taking into account the love that sat on each hearthstone––the love that turned the simple houses into homes and the plain, hard-working men into husbands and sons and brothers and lovers and saw that they were good men and brave heroes in spite of their poverty. Love would have altered her estimate, but she did not ask love to count with her. She only thought: "If I did not know of a better life, of a life full of pleasure and change, I might go and live with Tris and dree my days out with him; but I am now too wise to be so easily satisfied. I want a house finer than Elizabeth's; I want grand dresses, and plenty of servants, and a carriage; and Roland says all these things are in my voice. Besides, I am far too pretty to be a fisherman's wife and mend guernseys, and make nets, and bake fish-pies every day in the year."

Far too pretty! After all, this was the deepest thought in her foolish heart. At first, Roland's pictures of her in picturesque costume, singing to enthusiastic crowds, had rather terrified her; but she had let the idea enter her mind, it had become familiar, then alluring, and finally a delightful dream. She occupied many hours in devising costumes, in imagining herself in their colours and forms, and in considering how the homage she would receive would be most nobly borne as it affected Roland. Of course she would throw all at his feet––all the admiration, all the love, all the gold that came to her.

She looked at the grave-faced, preoccupied mother and wished she could talk with her about her hopes. Roland had expressed himself as greatly hurt by this inability. "Most mothers, Denas," he said, "would be only too happy to anticipate such a prospect for their daughter, and you ought to have had a mother's sympathy and help at this great epoch of your life. Poor girl! it is too bad that you are obliged to bear the whole weight of such a movement yourself!"

So Denas looked at her mother, and felt aggrieved by the strict creed which ruled her life. Methodists were so very narrow. She remembered her father's anger at a mere proposal of Miss Tresham to take Denas to a theatre with her. She knew that he believed a theatre to be the open door to hell; and that the mere idea of men and women, either with souls saved or souls to be saved, dancing, filled him with shame and anger. Yet she was going to sing in a theatre if possible; and Roland had said a great deal about the fisher dances of various countries and how effective they would be with the songs.

At first she had refused to tolerate the idea; she could not imagine herself dancing to amuse a crowd of strangers––dancing for money. She thought of Herodias dancing the Baptist's head off, and she said solemnly to Roland, and with the utmost sincerity, that she dared not dance. It was the broad road to perdition. Roland had not cared to argue with such a prejudice. He knew well that the dancing would follow the public singing, as naturally as the singing followed the professional orchestra. But he said then, as he said frequently afterward: "It is such a pity, Denas, you have not a mother you can advise with and who could help and encourage you. It just locks a girl up in a box to be born a Methodist!"

This attitude of Roland's was a very cruel one. It taught Denas to feel that her secrecy was not her fault. She continually told herself that she would have been glad to talk over her future plans with her parents if they would only have listened to her; that it was not her fault if they were unreasonable and bigoted––not her fault if her mind had grown beyond her surroundings; that her father and mother ought to consider that her education and her companionship with Elizabeth Tresham had led naturally to the craving for a wider life; and that if they give the first they ought in common justice to be ready to consider the consequences with her.

“But they will not,” she thought angrily. “They want me to settle down and be content with Tris Penrose. I dare not tell them that Roland loves me. Roland dare not tell them either. I cannot say a word to them about my voice and the money it may make. Roland says any reasonable father and mother would be quite excited at the prospect and glad to go to London with me. But will my father and mother do so? Oh, no! In order to do myself justice I am obliged to run away. It is too bad! Any sensible person would feel sorry for me.”

With such specious reasoning she satisfied her conscience, and the afternoon wore away in gathering gloom and fierce scuds of rain. It was nearly dark at four o’clock, and she rose and brought a small round table to the hearth and began to put on it the tea-cups and the bread and butter. As she did so Joan entered the room. Her arms were full of clean clothing, but glancing at the table she threw them above her head, and regardless of the scattered garments cried out:

“Denas! Look to the loaf! Some poor ship be in distress! Pray God it be not your father’s.”

Then Denas with trembling hands lifted the loaf, which she had inadvertently laid down wrong side upward, and placed it, with a “God save the ship and all in her,” in the proper position. But Joan was thoroughly unnerved by the ominous incident, and she sat down with her apron over her head, rocking herself slowly to her inaudible prayer; while Denas, with a resentful feeling she did not try to understand, gathered up the pieces of linen and flannel her mother had apparently forgotten.

Into this scene stepped a young man in the Burrell Court livery. He gave Denas a letter, but refused the offer of a cup of tea, because “the storm was hurrying landward, and he would be busy all to catch the cliff-top before it caught him.”

Joan took no notice of the interruption, and Denas felt her trouble over such a slight affair as a turned loaf to be almost a personal offence. In a short time she said: “Mother, your tea is waiting; and I have a letter from Mrs. Burrell, if you care anything about it.”

“Aw, my girl, I care little for Mrs. Burrell’s letters to-night. She be well and happy, no doubt; and my old dear is in the wind’s teeth and pulling hard against a frosty death.”

“Father knows the sky and the sea, and I think it is cruel hard of him to take such risks.”

“And where will the fishers be who do take no risks? Fish be plenty just before a storm, and the London market-boat waiting for the take; and why wouldn’t the men do their duty, danger or no danger?”

“I would rather die than be a fisher’s wife.”

“Aw, my girl, the heart for one isn’t in you.”

“I never saw you so nervous before, mother.”

“Nervous! Nervous! No, my dear, it be downright fear. I never knew what fear was before. I’ve gone down-daunted––that be the trouble, Denas. I’ve had such dreams lately––such creepy-like, ghastly old dreams of wandering in wayless ways covered with water; of seeing the hearth-place full of cold ashes and the lights put out; and of carrying the ‘Grief Child’ in my breast, a puny, wailing bit of a baby that I could not be rid of, nor yet get away from––sights and sounds after me night and day that do give me a turn to think of; and what they do mean I haven’t mind-light for to see. God help us! But I do fear they be signs of trouble. And who goes into the way of trouble but your father? May God save him from it!”

“Trouble is no new thing, mother.”

“That be the truth. Trouble be old as the floods of Dava.”

“And it does seem to me religious people, who are always talking about trusting God, are a poor, unhappy kind. If you do believe, mother, that God is the good Father you say He is––if you do think He has led millions to His own heavenly city––I wonder at you always fearing that He is going to forget you and let you lose your way and get into all kinds of danger and sorrow.”

“There, then! You be right for once, my dear. Your father, he do serve the Lord with gladness, but a wife’s heart is nothing but a nest of fear. And it be true that I do not think so much of serving the Lord as of having the Lord serve me; and when it is me and always me, and your heart be top-full of your dismal old self, how can you serve God with gladness? You be right to give me a set-down, Denas. Come, now, what is Mrs. Burrell’s letter about? I be pleased and ready to hear it now, my dear.”

“This is what she says, mother:

> “‘Dear Denas:––I am troubled about Roland and you. I want very much to talk things over with you. If I offended you when you were at the Court, I am very sorry for it. Come and spend a day next week with me. I will send the carriage to Miss Mohun’s.
>
> “‘Your friend,
> “‘Elizabeth Burrell.’”

“Why is she troubled about you and that young man? Is he not in London now?”

“He is here, and there, and everywhere. Would you go to the Court again, mother? I told you how Elizabeth behaved to me.”

“Aw, then she had the bride-fever, my dear. She will be come to her senses by this time. Yes, yes, if you aren’t very sure how to act, take the kind way rather than the ill way; you will be mostly right, my dear.”

Of course Denas had no idea of taking either way, but the invitation furnished her with a reason for wearing her best dress on Monday; and she had been much exercised to find out a cause for this unusual finery. She felt quite excited over this fortunate incident, and she could not avoid a smile when she reflected that Elizabeth had so opportunely furnished her with the very thing she wanted.

Then for an hour or two Joan quite controlled herself. She asked after the news of the upper town, and listened with interest to her daughter's description of the dresses she was helping to fashion. From this topic they glided naturally to Christmas and its coming festivities, and Joan talked a good deal of the new silver watch they had decided to give John as a Christmas gift, and so for some time she was as full of plans and happy hopes as a little child could be.

She did not notice that after a while Denas grew weary and constrained, that speech seemed a trouble to her, that she lost herself frequently in reverie, and was as nearly nervous as she had accused her mother of being. But the conversation finally flagged so much that Joan began to worry about the weather once more. The wind was now frightful, the icy rain rattled against the windows, and at the open door Joan could hear billow on billow, crash on crash, shrieking blast on shrieking blast. She was unable to preserve her cheerfulness. Like all strong hearts in anxiety, she became silent. The platitudes of Denas, dropped without interest, annoyed her; she only moved her head in reply.

Midnight came, and no boats. There was a pitifully frequent opening of cottage doors, and the sudden flashes of fire and candle light that followed revealed always some white, fearful face thrust out into the black night, in the hope of hearing the shouts of the home-coming men. Joan could not keep away from the door; and the yawning of Denas, her shifting movements, her uncontrolled sleepiness, irritated Joan. In great anxiety, companionship not perfectly sympathetic is irritating; mere mortals quiver under its infliction. For Denas could not perceive any special reason for unusual fear; she longed to go to bed and sleep, as she had done many a time before under the same circumstances. She laid the Bible on the table before Joan and said: "Won't you read a psalm and lie down a bit, mother?"

"No. Read for yourself, and to bed then if you want to go."

Denas opened the book. Her father's mark was in the psalms, and she began to read to herself.

Joan's face was beneath her blue apron. David's words did not interpret her at this hour; only her own lips could speak for her own sorrow and fear. There was a deep stillness in the house. Outside the tempest raged wildly. It seemed to Joan as if hours passed in that interval of heart-trembling; she was almost shocked when the old clock gave its long whirring warning and then struck only *one*. Her first look was to the fire. It wanted replenishing. Her next was at Denas. The girl was fast asleep. Her hands were across the open Bible, her face was dropped upon them. Joan touched her and said not unkindly:

"A little bit of Bible-reading do send people to sleep quick, don't it, Denas?"

"I was so tired, mother."

"Aw, my dear, you be no worse than Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' He did go to sleep, too, when he was reading his roll. Come, my girl, it is your time for bed. Sitting up won't help you to bear trouble."

"Mother, won't it be time enough to bear trouble when it is really here to be borne?"

"It do seem as if it would. Love be a fearful looker-forward. Go to bed, my girl; maybe you will sleep sorrow away."

So Denas went to bed and did not awake until the grey light of the stormy morning was over everything. She could hear the murmur of voices in the living-room, and she dressed quickly and went there. John Penelles sat by the fire drinking hot tea. His hair had yet bits of ice in it, his face still had the awful shadow that is cast by the passing-by of death. Denas put her arms around his neck and kissed him; she kissed him until she began to sob, and he drew her upon his knee, and held her to his breast, and said in a whisper to her:

"Ten men drowned, my dear, and three frozen to death; but through God's mercy father slipped away from an ugly fate."

"Oh, father, how could you bear it?"

"God help us, Denas, we must bear what is sent."

"What a night it has been! How did you live through it?"

"It's dogged as does it and lives through it. It's dogged as does anything, my dear, all over the world. I stuck to the boat and the boat stuck to me. God Almighty Himself can't help a coward."

The storm continued all day, but began to slacken in intensity at sunset. There was of course no service at Pendree. John, even if he had not been so worn out, could not have reached the place in such a storm, either by land or sea. But the neighbours, without seeming premeditation, gathered in John's cottage at night, and he opened his Bible and read aloud:

"Terrors take hold on him, as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurleth him out of his place."

And it was to these words, with their awful application to the wicked, that Denas listened the last night she intended to spend under her father's roof. John's discourses were nearly always like his nature, tender and persuasive; and this terrible sermon wove itself in and out of her

wandering thoughts like a black scroll in a gay vesture. It pained and troubled her, though she did not consider why it should do so. After the meeting was over John was very weary; but he would not go to bed until he had eaten supper. He “wanted his little maid to sit near him for half-an-hour,” he said. And he held her hand in his own hand, and gave her such looks of perfect love and blessed her so solemnly and sweetly when at length he left her that she began to sob again and to stand on tiptoe that she might throw her arms around his neck and touch his lips with hers once more.

Her kisses were wet with her tears, and they made John’s heart soft and gentle as a baby’s. “She be the fondest little maid,” he said to his wife. “She be the fondest little maid! I could take a whole year to praise her, Joan, and then I could not say enough.”

In reality, the last two days, with their excess of vital emotions, had worn Denas out. Never before had the life into which she was born looked so unlovely to her. She preferred the twitter and twaddle of Priscilla’s workroom to the intense realities of an existence always verging on eternity. She dared to contrast those large, heroic fishers, with their immovable principles and their constant fight with all the elemental forces for their daily bread, with Roland Tresham; and to decide that Roland’s delicate beauty, pretty, persuasive manners, and fashionable clothing were vastly superior attributes. So she was glad when the morning came, for she was weary of enduring what need no longer be endured.

It still rained, but she put on her best clothing, and Joan was not pleased at her for doing so. She thought she might come home some night when the rain was over and change her dress for the visit to Burrell Court. This difference of opinion made their last meal together a silent one; for John was in a deep sleep and Joan would not have him disturbed. Denas just opened the door and stood a moment looking at the large, placid face on the white pillow. As she turned away, it seemed as if she cut a piece out of her heart; she had a momentary spasm of real physical pain.

Joan had not yet recovered from her night of terror. Her face was grey, her eyes heavy, her heart still beating and aching with some unintelligible sense of wrong or grief. And she looked at her child with such a dumb, sorrowful inquiry that Denas sat down near her and put her head on her mother’s breast and asked: “What is it, mother? Have I done anything to grieve you?”

“Not as I know by, dear. I wish you hadn’t worn your best dress––dresses do cost money, don’t they now?”

“Yes, they do, mother. There then! Shall I take it off? I will, to please you, mother.”

“No, no! The will be as good as the deed from my little girl. Maybe you are right, too. Dress do go a long way to pleasing.”

“Then good-bye. Kiss me, mother! Kiss me twice! Kiss me again, for father!”

So Joan kissed her child. She smoothed her hair, and straightened her collar, and put in a missed button, and so held her close for a few moments, and kissed her again; and when Denas had reached the foot of the cliff, she was still watching her with the look on her face––the look of a mother who feels as if she still held her child in her arms.

O love! love! love! Is there any sorrow in life like loving?

CHAPTER VIII.

A SEA OF SORROW.

“Time the shuttle drives; but
we
Give to every thread its hue
And elect our destiny.”
––Burleigh.

“Life does not make us, we make life.”

“He gave me trust, and trust has given me
means
Once to be false for all.”
––Dryden.

“He at the news
Heart-struck, with chilling gripe of sorrow,
stood,
That all his senses bound.”

–-Milton.

IT had been raining a little when Denas bade her mother farewell, but by the time she reached the top of the cliff the rain had become fog. She stood still awhile and turned her face to the sea, and saw one drift after another roll inland, veiling the beach, and the boats, and the cottages, and leaving the whole scene a spectacle of desolation.

It affected her painfully. The love and hope in her heart did not lift her above the depressing influence of that mournful last view of her home. Was the thing that she was going to do worth while? Was anything in life worth while? The little town had a half-awakened Monday-morning look. Every one seemed to be beginning another week with an “Oh, dear me!” sort of feeling. Miss Priscilla was just dressing her shop window, and as cross as crossed sticks over her employment. She said that Denas was late, and wondered “for goodness’ sake why she was so dressed up.”

It gave Denas a kind of spiteful pleasure to answer: “She was dressed to go to Burrell Court and spend a day with Mrs. Burrell. When she sent Mr. Burrell word the day she would come the carriage would call for her.”

“If you mean the day I can spare you best, I cannot spare you at all this week. There now!”

“I am not thinking of you sparing me, Priscilla. I am waiting for a fine day.”

“Upon my word! Am I your mistress or are you mine? And what is more, that Roland Tresham is not coming here again. I have some conscience, thank goodness! and I will not sanction such ways and such carryings on any longer. He is a dishonourable young man.”

“Has he not paid you, Priscilla?”

Before Priscilla could find the scathing words she required, an hostler from the Black Lion entered the shop and put a letter into the hand of Denas.

Priscilla turned angrily on the man and ordered him to leave her shop directly. Then she said: “Denas Penelles, you are a bad girl! I am going to write to Mrs. Burrell this day, and to your father and mother also.”

“I would not be a fool if I was you, Priscilla.”

Denas was reading the letter, and softly smiling as she uttered the careless words. For indeed affairs were at a point now where Priscilla’s interference would hurt herself more than others. The note was, of course, from Roland. It told her that all was ready, and that the weather being so bad as to render walking very tiresome and miserable, he had engaged a carriage which would be waiting for her on the west side of the parish church at seven o’clock that night; and her lover would be waiting with it, and if Roland was to be believed, everything joyful and marvellous was waiting also.

This letter was the only sunshine throughout the day. Priscilla’s bad temper was in the ascendant, both in the shop and in the workroom. She scolded Denas for working so slowly, she made her unrip whatever she did. She talked at Denas in talking to the other girls, and the girls all echoed and shadowed their mistress’ opinions and conduct. Denas smiled, and her smile had in it a mysterious satisfaction which all felt to be offensive. But for the certain advent of seven o’clock, the day would have been intolerable.

About half-past six she put on her hat and cloak, and Miss Priscilla ordered her to take them off. “You are not going outside my house to-night, Denas Penelles,” she said. “If you sew until ten o’clock, you will not have done a day’s work.”

“I am going home, Priscilla. I will work for you no more. You have behaved shamefully to me all day, and I am going home.”

Priscilla had not calculated on such a result, and it was inconvenient to her. She began to talk more reasonably, but Denas would listen to no apology. It suited her plans precisely to leave Priscilla in anger, for if Priscilla thought she had gone home she would not of course send any word to her parents. So she left the workroom in a pretended passion, and shut the shop door after her with a clash that made Miss Priscilla give a little scream and the forewoman ejaculate:

“Well, there then! A good riddance of such a bad piece! I do say that for sure.”

Very little did Denas care for the opinions of Priscilla and her work-maidens. She knew that the word of any girl there could be bought for a day’s wage; she was as willing they should speak evil as well of her. Yet it was with a heart full of anger at the day’s petty slights and wrongs that she hastened to the place mentioned by Roland. As she turned into the street at one end the carriage entered it at the other. It came to meet her; it stopped, and Roland leaped to her side. In another moment she was in the carriage. Roland’s arm was around her; he was telling her how grateful he was; how happy! how proud! He was promising her a thousand pleasures, giving her hope after hope; vowing an unalterable and never-ending love.

And Denas surrendered herself to his charm. After the last three dreadful days, it did seem a kind of heaven to be taken right out of a life so hard and unlovely and so full of painful emotions; to be kissed and flattered and to be treated like a lady. The four miles she had expected to walk went like a happy dream; she was sorry when they were passed and the bare railway station was reached. It was but a small place lit by a single lamp, but Roland improvised a kind of couch, and told her to sleep while he watched and smoked a cigar.

In a short time he returned, and said that there was no train to Plymouth until midnight; but an

express for London would pass in half an hour, and they had better take it. Denas thought a moment, and answered with a decision that made Roland look curiously at her: “No. I will not go to London to be married. I know the preacher at Plymouth. We will wait for the Plymouth train.” It was not a very pleasant wait. It was cold and damp and inexpressibly dreary, and Roland could not avoid showing that he was disappointed in not taking the London train.

But the hours go by, no matter to what measure, and midnight came, and the train came, and the comfort and privacy of a first-class carriage restored the lover-like attitude of the runaways. Early in the morning they reached Plymouth, and as soon as possible they sought the house of the Wesleyan preacher. It stood close to the chapel and was readily found. A written message on Roland’s card brought him at once to the parlour. He looked with interest and curiosity and some disapproval at the couple.

“Mr. Tresham,” he said, glancing at the card which he held in his hand, “you wish me to marry you. I think–––” He was going to make some inquiries or objections, but he caught the expression of anxiety in the face of Denas, and then he looked carefully at her and asked:

“Have I not seen you before?”

“Yes, sir, when you preached at St. Penfer last summer. I am the daughter of John Penelles.”

“The fisher Penelles?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Oh! Yes, Mr. Tresham, I will marry you at once. It will be the best thing, under the circumstances, I am sure. Follow me, sir.” As they went along a narrow covered way, he called a servant and gave her an order, and then opening a door ushered the would-be bride and bridegroom into the chapel, and straight to the communion rail.

Denas knelt down there, and for a few moments lost herself in sincere prayer. After all, in great emotion prayer was her native tongue. When she stood up and lifted her eyes, the preacher’s wife and two daughters were at her side, and the preacher himself was at the communion table, with the open book in his hand. The bare chapel in the grey daylight; the strange tones of the preacher’s voice in the empty place; the strange women at her side––it was all like a dream. She felt afraid to move or to look up. She answered as she was told, and she heard Roland answer also. But his voice did not sound real and happy, and when he took the plain gold ring from the preacher’s hand and said after him, “With this ring I thee wed,” she raised her eyes to her husband’s face. It was pale and sombre. No answering flash of love met hers, and she felt it difficult to restrain her tears.

In truth, Roland was smitten with a sudden irresolution that was almost regret. As Denas knelt praying, there had come to his mind many a dream he had had of his own wedding. He had always thought of it in some old church that would be made to glow with bride-roses and ring with bride-music. Young maidens and men of high degree were to tread the wedding march with him. Dancing and feasting, gay company and rich presents, were to add glory to some fair girl wife, whom he would choose because, of all others, she was the loveliest; and the wealthiest, and the most to be desired.

And then his eyes fell upon the girl at his feet, in her plain dark dress crushed and disordered with a night’s travel; the bare, empty chapel; the utter want of music, flowers, company, or social support of any kind; the small, rigid-looking preacher without surplice or insignia of holy office; the half-expressed disapproval on the countenances of the three women present as witnesses––it was not thus Elizabeth was married; it was not thus he himself ought to have been married. How the surroundings might affect Denas he did not even think; and yet the poor girl also had had her dreams, which this cold, dreary reality in no measure redeemed.

But the ring was on her finger; she was Roland’s wife. Nothing could ever make her less. She heard the preacher say: “Come into the vestry, Mrs. Tresham, and sign the register.” And then Roland gave her his arm and kissed her, and she went with the little company, and took the pen from her husband’s hand, and wrote boldly for the last time her maiden name:

“Denasia Penelles.”

Roland looked inquiringly at her, and she smiled and answered: “That is right, dear. I was christened Denasia.”

Very small things pleased Roland, and the new name delighted him. All the way to London he spoke frequently of it. “You are now Denasia, my darling,” he said. “Let the old name slip with the old life. Besides, Denasia is an excellent public name. You can sing under it splendidly. Such a noble name! Why did you let everyone spoil it?”

“Everyone thought Denas was my name. Father and mother always called me Denas, and people forgot that it was only part of my name. Fisher-folk have short names, or nicknames.”

“But, really, Denasia Penelles is a very distinguished name. A splendid one for the public.”

“Why not Denasia Tresham?”

“Because, my dear, there are Treshams living in London who would be very angry at me if I put their name on a bill-board. The Treshams are a very proud family.”

“Roland, it would kill my father if I put his name on anything that refers to a theatre. You don’t know how he feels on that subject. It is a thing of life and death––I mean the soul’s life or death––to him.”

A painful discussion, in which both felt hurt and angry and both spoke in very affectionate terms, followed. It lasted until they reached the great city which stretches out her hands to every other city. Roland had secured rooms in a very dull, respectable house in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury. He had often stayed there when his finances did not admit of West End luxuries, and the place was suitable for many other reasons.

Then followed two perfectly happy weeks for Denas. She had written a few lines to her parents while waiting for a train at Exeter, and she then resolved not to permit herself to grieve about their grief, because it could do them no good and it would seriously worry and annoy Roland. And Roland was so loving and generous. At his command modistes and milliners turned his plebeian bride into a fashionable, and certainly into a very lovely lady. She had more pretty costumes than she had ever dreamed of; she had walking-hats and dress-hats, and expensive furs, and she grew more beautiful with each new garment. They went to theatres and operas; they went riding and walking; they had cosey little dinners at handsome restaurants; and Roland never once named money, or singing, or anything likely to spoil the charm of the life they were leading.

During this happy interval Denas did not quite forget her parents. She wrote to them once, and she very often wondered through whom and in what manner they received the news of their loss. It was her own hand which dealt the blow. Miss Priscilla really thought Denas had gone back to her home, and she resolved on the following Sunday afternoon to walk down to the fishing village and "make it up" with her. About Wednesday, however, there began to be floating rumours of the truth. Several people called on Priscilla and asked after the whereabouts of Denas; and the landlord of the Black Lion was talking freely of the large bill Roland had left unsettled there. But none of these rumours reached the ears of the fisher-folk, nor were they likely to do so until the St. Penfer *Weekly News* appeared. The first three days of the week had been so foggy that no boat had cared to risk a sail over the bar; but on Thursday morning all was clear, and the men were eager to get out to sea. John Penelles was hastening toward his boat, when he heard a voice calling him. It was the postman, and he turned and went to meet him.

"Here be a letter for you, John Penelles. Exeter postmark. I came a bit out of my way with it. I thought you would be looking for news."

The man was thinking of Denas and the reports about her flight; but John's unconcern puzzled him, and he did not care to say anything more definite to the big fisherman. And, as it happened, a letter was expected from Plymouth, on chapel business; for the very preacher who had married Roland and Denas had been asked to come to St. Penfer and preach the yearly missionary sermon. John had no doubt this letter from Exeter referred to the matter. He said so to the postman, and with the unconscious messenger of sorrow in his hand went back to his cottage.

For letters were unusual events with John. If this referred to the missionary service, he would have to read it in public next Sunday, and he was much pleased and astonished that it should have been sent to him. He felt a certain importance in the event, and was anxious to share his little triumph with his "old dear." Joan did not quite appreciate his consideration. She had her hands in the dough, and her thoughts were upon the pipeclaying which she was going to give to the flagged floor of her cottage. She had hoped men-folks with their big boots would keep away until her work was dry and snow-white.

"Here be a letter from Exeter, Joan, to me. 'Twill be about the missionary service. I thought you would like to know, my dear."

"*Hum-m-m!*" answered Joan. "I could have done without the news, John, till the bread was baked and the floor was whitened." She had her back to John, but, as he did not speak again, she turned her face over her shoulder and looked at him. The next moment she was at his side.

"What is it, John? John Penelles, speak to me."

John stood on the hearth with his left arm outstretched and holding an open letter. His eyes were fixed on it. His face had the rigid, stubborn look of a man who on the very point of unconsciousness arrests his soul by a peremptory act of will. He stood erect, stiff, speechless, with the miserable slip of white paper at the end of his outstretched arm.

Joan gently forced him back into his chair; she untied his many neckcloths; she bared his broad, hairy chest; she brought him water to drink; and at length her tears and entreaties melted the stone-like rigour; his head fell forward, his eyes closed, his hand unclasped, and the letter fell to the floor. It did not interest Joan; nothing on earth was of interest to her while her husband was in that horror of stubborn suffering.

"John," she whispered, with her face against his face––"John! My John! My good heart, be yourself and tell Joan what is the matter. Is it sickness of your body, John? Is it trouble of your mind, John? Be a man, and speak to God and to me. God is our refuge and our strength––think o' that. A very present help in trouble––present, not a long way off, John, not in heaven; but here in your heart and on your hearth. Oh, John! John! do speak to me."

"To be sure, Joan! The letter, dear; read it––read it aloud––I may be mistaken––it isn't possible, I'm sure. God help us both!"

Joan lifted the letter and read aloud the words written so hastily in a few moments of time, but which brought to two loving hearts years of anxious sorrow:

"'DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:––I have just been married to Roland Tresham, and we are on our way to

London. I love Roland so much, I hope you will forgive me. I will write more from London. Your loving child,

"'DENAS TRESHAM.'"

"Oh, Joan, my dear! My heart be broken! My heart be broken! My heart be broken!"

"Now, John, don't you be saying such wisht dismal, ugly words. A heart like yours is hard to break. Not even a bad daughter can do it. Oh, my dear, don't you talk like that there! Don't, John."

"'Tis the Lord's will, Joan––I do know that."

"It be nothing of the kind, John. It be the devil's will when a child do wrong such love as yours and mine. And there, now! Will you break your brave old heart, that has faced death a hundred times, for the devil? No, 'tis not like to be, I'm sure. Look at the worst of it. Denas does say she be married. She does write her name with his name. What then? Many a poor father and mother have drunk the cup we be drinking––nothing strange have come to us."

"I do not believe she be the man's wife."

"Aw, my dear, I do believe it. And Denas be my daughter, and I will not let you or any other man say but that she be all of an honest woman. 'Tis slander against your awn flesh and blood to say different, John." And Joan spoke so warmly that her temper had a good effect upon her husband. It was like a fresh sea-breeze. He roused himself and sat upright, and began to listen to his wife's words.

"Denas be gone away––gone away for ever from us––never more our little maid––never more! All this be true. But, John, her heart was gone a long time ago. Our poor ways were her scorn; she have gone to her awn, my dear, and we could not keep her. 'Tis like the young gull you brought home one day, and, when it was grown, no love kept it from the sea. You gave it of your best, and it left you; it lay in your breast, John, and it left you. My dear! my dear! she be the man's wife. Say that and feel that and stick to that. He be no son to us, that be sure; but Denas is our daughter. And maybe, John, things are going to turn out better than you think for. Denas be no fool."

"Oh, Joan, how could she?"

At this point Joan broke down and began to sob passionately, and John had to turn comforter. And thus the painful hours went by, and the bread was not baked, and the boats went to sea without John; and the two sorrowful hearts sat together on their lonely hearth and talked of the child who had run away from their love. They were uncertain what to say to their neighbours, uncertain what their neighbours would say to them. John thought he ought to go to Exeter and see all the clergymen there, and so find out if Denas had been lawfully married. Joan thought it "a wisht poor business to go looking for bad news. Sit at your fireside, old man, or go far out to sea if you like it better, and if bad news be for you it will find you out, do be sure of that."

The next day it did find them out. The St. Penfer *News*, published on Thursday, which was market-day, contained the following item: "On Monday night the daughter of John Penelles, fisher, ran off with Mr. Roland Tresham. The guilty pair went direct to London. Great sympathy is felt for the girl's father, who is a thoroughly upright man and a Wesleyan local preacher of the St. Penfer circuit."

One of the brethren thought it his duty to show this paragraph to John. And the "old man" in John gained the mastery, and with a great oath he swore the words were a lie. Then, being sneeringly contradicted, he felled "the man of duty" prone upon the shingle. Then he went home and thoroughly terrified Joan. The repressed animal passion of a lifetime raged in him like a wild beast. He used words which horrified his wife, he kicked chairs and tables out of his way like a man drunk with strong liquor. He said he would go to St. Merryn's and get his money, and follow Roland and Denas to the end of the world; and if they were not married, they should marry or die––both of them. He walked his cottage floor the night through, and all the powers of darkness tortured and tempted him.

For the first time in all their wedded life Joan dared not approach her husband. He was like a giant in the power of his enemies, and his struggles were terrible. But she knew well that he must fight and conquer alone. Hour after hour his ceaseless tramp, tramp, tramp went on; and she could hear him breathing inwardly like one who has business of life and death in hand.

Toward dawn she lost hold of herself and fell asleep. When she awoke it was broad daylight, and all was still in the miserable house. Softly she opened the door and looked into the living-room. John was on his knees; she heard his voice––a far-off, awful voice––the voice of the soul and not of the body. So she went back, and with bowed head sat down on the edge of her bed and waited. Very cold was the winter morning, but she feared to make a movement. She knew it was long past the breakfast hour; she heard footsteps passing, the shouts of the fishers, the cries of the sea-birds; she believed it to be at least ten o'clock.

But she sat breathlessly still. John was wrestling as Jacob wrestled; a movement, a whisper might delay the victory or the blessing. She almost held her breath as the muttered pleading grew more and more rapid, more and more urgent. Then there was a dead silence, a pause, a long deep sigh, a slow movement––and John opened the door and said softly, "Joan." There was the light of victory on his face; the cold strong light of a lifted sword. Then he sat down by her side; but what he told her and how she comforted him belong to those sacred, secret things which it is a sacrilege against love to speak of.

They went together to the cold hearth, and kindled the fire, and made the meal both urgently needed, and, as they ate it, John spoke of the duty before him. He had sworn at Jacob Trenager and knocked him down; he had let loose all the devils within him; he had failed in the hour of his trial, and he must resign his offices of class leader and local preacher.

It was a bitter personal humiliation. How his enemies would rejoice! Where he had been first, he must be last. After he had eaten, he took the plan out of the Bible and looked at it. As he already knew, he was appointed to preach at St. Clair the following evening. He had prepared his sermon on those three foggy days that began the week. He then thought he had never been so ready for a preaching, and he had the desire of a natural orator for his occasion. But how could he preach to others when he had failed himself? The flight of his daughter was in every mouth, and in some measure he would be held responsible for her sin. Was not Eli punished for his son's transgressions? The duty before him was a terrible one. It made his brown face blanch and his strong, stern mouth quiver with mental anguish.

But he laid the plan on the table and crossed out carefully all the figures which represented John Penelles. Then he wrote a few lines to the superintendent and enclosed his self-degradation. Joan wondered what he would do about the St. Clair appointment, for he had asked no one to take his place, and early in the afternoon he told her to get the lantern ready, as he was going there. She divined what he purposed to do, and she refused to go with him. He did not oppose her decision; perhaps he was glad she felt able to spare herself and him the extra humiliation.

Never had the little chapel been so crowded. All his mates from the neighbouring villages were present; for everyone had some share of that itching curiosity that likes to see how a soul suffers. A few of the leaders spoke to him; a great many appeared to be lost in those divine meditations suitable to the house of worship. John's first action awakened everyone present to a sense of something unusual. He refused to ascend the pulpit. He passed within the rails that enclosed the narrow sacred spot below the pulpit, drew the small table forward, and, without the preface of hymn or prayer, plunged at once into his own confession of unworthiness to minister to them. He read aloud the letter which he had received from his daughter, and averred his belief in its truthfulness. He told, with the minutest veracity, every word of his quarrel with Jacob Trenager. He confessed his shameful and violent temper in his own home; his hatred and his desire and purposes of revenge; and he asked the pardon of Trenager and of every member of the church which had been scandalized by the action of his daughter and by his own sinfulness.

His voice, sad and visibly restrained by a powerful will, throbbed with the burning emotions which made the man quiver from head to feet. It was impossible not to feel something of the anguish that looked out of his large patient eyes and trembled on his lips. Women began to sob hysterically, men bent their heads low or covered their faces with their hands; an irresistible wave of sorrow and sympathy was carrying every soul with it.

But, even while John was speaking, a man rose and walked up the aisle to the table at which John stood. He turned his face to the congregation, and, lifting up his big hand, cried out:

"Be quiet, John Penelles. I be to blame in this matter. I be the villain! There isn't a Cornishman living that be such a Judas as I be. 'Twas under my old boat Denas Penelles found the love-letters that couldn't have come to her own home. Why did I lend my boat and myself for such a cruel bad end? Was it because I liked the young man? No, I hated him. What for, then?" He put his hand in his pocket, took out a piece of gold, and, in the sight of all, dashed it down on the table.

"That's what I did it for. One pound! A wisht beggarly bit of money! Judas asked thirty pieces. I sold Paul Pyn for one piece, and it was too much––too much for such a ghastly, mean old rascal. I be cruel sorry––but there then! where be the good of 'sorry' now? That bit of gold have burnt my soul blacker than a coal! dreadful! aw, dreadful! I wouldn't touch it again to save my mean old life. And if there be a man or a woman in Cornwall that will touch it, they be as uncommon bad as I be! that is sure."

"Paul, I forgive you, and there is my hand upon it. A man can only be 'sorry.' 'Sorry' be all that God asks," said John Penelles in a low voice.

"I be no man, John. I be just a cruel bad fellow. I never had a child to love me or one to love. No woman would be my wife. I be kind of forsaken––no kith or kin to care about me," and, with his brown, rugged face cast down, he began to walk toward the door. Then Ann Bude rose in the sight of all. She went to his side; she took his hand and passed out of the chapel with him. And everyone looked at the other, for Paul had loved Ann for twenty years and twenty times at least Ann had refused to be his wife. But now, in this hour of his shame and sorrow, she had gone to his side, and a sigh and a smile passed from heart to heart and from face to face.

John stood still, with his eyes fixed on the piece of gold. It lay on the table like a guilty thing. All Pyn's sin seemed to have passed into it. Men and women stood up to look at it where it lay––the wretched tool of a bad man. It was a relief when Jacob Trenager gave out a hymn, a greater relief that John Penelles went out while they were singing it. Brothers and sisters all wished to talk about John and John's trouble, but to talk to him in his grief and humiliation was a different thing. Only the old chapel-keeper watched him going along the rocky coast at a dangerous speed, his lantern swinging wildly to his big strides.

But a five-minutes' walk brought John to a place where he was alone with God and the sea. Oh, then, how he cried out for pity! for comfort! for help! for forgiveness! His voice was not the

inaudible pleading of a man praying in his chamber; it was like the despairing call of a strong swimmer in the death-billows. It went out over the ocean; it went out beyond time and space; it touched the heart of the Divinity who pitieth the sufferers, “even as a father pitieth his children.”

There was a glow of firelight through his cottage window, but no candle. Joan was bending sorrowfully over the red coals. John was glad of the dim light, glad of the quiet, glad of the solitude, for Joan was only his other self––his sweeter and more hopeful self. He told her all that had passed. She stood up beside him, she held his head against her breast and let him sob away there the weight of grief and shame that almost choked him. Then she spoke bravely to the broken-down, weary man:

“John, my old dear, don’t you sit on the ash-heap like Job, and bemoan yourself and your birthday, and go on as if the devil had more to do with you than with other Christians. Speak up to your Heavenly Father, and ask Him ‘why,’ and answer Him like a man; do now! And go to Exeter in the morning, and make yourself sure that Denas be a honest woman. I, her mother, be sure of it; but there then! men do be so bad themselves, they can’t trust their own hearts, nor their own ears and eyes. ‘I believe’ will make a woman happy; but a man, God knows, they must go to the law and the testimony, or they are not satisfied. It’s dreadful! dreadful!”

They talked the night away, and early in the morning John went to Exeter. With the proofs of his daughter’s marriage in his hand, he felt as if he could face his enemies. Joan was equal to them without it. She knew they would find her out, and they found her singing at her work. Her placid face and cheery words of welcome nonplussed the most spiteful; the majority who came to triumph over her went away without being able to say one of the many evil thoughts in their hearts; and not a few found themselves hoping and wishing good things for the bride.

But it was a great effort, and many times that day Joan went into the inner room, and buried her face in her pillow, and had her cry out. Only she confidently expected John to bring back the proofs of her child’s marriage, and in that expectation she bore without weakening the slant eye, and the shrugged shoulder, and the denying looks of her neighbours. And of course John found no minister in Exeter who had married Denas Penelles and Roland Tresham; and it never once struck him that Denas had been married in Plymouth and found no time to write until she reached Exeter. Neither did Joan think of such a possibility; yet when her husband came in without a word and sat down with a black, stubborn face, she knew that he had been disappointed.

That night John held his peace, even from good; and Joan felt that for once she must do the same. So they sat together without candle, without speech, bowed to the earth with shame, feeling with bitter anguish that their old age had been beggared of love, and honour, and hope, and happiness; and, alas! so beggared by the child who had been the joy and the pride of their lives.

At the same hour Denas sat with Roland in one of the fine restaurants to be found in High Holborn. They had eaten of the richest viands, the sparkle of the champagne cup was in both their eyes, and they were going anon to the opera. Denas had a silk robe on and a little pink opera cloak. Her long pale gloves and her bouquet of white roses were by her side. Roland was in full evening dress. Their eyes flashed; their cheeks flamed with pleasant anticipations. They rose from their dinner with smiles and whispered love-words; and Roland ordered with the air of a lord, “A carriage for the opera.”

From John and Joan these events were mercifully hidden. It is only God who can bear the awful light of omniscience and of omnipresence. The things we cannot see! The things we never know! Let us be unspeakably grateful for this blessed ignorance! For many a heart would break that lives on if it only knew––if it only saw––how unnecessary was its love to those it loves so fondly!

CHAPTER IX.

A PIECE OF MONEY AND A SONG.

“Tis but a Judas coin, though it be gold;
The price of love forsworn, ’tis full of fears
And griefs for those who dare to hold;
And leaves a stain, only washed clean with tears.”

“Behold and listen while the fair
Breaks in sweet sounds the willing air;
She raised her voice so high, and sang so clear,
At every close she made the attending throng

Replied, and bore the burthen of the song;
So just, so small, yet in so sweet a note,
It seemed the music melted in the throat."
––Dryden.

THE piece of money left by Pyn might have been a curse; no one would touch it. While the women stood in groups talking of poor John Penelles and Denas, the men held an informal meeting around the table on which it lay.

"This be the communion table," said Jacob Trenager; "some one ought to take the money off it. And I think it be best to carry the gold to the superintendent; he will tell us what to do with it;" and, after some objections, Jacob took charge of the sinful coin, and the next morning he went up the cliff to St. Penfer with it.

The preacher heard the story with an intense interest. "Jacob," he answered, "I suppose there be none so poor in your village as to feel it might do them good?"

"Man, nor woman, nor child, would buy a loaf with it, sir; none of us men would let them. If Denas Penelles have gone out of the way, sir, she be a fisher's daughter, and the man and the money that beguiled her be hateful to all of us."

"Your chapel––is it not very poor?"

"Not poor enough to take the devil's coin, sir."

"Well, Jacob, I cannot say that I feel any more disposed to use it than you do. We know it was the wage of sin, and neither the service of God nor the poor will be the better for it. I think we will give it back to the young man. It may help to show him how his fellows regard the thing he did."

"That be the best way of all, sir. But he be in London, and hard to find no doubt."

"I will take it to his sister. I do not hold her quite guiltless."

So Jacob threw the sovereign on the preacher's desk, and it lay on the green baize, a yellow, evil-looking thing. For men love to make their thoughts palpable to their senses, and this bit of gold was visible sin––part of the price of a desolated home.

It was singular to see this same personification troubling the educated preacher as well as the unlearned fisherman. The Rev. William Farrar, when left alone with the unwelcome coin, looked askance at it. He did not like to see it on his desk, he had a repugnance to touch it. Then he forced himself to lift the sovereign, and by an elaborate fingering of the coin convince his intellect that he had no foolish superstition on the subject. Anon he took out his purse for its safe keeping, but suddenly, after a moment's hesitation, he snapped the clasp tight, and threw the bit of money on the chimney-piece. For a momentary flash of thought had brought vividly before him the sinful Babylonish garment which troubled the camp of Israel. Perhaps that sinful money might be equally malign to his own household.

He had resolved to take it to Mrs. Burrell in the afternoon, for the morning was his time for study and writing. But he found it impossible to think of his sermon. That sovereign on the mantelpiece was in all his thoughts. His back was to it, and yet he saw the dull shining disc. In spite of his reason and his faith, in spite of a very strong will and of a practiced command over himself, he felt the presence of the rejected coin to be a weight and an influence he could not pretend to ignore.

So he resolved to leave every other duty and go to Burrell Court, though it was a long walk, and the thick misty Cornish rain had begun to fall. Indeed, there was nothing but a vapourish shroud, a dim, grey chaos, as far as his eye could reach. The strip of road on which he trod was apparently the only land left to tread on––all the rest of creation had disappeared in a spectral mist. But above the mist the lark was singing joyously, singing for the song's sake, and the melody went down into his heart and preached him a better sermon than he was ever likely to write.

Listening to it, he reached, before he was aware, the great gates of the Court. Mrs. Burrell was at home, and he sent a request for an interview. Elizabeth instantly suspected that he had come on some affair relating to that wretched business. She was in trouble enough about it, but she was also proud and reticent, and not inclined to discuss Roland with a stranger.

Quite intentionally she gave to her manner a good deal of that haughtiness which young wives think dignity, but which is in reality the offensive freshness of new-made honour. The preacher offered her his hand, but she did not see it, being fully occupied in arranging the long train of cashmere, silk, and lace which, in those days, made morning dresses a misnomer.

"I am the Wesleyan preacher from St. Penfer, Mrs. Burrell."

"Can I do anything for you, sir? though really, if yours is a charitable visit, I must remind you that my own church looks to me for all I can possibly afford."

"I do not come, Mrs. Burrell, to ask for money. I bring you this sovereign, which belongs to Mr. Roland Tresham."

The gold fell from his fingers, spun round a few times, and, dropping upon the polished mahogany table, made a distinct clink.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Farrar."

The preacher hastened to make the circumstance more intelligible. He related the scene at the St. Clair chapel with a dramatic force that sprang from intense feeling, and Elizabeth listened to his solemn words with angry uneasiness. Yet she made an effort to treat the affair with unconcern.

“What have I to do with the sovereign, sir?” she asked. “I am not responsible for Mr. Tresham’s acts. I did my best to prevent the disgrace that has befallen the fisherman’s daughter.”

“I think you are to blame in a great measure.”

“Sir!”

“Yes. I am sure you are. You made a companion of the girl––I may say a friend.”

“No, sir, not a friend. She was not my equal in any respect.”

“Say a companion then. You taught her how to dress, how to converse, how to carry herself above her own class. You permitted her to wander about the garden with your brother.”

“I always watched them.”

“You let her talk to him––you let her sing with him.”

“Never but when I was present. From the first I told her what Roland was––told her to mind nothing at all he said.”

“If you had put a glass of cold water before a man dying of thirst, would you have been justified in telling him not to drink? You might even have added that the water contained poison; all the same, he would have drunk it, and your blame it would be for putting it within his reach.”

“Indeed, Mr. Farrar, I will not take the blame of the creature’s wickedness. It is a strange thing to be told that educating a girl and trying to lift her a step or two higher is a sin.”

“It is a sin, madam, unless you persevere in it. God does not permit the rich, for their own temporary glory or convenience, to make experiments with an immortal soul, and then abandon it like a soiled glove or a game of which they have grown weary. What you began you ought in common justice to have carried on to such perfection as was possible. No circumstances could justify you in beguiling a girl from her natural protectors and then leaving her in the midst of danger alone.”

“Sir, this is my affair, not yours. I beg leave to say that you know nothing whatever of the circumstances.”

“Indeed, I know a great deal about them, and I can reasonably deduce a great deal more.”

“And pray, sir, what do you deduce?”

“The right of Denas Penelles to have been retained as your companion. Having made a certain refinement of life necessary to her, you ought in common justice to have supplied the want you created.”

“All this trouble arose when I was on my wedding-trip.”

“I think you ought to have taken her with you.”

“Sir!”

“I think so. It was hard to be suddenly deprived of every social pleasure and refinement and sent back to a fisher’s cottage to cure fish, and knot nets, and knit fishing-shirts. How could you have borne it?”

“Mr. Farrar, such a comparison is an insult.”

“I mean no insult; far from it. Even my office would give me no right to insult you. I only wish to awaken your conscience. Even yet it may take up your abandoned duty.”

“Perhaps you do not know that I endeavoured last week to see Denas. I wrote to her. I asked her to come and see me. I told her I wanted to talk with her about Mr. Tresham. She did not even answer my letter. I consider myself clear of the ungrateful girl––and as I am busy this morning I will be obliged to you, sir, to excuse my further attendance. Take the sovereign with you; give it to the poor.”

“God will feed His poor, madam.”

She made a little scornful laugh and asked: “Do you really inquire into the character of all the money your church receives?”

“No further, madam, than you inquire into the character of the visitors you receive. Plenty of thieves and seducers are in every society, but it is not until a man is publicly known to be a thief or a seducer that we are justified in refusing him a courteous reception. A great deal of money is the wages of sin, and it passes through our hands and we are not stained by its contact; but if I give you a piece of gold and say, ‘It is the price of a slain soul, or a slain body, or a slain reputation,’ would you like to put it in your purse, or buy bread for your children with it, or take it to church and offer it to God? I wish you good-morning, Mrs. Burrell.”

And Elizabeth bowed and stood watching him until the door was closed and she was alone with the coin. It offended her. It had been the cause of a most humiliating visit. She looked at it with scorn and loathing. A servant entered with a card; she took it eagerly, and pointing to the money said, “Carry it to Mr. Tresham’s room and lay it upon the dressing-table.” She was grateful to get it out of her sight, and very glad indeed to see the visitor who had given her such

a prompt opportunity for ridding her eyes of its gleaming presence.

Thus it is that not only present but absent personalities rule us. In St. Penfer, Paul Pyn and Ann Bude, John and Joan Penelles, the Rev. Mr. Farrar and Mrs. Burrell, were all that morning governed in some degree by Roland's evilly spent sovereign; and he far off in London was in the hey-day of his honeymoon with Denas. They were so gay, so thoughtless and happy that people turned to look at them as they wandered through the bazars or stood laughing before the splendid windows in Regent Street. Many an old man and woman smiled sympathetically at them; for all the world loves a lover, and none could tell that these lovers had forfeited their right to sympathy by stealing their pleasure from those who ought to have shared it with them.

But as yet the world was only an accident of their love, and there was a whole week before them of unbroken and unsatiated delight––a whole week in which neither of them thought of the past or the future; in which every hour brought a fresh pleasure, something new to wear, or to see, or to hear. If it could only have lasted! Alas! the ability to enjoy went first. Amusements of every kind grew a little––a very little––tiresome. The first glory was dimmed; the charm of freshness was duller; the unreasoning delight of ignorance a little less enthusiastic every day; and about the close of the third week Roland said one morning, "You look weary, Denasia, my darling."

"I am tired, Roland––tired of going a-pleasuring. I never thought anything like that could possibly happen. Ought I not to be taking lessons, learning something, doing something about my voice?"

"It is high time, love. Money melts in London like ice in summer. Suppose we go and see Signor Maria this morning."

"I would like to go very much."

"Then make yourself very fine and very pretty, and let me hear if your voice is in good order to-day." He went to the piano and struck a few chords, and throughout the still, decorous house, people in every room heard the sweet voice chanting:

"I will go back to the great sweet
mother,
Mother and lover of men––the sea"––

heard it again in the weird, startling incantation:

"Weave me the nets for the gray, gray
fish"––

and up and down stairs doors were softly opened, and through every heart there went a breath of the salt sea and a longing for the wide stretches of rippled sands and tossing blue waters.

Roland perceived the effect of the music and was satisfied. He had no fear of their future. What if the gold was low in his purse? That charmful voice was an unfailing bank from which to draw more. He was so proud of his darling, so full of praises and admiration, that Denas really put on an access of genius as she robed herself to his flattering words. Pleasure, and hope, and a pretty pride in her husband's eulogies lent her new physical graces. She was conscious that there were eyes at every window watching Roland and herself leave the house, and she felt certain that their owners were saying: "What a handsome couple! How fond they are of each other! What a wonderful voice she has!"

It is easy to be gay, and even beautiful, to such thoughts; and Roland and Denas reached Signor Maria's in a glow of good-humour and good hope. The Signor was at home and ready to receive them. He was a small, thin, dark man with long, curling black hair and bright black eyes. He bowed to Roland and looked with marked interest into the fair, sparkling face of Denas. He was much pleased with her appearance and quite interested in her ambitions. Then he opened the piano and said, "Will monsieur play, or madame?"

Roland played and Denas sang her very best. The Signor listened attentively, and Roland was sure of an enthusiastic verdict; on the contrary, it was one of depressing qualifications. The Signor acknowledged the quality of the voice, its charmful, haunting tones––but for the opera! oh, much more––very, very much more was needed. Madame must go to Italy for three years and study. She must learn the Italian language; the French; the German. Ah! then there was the acting also! Had madame histrionic power? That was indispensable for the grand opera. But in three years––perhaps four––with fine teachers her voice might be very rich, very charming. *Now* it was harsh, crude, unformed. Yes, it wanted the soft, mellowing airs of Italy. Where had madame been living––what was called "brought up?"

Denas answered she had always lived by the sea, and the Signor nodded intelligently and said: "Yes! yes! that was what he heard in her voice; the fresh wild winds––yes, wild and salt! It is airs from the rose gardens, velvety languors off the vineyards, heat and passions of the sunshine madame wants. Indeed, monsieur may take madame to Italy for two, three, perhaps four years, and then expect her to sing. Yes, then, even in grand opera."

This was undoubtedly the Signor's honest opinion, but Roland and Denas were greatly depressed by it; Denas especially so, for she had an inward conviction that he was right; she had heard the truth. It was almost two different beings that left Signor Maria's house. Silently

Roland handed Denas into the waiting cab, silently he seated himself beside her.

“I am afraid I have disappointed you, Roland.”

“Yes, a little. But we are going now to Mr. Harrison’s. There is nothing foreign about him. He is English, and he knows what English people like. I shall wait for his verdict, Denas.”

“It was a long ride to Mr. Harrison’s, and Roland did not speak until they were at his door. This professor was a blond, effusive, large man of enthusiastic temperament. He was delighted to listen to Mrs. Tresham, and he saw possibilities for her that Signor Maria never would have contemplated; though when Roland told him what Maria had said he endorsed his opinion so far as to admit the excellence of such a training for a great prima donna.

“But Mrs. Tresham may learn just as well by experience as by method,” he averred. “She sings as the people enjoy singing. She sings their songs. She has a powerful voice, which will grow stronger with use. I think Mr. Willis will give her an immediate engagement. Suppose we go and see. Willis is at the hall, I should say, about this time.”

This seemed a practical and flattering offer, and Roland gladly accepted it. Willis Hall was soon reached. It was used only for popular concerts and very slight dramas in which there was a great deal of singing and dancing. It had a well-appointed stage and scenery, but the arrangement of the seats showed a general democracy and a great freedom of movement for the audience.

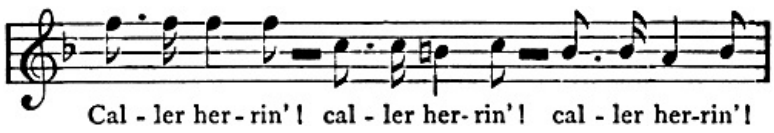
“Willis is always on the lookout for novelties,” said Professor Harrison, “and I am sure these fishing songs will ‘fetch’ such an audience as he has.”

As he was speaking Mr. Willis approached. He listened to Professor Harrison’s opinion and kept his eyes on Denas while he did so. He thought her appearance taking, and was pleased to give her voice a trial. The hall was empty and very dull, but a piano was pulled forward to the front of the stage and Roland took his seat before it. Denas was told to step to the front and sing to the two gentlemen in the gallery. They applauded her first song enthusiastically, and Denas sang each one better. But it was not their applause she listened to––it was the soft praises of Roland, his assurances of her success, which stimulated her even beyond her natural power.

At the conclusion of the trial Mr. Willis offered Denas twelve pounds a week, and if she proved a favourite the sum was to be gradually increased. The sum, though but a pittance of Roland’s dreams, was at least a livelihood and an earnest of advance, and it was readily accepted. Then the little company sat down upon the empty stage and discussed the special songs and costumes in which Denas was to make her début.

Never before in all his life had Roland found business so interesting. He said to Denas, as they talked over the affair at their own fireside, that he thought he also had found his vocation. He felt at home on the stage. He never had felt at home in a bank or in a business office. He was determined to study, and create a few great characters, and become an actor. He felt the power; it was in him, he said complacently. “Now,” he added, “Denas, if you become a great singer and I a great actor, we shall have the world at our feet. And I like actors and those kind of people. I feel at home with them. I like the life they lead––the jolly, come-day go-day, wandering kind of life. I never was meant for a respectable man of business. No: the stage! the stage! That is my real life. I am certain of it. I wonder I never thought of it before.”

It had been arranged that Denas was to open with Neil Gow’s matchless song of “*Caller Herrin’!*” and her dress was of course that of an idealized Newhaven fisher-girl. Her short, many-coloured skirts, her trig latched shoon, her open throat, and beautiful bare arms lifted to the basket upon her head was a costume which suited her to admiration. When she came stepping down the stage to the immortal notes, and her voice thrilled the house with the ringing musical “cry” that none hear and ever forget:



the assembly broke into rapturous delight. It was a song not above their comprehension and their feeling. It was interpreted by one to whom the interpretation was as natural as breathing. She was recalled again, and again, and again, and the uproar of approval only ceased when the next singer advanced with a roll of music in his hand. He was a pale, sentimental young man whose forte was despairing love-songs, but

“The last links are broken
That bound me to thee”

had little interest after Mademoiselle Denasia’s unique melody. For it was by this name Denas had consented to be known, the French prefix having but a very indefinite significance to her mind. Roland had told her that it meant a lady, and that all singers were either mademoiselle or

madame, and that she was too young for madame, and the explanation had been satisfactory.

Certainly, if signs could be trusted Mademoiselle Denasia was likely to be a name in many mouths; for her second and third songs were even more startling in their success than “Caller Herrin’,” and Mr. Willis would permit no further recalls.

“We must give them Denasia in small doses,” he said, laughing; “she is too precious to make common,” and Roland winced a moment at the familiar tone in which his wife’s name was spoken. But both alike were under a spell. The intoxicating cup of public applause was at their lips. Their brains were full of the wildest dreams, their hearts full of the wildest hopes. No consideration at that time could have turned their feet aside from the flower-covered, treacherous path they were so gayly treading.

Such a life would have simply been beyond the power of John and Joan Penelles to imagine. Its riot of dress and emotions and its sinful extravagance in every direction would have been to them an astounding revelation of the possibilities of life. As it was, their anxiety took mainly one direction: the uncertainty attending the marriage of their daughter. Denas had indeed said she was Roland’s wife, but the St. Penfer *News* implied a very different relationship; and John had all that superstitious belief in a newspaper which is so often an attribute of ignorance.

At any rate, the want of authentic data about the marriage humiliated and made him miserable. Two more weeks had passed since that eventful Sunday night service at St. Clair, and yet John had no assurance of a more certain character to rely on. Three or four illustrated papers had been received with “love from your daughter, Denas Tresham,” written on the title-page; but the claim thus made satisfied no one but Joan. Joan believed in the validity of the name, and handed around the sheets with a confidence few cared to in any degree dispute.

The third Sunday was an important one to the fisher-folk. There was to be a missionary sermon preached in the St. Clair chapel, and John and Joan went there. The chapel was crowded. Joan got a seat, but John lingered in the small vestibule within the door among the few brethren waiting for the strange preacher. It was the same person who had married Roland and Denas, and after he had shaken himself free from his dripping cloak he looked at the men around him, and his eyes fell upon John. And probably all the circumstances of that marriage were either well known or accurately divined, for he took the big fisherman by the hand and said cheerfully:

“John Penelles, I am glad, very glad indeed to meet you. I suppose you know that it was I who married your daughter?”

If a fixed star had fallen at John’s feet he could not have been more amazed. His large face lightened from within, he clasped firmly the preacher’s hand, but was so slow in forcing speech from his swelling heart that the preacher continued:

“Yes, they came to me, and I remembered your pretty child. I tied them true and fast, you may be sure of that, John.”

“Where, sir?”

“In Plymouth Wesleyan chapel, to be sure.”

“Thank God! Thank you too, sir! You might say so––some people here be slow to believe, sir, and it be breaking my heart, it be indeed, sir.”

There was only a nod and smile in reply, but John was extremely happy. He tried to get near to Joan and tell her; but the aisles were full and the service was beginning. John held his own service, and the singing, and the prayer, and preaching were just a joyful accompaniment to the thanksgiving in his heart. At length the service was over, and the preacher lifted a number of slips of paper and began to read aloud the announcements made on them. Missionary meetings, tea meetings for missions, a bazaar at St. Penfer for missions, a Bible meeting, a class meeting, and the service for that evening. Then, while the congregation were still expectant, he said in a clear, pleasant voice:

“I am requested also to say that on December the 17th, on Tuesday morning at nine o’clock, I united in the holy bands of marriage Denasia, the daughter of John Penelles, fisher of St. Penfer, to Roland Tresham, gentleman of that place. The ceremony was performed by me in the Wesleyan chapel at Plymouth; myself, my wife, and two daughters being witnesses to it. We will now sing the 444th hymn:

“‘Lord over all, if Thou hast made,
Hast ransomed every soul of man.’”

And all the congregation rose, and in the rising the conscious glance that passed through the chapel was lost in a more general purpose. It was presumed, at least, that everyone was singing a prayer for the heathen. Only Joan Penelles made no effort to think of India or Africa. Her face, full of radiant assurance, looked confidently over the crowd, seeking her husband’s mutual glance of pleasure. Her faith had been justified. Her girl was an honourable wife––the wife of a gentleman well known to all. She had no longer any need to hide the wounding look or doubtful word in a protesting attitude, as painful to her as it was offensive to others.

Well, it is a very hard thing to rejoice with those that do rejoice; evidently in that little chapel it was easier for the worshippers to be sorry for the heathen than to be glad for their brother and

sister Penelles. Never had John and Joan felt themselves so far away from the sympathy of their fellows. Only a few rough men who handled the nets with John, and who knew how hard the duty had been to him since his little girl went away, said a word of congratulation. But one and another of these, as they passed John and Joan on their way home, said a hearty “Praise God, brother John,” or a “God bless you both, ’twas good news for you this morning.” But, with or without sympathy, the happy father and mother walked to their house that day up-head and bravely. Their hearts had been miraculously lightened, and it was not until the burden had rolled away that they knew how woefully heavy it had been.

The next afternoon, when the wind was blowing inland too fiercely to permit boats to leave the harbour, a man who had been up the cliff brought back with him a letter for the Penelles. It was evidently from Denas. John looked at the postmark, “London,” and turned it around and around till Joan was nervous. “Aw, then, John, do open it, and read what be inside––do, my dear!” And John read:

> “Dear Father and Mother:––I have been intending to write to you every day, but I have been so happy that the days went away like a dream. I wish you knew my dear Roland as I do. He is the kindest of men, the most generous, the dearest in the whole world. He does nothing but try how to give me pleasure. He has bought me such lovely dresses, and rings, and bracelets, and he takes me everywhere. I never, never did think life could be so happy. I am going to have lessons too. I am to be taught how to sing and to do other things right, and your little Denas is the very happiest girl in the world. London is such a grand place, the very streets are all shows. Your loving daughter,
>
> “Denas Tresham.
>
> “P. S.––Perhaps you may wonder where we were married. It was at Plymouth, by the Wesleyan preacher. Father knows him, I think. D. T.”

A dead silence followed the reading of the letter. Joan sat upright with a troubled face. She had been washing the dinner dishes; the towel lay across her lap, and her fingers pleated and unpleated the bit of coarse linen. John laid his arms across his knees and dropped a stern face toward them. The bit of white paper was in his big brown fingers. He did not speak a word; his heart was full, his eyes were full, his tongue was heavy and dumb. Joan grew restless and hot with anger, for she was wounded in every sense.

“Aw, my dear, she be so happy with that man she do forget the days she was happy with you and me, John. She do forget all and everything. Aw, then, ’tis a cruel, thoughtless letter. Cruel beyond words to tell––dreadful! aw, dreadful! God help us! And I do wish I could forget her! And I do be sorry she was ever born.”

“Whist! whist! my old dear. She has gone into the wilderness. Our one little ewe lamb has gone into the wilderness, and aw, my dear, ’twill keep us busy all night and day to send love and prayer enough after her. There be wolves there, Joan; wolves, my dear, ready to devour––and the man she loves, he be one of them. Poor little Denas!”

Then Joan went on with her housework, but John sat silent, bending down toward the letter. And by and by his white face glowed with a dull red colour, and he tore the letter up, tore it very slowly into narrow ribbon-like strips, and let them fall, one by one, at his feet. He was in a mood Joan did not care to trouble. It reminded her of the day when he had felled Jacob Trenager. She was glad to see him rise and go to the inner room, glad to hear that he bolted the door after him. For in that temper it was better that John should complain to God than talk with any human being.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO ST. PENFER.

“Oh, waly waly, but love be bonny
A little while while it is new;
But when ’tis auld it waxeth cauld
And fades away like morning dew.”

––Old Song.

“Oh, and is all forgot––
All school days’ friendship, childhood’s innocence?

. . . . . .

Our sex as well as I may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury."
––SHAKESPEARE.

DENASIA made her *début* in the last ten days of January, and she retained the favour of that public which frequented Willis Hall for three months. Then her reputation was a little worn; people whistled and sang her songs and were pleased with their own performance of them. And Roland, also, had tired a little of the life––of its regularity and its obligations. He was now often willing to let any other performer who desired to do so take his place at the piano. He began to have occasional lookings-backward to Burrell Court and the respectability it represented.

Then at the close of April Denasia fell ill. The poor girl fretted at the decline of enthusiasm in her audience. She made stupendous efforts to regain her place in the popular favour, and she failed because of the natural law which few are strong enough to defy––that change is as necessary to amusement as fidelity is to duty. Denasia did not indeed reason about the event; the simple fact that she had no recalls and no clamorous approval made her miserable, and then sickness followed.

She was very ill indeed, and for four weeks confined to her room; and when she was able to consider a return to the hall, Roland found that her place had been taken by a Spanish singer with a mandolin and a wonderful dance. That was really a serious disappointment to the young couple, for during the month money had been going out and none coming in. For even when Denasia had been making twenty-five pounds a week, they had lived and dressed up to the last shilling; so that a month's enforced idleness and illness placed them deeply in debt and uncomfortably pressed for the wherewithal to meet debt.

Denasia also had been much weakened by her illness. Her fine form and colour were impaired, she was nervous and despondent; and a suffering, sickly wife was quite out of Roland's calculations and very much out of his sympathies. Poverty had a bad effect upon him. To be without money to buy the finest brand of cigars, to be annoyed by boarding-house keepers, tailors, and costumers, to have to buy medicines with cash when he was without his usual luxuries, was a condition of affairs that struck Roland as extremely improper for a young man of his family and education.

And he disliked now to interview managers. Mademoiselle Denasia was a recognised member of the profession which more than any other demands that everyone stand upon their merits; and Denasia had not been a very pronounced success. She remained just about where she had begun, and managers naturally thought that she had done the best of which she was capable. That best was not a phenomenal one, and Roland, as her husband and business agent, received no extraordinary amount of respect. He was offended where he had no reason for offence––offended often because everyone did not recognise him as a member of an old Cornish family and the son of an ex-lord mayor of London. Often he felt obliged, in order to satisfy his own self-respect, to make the fact known; and the chaff, or indifference, or incredulity, with which his claims were received made him change his opinions regarding the "jolly company of actors." In fact, he was undoubtedly at this period of Denasia's career her very worst enemy; for whatever Denasia might be, Roland and his pretensions were usually regarded as a great bore.

One afternoon in May he became thoroughly disgusted with the life he had chosen for himself. The bright sunshine made the shabby carpet and tawdry furniture and soiled mirrors intolerably vulgar. They had just finished a badly cooked, crossly served, untidy dinner, and Roland had no cigar to mend it. Denasia had not eaten at all; she lay on the bright blue sofa with shut eyes, and her faded beauty and faded dress were offensive to the fastidious young man.

She was thinking of her father's cottage, of the love at its hearth, and of the fresh salt winds blowing all around it. Roland half-divined her thoughts, and his own wandered to Burrell Court and his long-neglected sister.

Suddenly he resolved to go and see her. Elizabeth had always plenty of money, then why should he be without it? And the desire having entered his heart, he was as imperative as a spoiled child for its gratification. Denasia's physical condition did not appeal to him in any degree; he could not help her weakness and suffering, and certainly it was very inconvenient for him. He felt at that hour as if Denasia had broken her part of their mutual compact, which had not included illness or loss of prestige and beauty. He turned sharply to her and said:

"Denasia, I am going to St. Penfer. I shall have to sell a ring or something valuable in order to get the fare, but I see no other way. Elizabeth never disappointed my expectations; she will give me money, I am sure."

"Don't leave me, Roland. I will get well, I will indeed, dear. I am better this afternoon. In a few days––in a week, Roland, I can find some place to sing. Please have a little patience. Oh, do, my dear!"

"Little patience! What are you saying, Denasia? You are very ungrateful! Have I not had patience for a whole month? Have I not spent even my cigar-money for you? Patience, indeed!"

"Is there nowhere but St. Penfer? No person but Elizabeth?"

"I can go to St. Merryn's, if you like. Give me an order for the money in your name at St. Merryn's Bank."

She turned sullen in a moment. "I have told you a thousand times, Roland, I would rather die of

hunger than rob my father."

"Very well, then, why do you complain if I go to my own people? I hope when I return you will be better."

"Roland! Roland! You are surely not going to leave me––in a moment––without anything?"

Her cry so full of anguish brought him back to her side; but his purpose had taken full possession of him; only he left her with those kisses and promises which women somehow manage to live upon. He still loved her in his way of loving, but his way demanded so many pleasant accidentals that it was impossible for Denasia always to provide them. And yet, having once realised, in a great measure, his ideal of her value to his happiness, he did feel that her sudden break-down in health was a failure he ought to show disapproval of.

However, there was method even in Roland's selfish plans. He did not wish to find Mr. Burrell at St. Penfer, so he went to the bank and ascertained his whereabouts. He was told that Mr. Burrell had just left for Berlin, and was likely to be a week or ten days away. This information quite elated Roland. He sold his watch and took the first train to Cornwall. And as he was certain that Elizabeth would have settled his bill at the Black Lion, he went there with all his old swaggering good-humour and thoroughly refreshed himself before going out to Burrell Court.

Elizabeth gave him a hearty welcome; she was indeed particularly glad to see him just then. She was lonely in the absence of her husband; she had just had a slight disagreement with the ladies at a church meeting; she was feeling her isolation and her want of family support; and she had met, for the first time since their interview, the Rev. Mr. Farrar, who had presumed to arrest her coachman and, in the presence of her servants, congratulate her on the marriage of her brother and her friend. Under the circumstances, she had judged it best to make no remarks; but she was very angry, and not sorry to have the culprit in her presence and tell him exactly what she thought of his folly and disgrace.

She kept the lecture, however, until they had dined and were alone; then, as he sat serenely smoking one of Mr. Burrell's finest cigars, she said:

"I hope you are come back to me, Roland. I hope you have left that woman for ever."

"Who do you mean by 'that woman,' Elizabeth?"

"De––You know who I mean."

"Denas! Left Denas! Left my wife! That is absurd, Elizabeth! I wanted to see you. I could not bear to be 'out' with you any longer. You know, dear, that you are my only blood relative. Denas is my relative by marriage. Blood is thicker than––everything."

"Roland, you know how I love you. You are the first person I remember. All my life long you have been first in my heart. How do you think I liked to be put aside for––that fisher-girl? It nearly broke my heart with shame and sorrow."

"I ought to have told you, Elizabeth. I did behave badly to you. I am ashamed of myself. Forgive me, darling sister." And he pulled his chair to her side, and put his arm around her neck, and kissed her with no simulated affection. For he would indeed have been heartless had he been insensible to the true love which softened every tone in Elizabeth's voice and made her handsome face shine with tender interest and unselfish solicitude.

"I ought to have told you, Elizabeth. I believe you are noble enough to have accepted Denas for my sake."

"I am not, Roland. Nothing could have made me accept her. I have taken a personal dislike to her. I am sure that I cannot even do her justice."

"She has been very ill. She is still very weak. I have been unable to get her all the comforts she ought to have had––unable to take her to the sea-side, though the doctor told me it was an imperative necessity. We have been very poor, but not unhappy."

"I understood she was making a great deal of money with her trashy, vulgar little songs."

"She was until she fell ill. And whatever her songs are, they have been very much admired."

"By her own class. And you let her sing for your living! I am amazed at you, Roland!"

"I do not see why. You wanted me to marry Caroline Burrell and let her support me out of the money old Burrell worked for. Denas loves me, and the money she gives me is given with love. Old Burrell never saw me, and if he had I am quite sure he would have hated me and despised me as a fortune-hunter. Denas is a noble little darling. She has never inferred, either by word or look, that she sang for my living. It took you to do that, Elizabeth. Besides, I help Denas to make money. I arrange her business and I play her accompaniments, and, as I said, I love her and she loves me. Why, I have done without cigars to buy medicines for her; and if that isn't a proof of my devotion, I do not know how to give one! I can tell you that Mademoiselle Denasia is a great favourite with everyone."

"Mademoiselle Denasia!" cried Elizabeth with the utmost scorn. "Mademoiselle! and Denasia! However, she might well change her name."

"She did not change her name. She was baptised Denasia."

"Robert went to hear her sing. He says it was in a fourth-rate place, and I can tell you he was burning with indignation to see his brother-in-law playing a piano there."

"Then he ought to let his anger burn to some purpose. Signor Maria says that if Denasia had

proper masters and was sent to Italy for two or three years she could sing in grand opera. Mind, Maria says that; not I. Suppose you get Robert to send Denas to Italy."

"I will do nothing at all for Denas. And I think, Roland, that you ought to do something for yourself. I hate to think of my own brother taking his living from that fisherman's daughter. It is a shame! Father brought you up like a gentleman, sent you to college, gave you an opportunity–––"

"If father had given me a profession of any kind, if he had put me in the army or the navy, I should be to blame. If he had bought me a kit of carpenters' tools and had me taught how to use them, I should be no man at all if I looked to a woman for a living. But he did not. He sent me to college, gave me expensive tastes, and then got me a desk in a bank, where the only prospect before me was to add figures for the rest of my life for two pounds a week. Naturally I looked around for something more to my liking. I found Denasia. I loved her. She loved me. I could play, she could sing, and we made twenty-five pounds a week. That is the true state of the case."

"And do you intend to spend your life playing accompaniments to fishing-songs?"

"No. I am studying for the stage."

"Roland Tresham! Roland Tresham!"

"I think I have a new conception of the character of Orlando and I flatter myself the Romeo is yet to be played. I shall attempt it next winter. Now, Elizabeth, all the summer is before us. If you will not ask us to Burrell Court, then do in sisterly kindness send us to some quiet sea-side place to study. We could, of course, come to Penelles' cottage–––"

"No, you could not. John Penelles would not permit you to enter his door. He says he will never forgive his daughter until she leaves you for ever. I understand him. I cannot fully forgive you while you remain with that woman."

"Who told you John Penelles said such a thing? I do not believe it."

"Priscilla Mohun. He said it to her."

"Ah! He would not say it to Denasia. And it would not be a bad place to study. I should soon be a favourite with the fishers. I know how to get around that class of people, and I am fond of the sea and could spend a month very comfortably there. Cigars make any place comfortable."

"You are talking simple nonsense, Roland. You know it, too. Penelles would not endure your presence five minutes."

"I have done his daughter no harm."

"He believes that you have ruined her immortal soul. You are the devil incarnate to John Penelles. He would not let you put your foot in his cottage. And he is not a man to trifle with. He knocked Jacob Trenager down, and the man goes lame ever since, they say."

"I am not going in his way to be knocked down. It is absolutely necessary, both for Denas and myself, to be near London. If we had the means I would go to Broadstairs or perhaps Hastings."

"Do you want to ask me for money, Roland? If so, be man enough to ask me plainly."

"Yes, I want money, Elizabeth. I want you to give it to me. I have not troubled you for a long time, have I? All my life long I have come to you for money, and you never yet refused me. My dear sister, I remember that you once sold a brooch for me when we were both children." He kissed her and was silent, and Elizabeth's face was wet with tears.

"I could give the last shilling I had to you, Roland," she said, "but it is hard to ask me to rob myself for that woman."

"She is my wife. I want her to get strong and well. She is a comfort and a pleasure to me. You were always glad to give me money for my comforts and pleasures. You never before asked me what they were or said: 'You cannot have money for such or such a purpose.' You gave me money for whatever I wanted. Now I want Denas."

"Mademoiselle Denasia!"

"Well, then, Denasia. I want Denasia as I want my cigars or any other pleasant thing in life. Does it matter to you, if the money makes me happy, how I spend it?"

"If you put the question in that light I do not suppose it does matter." Then after a moment's pause: "Every shilling will be a coal of fire upon Mademoiselle Denasia's head. There is nothing wrong in that consideration––it is perfectly Christian."

"I should say it was perfectly unchristian; but, then, I am only a sinner. However, Elizabeth, if you can help me to get Denasia to the sea-side the action will be a good one, and we need not go about to question the motives for it. I think one hundred pounds will keep us until Denasia is able to sing again or I get an engagement as Romeo. I shall make up splendidly as Romeo. You must come and see me, Elizabeth."

"Not for anything in life! And one hundred pounds is a large sum of money. I cannot afford it."

"But, Elizabeth, I must have one hundred. I need every penny of it. I cannot do with less. Give me one hundred, Elizabeth."

"I tell you it will trouble me very much to spare a hundred pounds. It will indeed, Roland."

But Roland stuck to the idea of one hundred pounds, and finally Elizabeth gave way before his entreaties. She looked at the handsome fellow and sighed hopelessly. She said, "I will give it to

you, and do as you wish with it." Why should she now look for consideration from her brother? He had never yet reached higher ground than "I want;" and to expect Roland to look beyond himself was to expect the great miracle that never comes.

He remained with his sister ten days, and thoroughly enjoyed the change of life. And indeed he found himself quite a little hero in St. Penfer. Miss Mohun met him with smiles; she asked sweetly after Mrs. Tresham and never once named the fifty pounds Roland had promised her. The landlady of the Black Lion made a great deal of him. She came herself of fisher-folk, and she was pleased that the young gentleman had treated her caste honourably. The landlord gave him cigars and wine, and all the old companions of his pleasures and necessities showed him that they approved his conduct. The Rev. Mr. Farrar made a point of praising him. As he stood with the landlord of the Black Lion at the open door of the inn, he said to him:

"Mr. Tresham, I respect your strength of character. I know that in certain circles of society it is considered a slight offence for a young man to seduce a girl of the lower orders; but that a *mesalliance* with her is a social crime almost unpardonable. You have said boldly to the whole community that it is more ungentlemanly to wrong a poor girl's honour than to marry a wife below your own station. Sir, such an example is worth all the sermons that could be preached on the subject."

And Roland listened to all the spoken and unspoken praise given him with a smiling appropriation. It really never struck him, or apparently anyone else, that Denas might have been the person who took care of her own honour; or that Roland had done right because he could not induce his companion to do wrong. And there was another popular view of this marriage which was singularly false––the general assumption that Denas had been greatly honoured by it, and that John and Joan Penelles ought to be pleased and satisfied. Why not? Such a decision was the evident one, and how many people have the time or the interest in any subject to go below or beyond the evident?

One morning when Roland had been put into a very good humour by the public approval of his conduct, he saw John Penelles and Tris Penrose and two other fishers go into the Ship Inn together. They had Lawyer Tremaine with them, and were doubtless met to complete the sale or purchase of some fishing-craft. Roland knew that it would be an affair to occupy two or three hours, and he suddenly resolved to go down the cliff and interview his mother-in-law. It would please Denasia, and he was himself in that reckless mood of self-complacency which delights in testing its influence.

Without further consideration he lit a fresh cigar and went down the familiar path. It was full of memories of his wooing of Denas, and he smiled with a soft triumph to them. And the exquisite morning, the thrushes singing to the sun, the fluting of the blackbirds, the south wind swinging the blue-bells, the mystical murmur of the sea––all these things set themselves unconsciously to his overweening self-satisfaction.

The door of the Penelles cottage was wide open, and he stood a moment looking into it. The place had an Homeric simplicity and beauty which touched his sense of fitness. On the snow-white hearth there was a handful of red fire, and the bright black hob held the shining kettle. A rug of knitted bits of many-coloured cloths was before it, and on this rug stood John's big cushioned chair. The floor was white as pipeclay could make it; the walls covered with racks of showy crockery; the spotless windows quite shaded with blossoming flowers; and the deal furniture had been scrubbed with oatmeal until it had the colour and the beauty of ivory.

Joan sat with her back to the door. She was perfectly still. At her feet there was a pile of nets, and she was mending the broken meshes. When Roland tapped she let them fall and stood upright. She knew him at once. Her fine rosy face turned grey as ashes. She folded her arms across her breast and stood looking at the intruder. For a moment they remained thus––the gay, handsome, fashionably-dressed young man smiling at the tall grave woman in her neat print gown and white linen cap. Roland broke the silence.

"I am Roland Tresham," he said pleasantly.

"I do know you. What be you come for? Is Denas––where be my child? Oh, man, why don't you say the words, whatever they be?"

"I am sorry if I frightened you. I thought you might like to know that Denas was well and happy."

Then Joan went back to her nets and sat down without a word.

"I was in St. Penfer on business, and I thought you would like to know––might like to know––you see, I was here on business––"

He was growing every moment more uncomfortable and embarrassed, for Joan bent busily over her work and her back was to him.

"You see, I was here on business. I wanted to see my sister. I thought you would like to know about Denas."

She turned suddenly on him and asked: "Where be my child?"

"I left Denas in London."

"You be a coward. You be a tenfold coward. Why didn' you bring your wife home with you? Did Denas send me no letter––no word for myself––for my heart only? Speak then; I want my letter."

"I left in a hurry. She had no time to write."

“Aw, then, why did you come here without a word of comfort? You be cruel as well as cowardly. No word! No letter! No time! There then! take yourself away from my door. ’Twas a wisht cruel thought brought you here. Aw, then, a thought out of your own heart. You be a bad man! dreadful! dreadful!”

“Come, my good woman, I wish to be kind.”

“Good woman! Sure enough! but I have my husband’s name, thank God, and there then! when you speak to me I be called by it––Joan Penelles. And Joan Penelles do wish you would turn your back on this house; she do that, for you do have a sight of ghastly mean old ways––more than either big or little devil means a young man to have. There then! Go afore John Penelles do find you here. For ’twill be a bad hour for you if he do––and so it will!”

“I did not expect such a reception, Mrs. Penelles. I have dealt honourably with your daughter.”

“You have made my daughter to sin. Aw, then, I will not talk about my daughter with you. No indeed!”

“Have you no message to send to Denas?”

“Denas do know her mother’s heart and her father’s heart, and when she do find it in her own heart to leave that sinful place––the the-a-tre––and dress herself like a decent wife and a good woman, and sing for God and not for the devil, and sing for love and not for money, aw, then, who will love her as quick and as warm as I will? But if you do want a message, tell her she have broken her good father’s life in two; and that I do blame myself I ever gave her suck!”

Roland listened to these words with a scoffing air of great amusement; he looked steadily at Joan with a smile that was intolerable to her, then he raised his hat with an elaborate flourish and said:

“Good-morning, Mrs. Penelles.”

No notice was taken of this salute, and he added with an offensive mirthfulness:

“Perhaps I ought to say, ‘Good-morning, mother.’”

Then Joan leaped to her feet as if she had been struck in the face. She kicked the nets from her and strode to the open door in a flaming passion.

“Aw, then!” she cried, “not your mother, thank God! Not your mother, or you’d be in the boats making your awn living. You! you cruel, cowardly, lazy, lounging, bad lot! Living on my poor little girl, you be! You vampire! Living on her body and soul.”

“Madam, where is Mr. Penelles?”

“Aw, to be sure. Well you knew he wasn’ here, or you would never have put foot this road. And no madam I be, but honest Joan Penelles. Go! The Pender men are near by. Go!––and the Trefy men, and Jack Penhelick, and Reuben Trewillow. Go!––they are close by, I tell you. Go!––if I call they’ll come. Go!––or they will know the reason why!”

Then, still smiling and knocking the end of his cigar against the end of his cane, Roland leisurely took the road to the cliff. But Joan, in her passionate sense of intolerable wrong, flung up her arms toward heaven, and with tears and sobs her cry went up:

“O my God! Look down and see what sin this Roland Tresham be doing!”

CHAPTER XI.

FATHERLY AND MOTHERLY.

“In youth change appears to be certain gain;
Age knows that it is generally certain loss.”

“The worst wounds are those our own hands
inflict.”

“Like as a father pitieth his children.”

“A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive.”

––Coleridge.

TEN days of the methodical serenity of Burrell Court wearied Roland, and with money in his pocket the thought of London was again a temptation. He was quickly satisfied with green gardens and sea-breezes; the pavements of Piccadilly and Regent Street were more attractive. And for Roland, the last wish or the last plan held the quality of fascination. When he

turned his back upon Burrell Court, Elizabeth faded from his thoughts and affections; it was Denasia who then drew him through every side of his vivid imagination and reckless desires.

He had written to her as soon as Elizabeth promised him the money he needed; for he believed when Denasia was free from care she would speedily recover her health and strength. He pleased himself all the way home with the anticipation of his wife's smiles and welcome, and he was a little frightened not to see her face at the window the moment his cab arrived. He expected her to be watching; he was sure, if she were able, she would not have disappointed him. He had a latch-key in his pocket, and he opened the door and went rapidly to the room they occupied. It was empty; it was cleaned and renovated and evidently waiting for a new tenant.

Full of trouble and amazement, he was going to seek his landlady, when she appeared. She was as severely polite as people who have got the last penny they hope to get out of one can be. Mrs. Tresham had gone to the sea-side. She had left five days ago––gone to Broadstairs. The address was in the letter which she gave him. Greatly to Roland's relief she said nothing about money, and he certainly had no wish to introduce the subject.

But he was amazed beyond measure. Where had Denasia got money? How had she got it? Why had she said nothing to him? He had had a letter two days before, and he took it out of his pocket and re-read it. There was no allusion to the change, but he saw that the postmark showed it to have been mailed on the way to the Chatham and Dover Railway. However, he was not anxious enough to pursue his journey that night. He went to a hotel, had a good dinner, slept off his fatigue, and started for Broadstairs at a comfortable hour in the morning.

Nothing like jealousy troubled him. He had no more fear of Denasia's honour and loyalty than he had of the sun rising; and with a hundred pounds in his pocket curiosity was a feeble feeling. "Some way all is right, and when a thing is right there is no need to worry about it." This was his ultimate reflection, and he slept comfortably upon it.

Broadstairs was a new place, and to Roland novelty of any kind had a charm. A fine morning, a good cigar, a change of scene, and Denasia at the end, what more was necessary to a pleasant trip? His first disillusion was the house to which he was directed. It was but a cottage, and in some peculiar way Roland had persuaded himself that Denasia had not only got money, but also a large sum. The cottage in which he found her did not confirm his anticipations. And in the small parlour Denasia was taking a dancing-lesson. An elderly lady was playing the violin and directing her steps. Of course the lesson ceased at Roland's entrance; there was so much else to be talked over.

"Why did you come to this out-of-the-way place?" asked Roland with a slight tone of disapprobation.

"Because both my singing and dancing teachers were here for the summer months, and I longed for the salt air. I felt that it was the only medicine that would restore me. You see I am nearly well already."

"But the money, Denasia? And do you know that old harpy in London never named money. Is she paid?"

"Why do you say harpy? She only wanted what we really owed her. And she was good and patient when I was ill. Yes, I paid her nine pounds."

"I have one hundred pounds, Denasia."

"You wrote and told me so."

"Elizabeth gave it to me; and I must say she gave it very kindly and pleasantly."

"Of course Elizabeth gave you it. Why not? Is there any merit in her doing a kindness to her own brother pleasantly? How else should she do it?"

"It was given as much for you as for me."

"Decidedly not. If Elizabeth has the most ordinary amount of sense, she knows well I would not touch a farthing of her money; no, I would not if I was dying of hunger."

"That is absurd, Denasia."

"Call it what you will. I hate Elizabeth and Elizabeth hates me, and I will not touch her money or anything that is bought with it. For you it is different. Elizabeth loves you. She is rich, and if she desires to give you money I see no reason why you should refuse it––that is, if you see none."

"And pray what are you going to do?"

"Have I suffered in your absence? You left me sick, nervous, without a shilling. I have made for myself a good engagement and received fifty pounds in advance."

"A good engagement! Where? With whom?"

"I am learning to sing a part in 'Pinafore.' I am engaged at the Olympic."

"Denasia!"

She flushed proudly at his amazement, and when he took her in his arms and kissed her, she permitted him to see that her eyes were full of happy tears.

"Yes," she resumed in softer tones, "I went to see Colonel Moss, and he was delighted with my voice. Mr. Harrison says I learn with extraordinary rapidity and have quite wonderful dramatic talent, and madame has almost as much praise for my dancing. I had to pay some bills out of the

fifty pounds; but I am sure I can live upon the balance and pay for my lessons until September. As soon as I am strong enough to look after my costumes, my manager will advance money for them."

"Do you mean that you are to have fifty pounds a week?"

"I am to have thirty pounds a week. That is very good pay, indeed, for a novice."

"For six nights and a matinée? You ought to have had far more; it is not five pounds a performance. You ought to have ten pounds. I must see about this arrangement. Moss has taken advantage of you."

"I have given my promise, Roland, and I intend to keep it. You must not interfere in this matter."

"Oh, but I must!"

"It will be useless. I shall stand to my own arrangement."

"It is a very poor one."

"It is better than any you ever made for me."

"Of course! I had all the preparatory work to do, getting you known––getting a hearing for you, in fact. Now the harvest is ripe, it is easy enough to get offers. You had better let me have a talk with Moss."

"I have signed all the necessary papers. I have accepted fifty pounds in advance. I will not––no–– I will not break a letter of my promise for anyone."

"Then I shall have nothing to do with the affair. It is a swindle on Moss' part."

"No, it is not. He made me a fair offer; I, of my own free will and judgment, accepted it."

"Thirty pounds a week! What is that for a first-class part?"

"It is a good salary. I can pay my expenses and buy my wardrobe out of it. You have Elizabeth's money. When it is done she will probably give you more. She ought to, as you preferred trusting to her." But though the words were laughingly said, they sprang from a root of bitterness.

In fact, Roland quickly discovered that those ten days he had so idly passed at Burrell Court with his sister had been ten days of amazing growth in every direction to Denasia. She had wept when Roland so suddenly left her; wept at his want of faith in her, at his want of care for her, at his indifference to her weakness and poverty. But to sit still and cry was not the way of her class. She had been accustomed to reflect, when trouble came, whether it could be helped or could not be helped. If the former, then it was "up and about it;" if the latter, tears were useless, and to make the best of the irrevocable was the way of wisdom.

In an hour she had conquered the physical weakness which spoke by weeping. A suspicion of cruelty gave her the salutary stimulus of a lash; she sat upright and began to plan. The next day she went out, sold a bracelet, hired a cab, and went from one manager to another until she succeeded. Brought face to face with the question of work and wage, all the shrewd calculating instincts of a race of women accustomed to chaffer and bargain awoke within her. She sold her wares to good advantage, and she knew she had done so. Then a long-nascent distrust of Roland's business tact and ability sprang suddenly to vigorous life. She realised in a moment all the financial mistakes of the past winter. She resolved not to have them repeated.

The sea air soon restored all her vigour and her beauty. She gave herself to study and to practice with an industry often irritating to Roland. It reproached his own idleness and it deprived him of her company. He did indeed rehearse his characters, and in a stealthy way he endeavoured to find a better engagement for Denasia. He was sure that if he were successful there would be no difficulty in inducing, or if necessary compelling, his wife to accept it. He could as easily have made Queen Victoria accept it. For with the inherited shrewdness of her class she had also their integrity. She would have kept any engagement she made even if it had ruined her.

The winter was a profitable one, though not as happy as Denasia had hoped it would be. They had no debts and were able to indulge in many luxuries, and yet Roland was irritable, gloomy, and full of unpleasant reminiscences and comparisons. He thought it outrageous for Moss to refuse the payment of his wife's salary to him. And Denasia had a disagreeable habit of leaving a large portion of her income with the treasurer of the company, and then sending her costumer and other creditors to the theatre for payment. Indeed, she was developing an independence in money matters that was extremely annoying to Roland. He felt that his applications to Elizabeth were perpetual offences to Denasia, and if he had been a thoughtful man he would have understood that this separation of their interests in financial matters was the precursor of a much wider and more dangerous one.

Roland had other unpleasant experiences to encounter. It seemed incredible that the handsome, witty, fascinating Mr. Tresham could possibly be a bore, and yet the authorities in various green-rooms either said so in plain English or made him aware of the fact through every other sense but hearing. He felt himself to be politely or sarcastically quizzed. Stars ignored him; meaner lights gave him a bare tolerance. A few inquired if his grand relatives had yet forgiven him. One or two affected to have heard he had an offer from Henry Irving, or some other histrionic luminary; in fact, he gradually was made to understand that Roland Tresham was by no means a name to conjure with.

He did not tell Denasia of these humiliations, and she believed that his chagrin and ill-temper

arose from his continual disappointments. He could get no chance worthy of his efforts for a trial of his new Shakespearian interpretations. He felt sure there was a coalition against him. “Let a man have a little more beauty or talent than the crowd, and the crowd are determined to ruin him, naturally,” he said, and he believed his own dictum thoroughly. Toward the end of the season, however, he did obtain a hearing under what were undoubtedly favourable circumstances; and then the press was his enemy. And he knew positively that the adverse criticisms were the results of venality, or ignorance, or want of taste, or of that brutal conservatism which makes Englishmen suspicious of everything not endorsed by centuries of use and wont.

It may be easily seen how these personal irritations made an unhappy atmosphere in which to dwell. And Roland had another disappointment also which he hardly liked to admit to himself–– Denasia was changing so rapidly. The society into which he himself had brought her forced the simple, trustful, ignorant girl into observations and calculations which lifted her unconsciously to a level, perhaps in some respects to a plane above her husband. She was naturally clever, and she learned how to dress herself, how to take care of herself, how to look out for her own interests. Roland had intended to dictate to her, and she began to smile at his dictations and to take her own way, which she charmingly declared was the only reasonable way for her to take.

During this interval Roland wrote often to Elizabeth. He wanted some one to complain to, and Elizabeth was the only person he knew who was willing to listen to his complaints. She perceived very early the little rift between husband and wife which might be bridged by love or might become an abyss in which love would be for ever lost. It must, however, be noted to her credit that she avoided any word likely to widen it. She did not like Denasia, but she had a controlling sense of honour. She had also a lofty ideal of the sacredness of the marriage tie. To have made trouble between a man and his wife would, in Elizabeth’s opinion, have been as wicked a thing as to break into a church vestry and steal the sacramental silver. But she did sympathize with her brother, and advise him, and send him money. And naturally Denasia, who thought badly of Elizabeth, resented her interference in her life at all; so that there was usually a coolness between Roland and Denasia after the arrival of a letter from Burrell Court.

In truth, any letter from St. Penfer at this period of Denasia’s life hurt her. She longed for her own people. She felt heart-sick for a word from them. In some moment of confidence or ill-temper, Roland had given his wife his own version of the visit to his mother-in-law. And whatever else he remembered or forgot, he was clear and positive about Joan’s message to her daughter. She had broken her good father’s life in two and her mother was sorry she had ever given her suck. Denasia knew her mother’s passionate nature, and she could understand that some powerful aggravation had made her speak so strongly, but the words, after all allowances, were terrible words. They haunted her in the midst of her professional excitements, and still more in the solitude of her frequently restless nights.

And if Joan had felt this a year ago, Denasia knew that she now felt much more bitterly; for in one of her letters to Roland Elizabeth had written freely of the passionate anger of John Penelles when he learned that his daughter had become a public dancer. Indeed, Elizabeth affected to think it very cruel of Denasia to send to her old ignorant parents the illustrated paper which contained her picture in the dance act. She thought Denasia’s vanity had overstepped all bounds and become positive cruelty, etc., etc. And Denasia, in a passion which matched any outbreak of her father’s, vowed not only that she had never sent such a paper to St. Penfer, but that Elizabeth herself must have been the perpetrator of the cruelty, unless––and she then gave Roland a glance which made him wonder where his willing and obedient Denasia of former days had gone.

In all essential points this story was a false one. It was indeed true that some person had sent to the Penelles cottage a London paper, in which there was a large picture of Denasia and the admiral dancing the famous hornpipe. But the manner of its reception was matter of speculation only, and the speculative had founded their tale upon the known hastiness of John and Joan’s tempers, without taking into consideration the presence of unknown influences.

As it happened, the pictured girl was received in the St. Penfer post-office during a storm. John had been called in the grey dawn to the life-boat, and Joan, in spite of wind and rain, went down to the beach with him. With a prayer in her heart, she saw him buckle on his buoyant armour and set his pale blue oar like lance athwart his rest, and then make straight out into the breakers that dashed and surged around. Joan saw the boat’s swift forward leaping, its downward plunge into the trough of the sea, its perilous uplifting, its perpendicular rearing, its dread descent. And John felt its human reel and shudder, its desperate striving and leaping and plunging, and its sad submission when the waters half filled it and the quivering men clung for very life under the deluge pouring over them.

So for three hours John was face to face with awful death, and Joan on her knees praying for his safety, and John had but just got back to his home, and the cry of thanksgiving for her old dear’s return was yet on Joan’s lips, when the postman brought the fateful newspaper. Fortunately they did not open it at once. Joan laid it carefully aside and brought on their belated breakfast. And as they ate it they talked of the lives that were lost and saved. Then John smoked his pipe, and Joan tidied up her house and sat down beside him with her knitting in her hands. Both their hearts were solemn and tender. John felt as if his life was a new gift to him; Joan, as if her husband’s love had some miraculous sweetness never known before. They spoke seldom and softly, finding in their responsive silence a language beyond words.

It was, then, in this gentle mood that John reached to the shelf above his head and took down

the paper. He opened it, and Denas in her pretty dancing dress, with her bare arms lifted above her head, looked her father full in the face. She was laughing; she was the incarnation of merriment and of consciously graceful, captivating vivacity. The miserable father was, however, fascinated; he gazed and gazed until his eyes overflowed, and his hands trembled, and the paper fell with a rustle to the floor.

Joan lifted it and looked at her husband. His eyes were shut, he was sobbing inwardly as punished children sob in sleep. She spoke to him, and he opened his eyes and pointed to the paper. Then Joan met the same well-beloved face. The mother's cheeks burned red and redder, her eyes flashed, she straightened out every crease, as if the pictured satin and lace had been real; and then turning to the printed page, she read aloud every word of adulation.

They had talked together of the men and women drowned within sight of land that morning, but here was their only child dancing in sight of eternal death, and they could not say a word to each other about her. For it must be remembered that these simple, God-fearing fisher-folk had been strictly and straitly reared in a creed which regarded dancing as one of the deadly sins. They honestly believed that there was but a step between their darling and eternal death, and if she should take that step while dancing! To have known that she was on the ship which had just gone to pieces on the rocks would not have made them so heart-sick. Their very souls shivered as they thought of her. As for John, he could find only those two words that spring instinctively to every soul in trouble, "O God!"

But he motioned Joan to take the paper away, and Joan took it into the room which was still called "Denas' room." She kissed the pictured face, the hair and eyes and mouth, the lifted arms, the slender throat. She could not bear to crush the paper together; she opened a drawer and laid it as gently within as if she had been putting her baby in its coffin. At this hour there was no anger in her heart; there was even a little motherly pride in her child's beauty and grace and cleverness. At this extremity of ill-doing she did not altogether blame Denas. She was certain that before Denas danced, some one had somehow persuaded the girl that it was not wicked to dance. "Denas do have principles," she said stiffly, "and the man do not live who can make her do wickedly if she do think it be wicked."

She looked with a sad affection around the little room. How lonely it was! Yes, it is the living who desert us that make lonely rooms, and not the dead. We know the dead will never come back, but oh, how long it seems to wait for the living! Month after month to keep the room ready for the one who does not come for our longing! Month after month to dress the bed and the table, and lay out the books they loved, and the little treasures that may tell they were unforgotten. Joan looked at the small dressing-table holding the shell box, and the satin pincushion, and the alabaster vase which Denas had once thought beautiful beyond price. The snowy quilt and pillows, the carefully kept floor and chairs, the clothing washed and laid with sprigs of lavender in the tidy drawers––oh, what poetry and eloquence of untiring, undespairing mother-love were in these things!

But this patient, loving pity for their erring child was an attitude not easily supposable, and Denasia did not suppose it. She knew from Roland's report that her appearance as a public singer had caused her parents great sorrow and anger, and she could only imagine a still deeper anger when she added the sin of dancing to other causes of offence. But this alienation from her own people was the bitter drop in all her success and in all her pleasure. For now that the illusions and selfishness of her bride-days were past, the faithful home affection that never wounded and never deceived resumed its importance, and she longed for her father's kiss and her mother's breast.

But every day the day's work is to face, and Denasia's days were fully occupied by their obvious duties. So week after week and month after month wore on in alternations of hope and despair, happiness and vexation, loving and quarrelling. Roland certainly, with his discontent and abiding sense of wrong, threw a perpetual shadow over life. She did not even dare to take, with any show of pleasure, such poor satisfaction as her passing fame awarded. A man may be jealous of the praise given to his own wife, and there were times when Roland could not understand Denasia's success and his own failure––bitter hours in which the poor girl felt that whether she pleased her audience or did not please them, her husband was sure to be offended and angry.

She was almost glad when, at the close of the season, the company disbanded and she was at liberty to retire. She had saved money and was resolved to resume her studies. There was at least nothing in that to irritate her husband, and she had a strong desire to improve her talent in every direction. One evening Roland entered their sitting-room in that hurry of hope and satisfaction once common enough to him, but of which he had shown little during the past winter. Denasia looked up from her writing with a smile, to meet his smile.

"Denasia," he cried impulsively, "what do you think? We are going to America! The United States is the place for me. How soon can you be ready?"

"But, Roland? What?"

"It is true, dear. Whom are you writing to?"

"I was writing to Mr. Harrison and to madame. I want to know if they are going to Broadstairs this summer, for where they go I wish to go also; that is, if they can give me lessons."

"A waste of money, Denasia. I have had a long talk with some of the men who are here with the American company. Splendid fellows! They tell me that my Shakespearian ideas will set New York agog. New Yorkers give every one a fair hearing; at least 'there's nothing beats a trial!'

That is a New York motto, and these people are sure I would have a fair trial there. And the country is so big! So big, Denasia, that the parts you know will last you for years. There is not a bit of need for you to study new songs and dances. Sing the old ones in new places. Why, you may travel thousands of miles in all directions––big cities everywhere, little ones scattered thick as blackberries on all the railroad routes, and railroad routes are spread like spider-webs all over the United States! That is the country for us! New York first of all, then Chicago, St. Louis, Salt Lake, San Francisco, New Orleans––oh, hundreds of cities! And money, my dear! Money for the picking up––that is, for the singing for."

"I do not believe a word of it, Roland. It is all talk. I am going to Broadstairs to spend the summer in study."

Roland looked a moment at the handsome, resolute woman who had resumed her writing, and he wondered how this Denasia had sprung from the sweetly obedient little maid he had once manipulated to his will with a look or a word. However, he could not spare her. It was not only her earnings he required; her beauty and talent gave him a kind of reflected importance, and he expected great things from their united efforts in the wonderful new world of which he had just begun to think.

So he set himself to win what it was evident he could not command, and, Denasia's womanly instincts being stronger than her artistic instincts, the husband conquered. The sweet words and kisses, the frank acknowledgment of his faults, the declaration that his whole future hung now on her support and interest in his American scheme, moved Denasia to concede where she felt sure she ought to have refused. But when a man finds all other arguments fail with a woman, he has only to throw himself upon her unselfishness. To prove it, she will ruin her own life. Denasia was sure she was going a wrong road, but then Roland asked her to take it for his sake, and to show her love for him she offered up her own hopes and desires, and offered them with smiles and kind words and an affected belief that the change might be as good for her reputation as for her husband's. She did indeed––as good women do a kindness––surrender herself entirely, and pretended that the surrender was her own desire and her husband's complaisance a thing he deserved praise for.

However, Roland's enthusiasms were undoubtedly partly contagious. Even Denasia, who had so often been deceived, was partly under their influence. His words had caught something of the vastness of the land of his hopes, and he talked so ambitiously and with so much certainty that the untravelled woman caught his fever once more. Then she also suffered the idea of America to fascinate her, and she permitted Roland to bring his new friends to see her, for she desired to be entirely possessed by the idea which was now to be the ruling motive of their lives. It was decided that they should sail about the middle of June. "We shall then have time to become familiar with the country, and we need not be in a hurry to decide about engagements. Hurry is such a mistake," said Roland with oracular wisdom. And Denasia hoped and smiled, and then turned away to hide the sudden frown and sigh. For the heart is difficult to deceive, and Denasia's heart warned her morning, noon, and night. But to what purpose? Who heeds the warning from their higher selves? Though one rose from the dead to point out a fatal mistake, how many would heed the messenger? For when love says, "This is the way," wisdom, fate, death itself may speak in vain.

About a week before the voyage, Roland said one night: "I think now, Denasia, that we have everything packed, I shall run down to St. Penfer and see my sister. I may never come back from America. Indeed, I do not think I shall ever want to come back, and I really ought to bid Elizabeth good-bye. She will doubtless also remember me in money matters, and in a strange country money is always a good friend. Is it not, dear? What do you think, Denasia?"

"I have been thinking a great deal of St. Penfer. My heart is like to break when I think of it. I do want to see my father and mother so much."

"You would only get a heart-break, my love. They would have no end of reproaches for you. I shall never forget your mother. Her temper was awful!"

"You must have said something awful to aggravate her, Roland. Mother has a quick temper, but it is also noble and generous. I do want to see her. I must see her once more. Let us go together."

"To St. Penfer? What a foolish idea! You would only give yourself a wretched memory to carry through your whole life."

"Never mind! I want to go to St. Penfer."

"How can you? I cannot take you to Burrell Court, Denasia."

"I would not put my foot inside Burrell Court."

"Then if I went there and you went to your father's house, that would look very bad. People would say all kinds of wicked things."

"We could stop together at the Black Lion. From there you could call upon Elizabeth. From there I could go to my father and mother. Even if they should be cruel to me, I want to see them. I want to see them. If father should strike me––well, I deserve it. I will kiss his hand for the blow! That is how I feel, Roland."

"I shall not permit my wife to go to any place where she expects to be struck. That is how I feel, Denasia."

"You are ashamed to take me to St. Penfer as your wife. And yet you owe me this reparation."

“There is no use discussing such a foolish statement. I do not think I owe you anything, Denasia. I have given you my name; at this very moment I am considering your welfare. You know that money is necessary, and as much of it as we can get; but Elizabeth will give me nothing if you are tagging after me.”

“If you are going begging, Roland, that alters the question. I have no desire to ‘tag’ after you on that errand. As for Elizabeth, I hate her.”

“Why should you hate her? She was always good to you.”

“Good! Do not name the woman. If you want to go to her, go. I hope you will carry her nothing but sorrow and ill-luck. I do! I do! I hate her as the sailor hates the sunken reef. I have not asked myself why. I only know that I have plenty of reason.”

“Do not be so excessive, Denasia. I shall leave for the West to-night. Would you like me to see your father? Your mother I decline to see.”

“Leave my father alone. You would not dare to go near him. If you do I will never speak to you again––never!”

Roland laughed lightly at her passion and answered with a provoking pleasantry: “You feel too, too, too furiously, Denasia. It is not ladylike. Your emotions will wear away your beauty.”

So Roland went by the night train to St. Penfer, and Denasia took the train after his for the same place. She was determined to see her parents once more, and all their habits were so familiar to her that she had no fear of accomplishing her desire unknown to them. She timed her movements so well that she arrived at a small wayside station near St. Penfer about dusk. No one noticed her, and she sped swiftly across the cliff-path, until it touched the path leading downward to her own home.

The little village was quite still. The children had gone to bed. The men were at sea. The women were doing their last daily duties. Denasia kept well in the shadow of the trees till she was opposite her home. A few steps across the shingle would bring her to the door. She tried to remember what her mother might be doing just at that hour, and while thus employed Joan came to the door, stood a moment on the threshold, and then went slowly to the next cottage. She had her knitting in her hand, and she was likely going to sit an hour with Ann Trewillow. When Joan’s footsteps no longer crunched the shingle there was no sound but the ocean beating on the shore and the wind stirring the tree-tops, and when Joan and Ann Trewillow went inside Ann’s cottage there was not another human creature visible.

Swiftly, then, Denasia crossed the shingle. She was at the door of her home. It stood wide open. She entered and looked around. Nothing was changed; the same glow of red fire on the white hearth, the same order and spotless cleanliness, the same atmosphere of love and peace and of life holy and simple. She was not hungry, but she was very thirsty and exceedingly weary. The bucket was full of freshly drawn water; she drank and then turned her face to her own room. A strong, sweet curiosity tempted her to enter it, and its air of visible welcome made her smile and weep. It was then impossible to resist the desire that filled her heart; she shut the door, she unclothed herself, and once more lay down in her home to sleep.

“It is hardly likely mother comes into this room more than once a week; she will not, at any rate, come into it to-night. I shall hear her return and go to bed. When she is asleep I will look once more––once more on her dear face. Father will be home in the dawning. I will watch for his coming. If he goes to bed at once I may get away before any person sees me. If he sits and talks to mother, I may hear something that will give me courage to say, ‘I am here! Forgive me!’ I must trust to luck––no, no, to God’s pity for me!”

Thinking thus, she lay in weary abandon on her childhood’s bed. The monotonous tick of the old clock, the simmering of the kettle on the hob, and the deep undertone of the ocean soothed her like a familiar, unforgotten lullaby. In a few minutes she had fallen into a deep, dreamless sleep.

She was asleep when Joan returned. Joan had gone to her neighbour’s to ask a question about the boats, and she remained there for more than an hour. For Ann Trewillow had heard of Roland’s arrival in the village, and she and Joan had some opinions to express on the subject. So that when Joan returned to her own cottage, it was with her heart beating to memories of her daughter.

She put a little more coal on her fire and then went for a drink of water. The tin cup was not in its usual place, for Denas had left it on the table. Joan looked at the cup with a face full of questions. Had she left it there? She never before had done such a thing. Who then had been in her house? Who had been drinking from her water-bucket? She asked the questions idly, without fear, but with a certain curiosity as to her unknown visitor. Then she put more water into the kettle and set a cup and saucer for her husband in case he wanted a drink of hot tea when he came in from the fishing. All the time she was thinking of Denas, and the girl seemed to grow into the air beside her; she felt that if she whispered “Denas” she might hear the beloved voice answer “Mother.”

Unknown to any mortal, Joan had made a kind of idol of the pictured Denasia. She was sorry for her weakness in this matter, but she was not able to resist the temptation of very frequently opening the drawer in which it lay, of looking at it, and of kissing it. Her conversation, her thoughts, her fancies made her child-sick. She longed for a sight of her darling’s face, and she lifted a candle and went to the door of the room in which it lay hidden.

There was always an unacknowledged sense of self-indulgence in this act, and the sense made

her go a little softly about it, as if it had to be done secretly. She opened the door slowly, and the rush candle showed her clothing scattered about the room. Her heart stood still; she was breathless; she put down her light and on tiptoes went to the bedside. Denas was fast asleep. Her long hair lay loose upon the pillow, her face was pale and faintly smiling, her hands open and at rest upon the coverlet. Her deep, slow breathing showed her to be far below conscious being, and Joan knelt down at her child's side and filled her empty eyes with the fair picture and her empty heart with the hopes it inspired.

Still Denas slept. Then Joan went into the outer room and sat down to wait for John. As the dawn came up the East she pushed aside the foliage of her flowering plants and watched the beach for John's approach. He came on with his mates, but they scattered to their cottages, and at last he was alone. Then Joan went to the door and he smiled when he saw her waiting. She made an imperative motion of silence; she took his string of fish and his water-bottle out of his hands and laid them very softly down, and while John was yet lost in amazement at her actions, she put her hand in his and led him to their girl's bedside. Without a word both stood looking at her. The dawn showed every change in her young face, and the pathos of hidden suffering was revealed unconsciously as she slept.

There is some wonderful magnet in the human eye; no sleeper can long resist its influence. As John and Joan gazed steadily on their sleeping daughter she, became restless, a faint flush flew to her cheeks, she moved her hands. Joan slipped down on her knees; when the girl opened her eyes she was ready to fold her in her arms. John stood upright, and it was his wide-open, longing gaze which brought Denasia's soul back to her. She gazed back silently into her father's face for a moment and then murmured:

"Father! forgive me! Oh, mother! mother!"

They forgave her with tears of joy. They put her fault out of words and out of memory. Confession and forgiveness was an inarticulate service of sorrow; but joy and welcome were eloquent and full of tender words. For once John locked his door and did not call his neighbours to share his gladness. He speedily understood the shortness and secrecy of her visit. After all, it was but a farewell. The joy was dashed with tears. The hope quickly faded away.

They did not try to turn her from the way she had promised to go. John said only, "The Lord go with you, Denas," and Joan wept at the thought of the land so far, far off. But they divined that their child had her own sorrows, that the lot of woman had found her out, that she had come to places where their love could not help her. Yet the visit, short and unsatisfactory as it was, made a great difference in Penelles' cottage. It lifted much anxiety. It gave the father and mother hopes which they took to God to perfect, excuses which they pleaded with Him to accept. Their confidence in their child was strengthened; they could pray for her now with a more sure hope, with a more perfect faith.

When the gloaming came on thick with Cornish fog Joan kissed her darling good-bye with passionate love and grief, and John walked with his "little dear" through the dripping woods to the wayside station, and lifted her into the carriage with a great sob. None of the three could have borne such another day, but oh, how glad was each one that they had dared, and enjoyed, and suffered through this one! It left a mark on each soul that eternity would not efface.

CHAPTER XII.

A COWARDLY LOVE.

"Howso'er I stray or range,
Whate'er I do, thou dost not change;
I steadier step when I recall
That if I slip thou dost not fall."
––Clough.

"Have you buried your happiness? Well, live bravely on. The plant does not die though all its flowers be broken off. It remembers that spring will surely come again."

ROLAND and Denasia were in Liverpool. They were full of hopes and of prudent plans. Roland had again turned over a new leaf; he had renounced his past self––the faults he could no longer commit; he had renounced also his future faults. If he was a little extravagant in every way for a day or two before making so eventful a voyage, he felt that Denasia ought not to complain. Alas! it is not the renunciation of our past and future selves that is difficult; it is the steady denial of our present self which makes the disciple.

They spent two pleasant days in Liverpool, and on the eve of the second went to the wonderful piers and saw the vast companies of steamers smudging the blue sky with their lowering clouds of black smoke. Denasia clung closely to Roland; she felt that she was going into a new world, and she looked with a questioning love into his eyes, as if she could read her fortune in them. Roland was unusually gay and hopeful. He reminded his wife that the mind and the heart could not be changed by place or time. He said that they had each other to begin the new life with, and he was very sure they would soon possess their share of every other good thing. And Denasia fell asleep to his hopeful predictions.

In the morning all was changed. The sun was hidden behind banks of black clouds, the streets were plashy and muddy, the fierce showers smote the windows like hail, and the view outside was narrowed to a procession of dripping umbrellas. It was chilly, too, and the hotel was inexpressibly dreary and uncomfortable. Greatly to Denasia's astonishment, Roland was already dressed. All his hopes were fled. He was despondent and strangely woe-begone and indifferent. He said he had had a miserable dream. He did not think now it was right to go to America; they would do nothing there. He wished they were at Broadstairs; he had been a fool to mind the chatter of men who were probably guying him; he wished Denas had not urged the plan; if she had only stood firm, etc., etc., etc.

Denasia looked at him with amazement and with some anger. She reminded him that the American idea was entirely his own. She wondered what stuff he was made of, to be so dashed and quailed by a dream. She said that she also had had a bad dream. They had both eaten late; and as for dreams, everyone knew they went by contraries. And as limp spirits like to lean, Roland was soon glad to lean upon Denasia's bravery.

The few last weary hours in England went slowly by. Roland and Denasia became at last impatient to be off; any place must certainly be better than that dreary hotel and that storm-beaten town; the cab that took them to the wharf was a relief, and the great steamer a palace of comfort. They were not sick, and the storm was soon over. After they lost sight of land the huge waves were flatted upon the main; the weather was charming; the company made a fair show of being intensely happy, and day after day went past in the monotonous pretension. Nothing varied the life until the last night on board, when there was to be a concert. Denasia had been asked to take a part in it, and she had promised to sing a song.

No one expected much from her. She had not been either officious or effusive during the voyage, and "song by Mrs. Tresham" did not raise any great expectations. As it was nearly the last item on the programme, many had gone away before Roland took his place at the piano and struck a few startling chords. Then Mrs. Tresham stepped forward and became suddenly Mademoiselle Denasia.

"Here beginneth the sea,
That ends not till the world
ends,"

thrilled the great ship's cabins from end to end. The captain was within the door before the first verse was finished. There was a crowd at the doors; all the servants in the lower saloon had ceased work to listen. Song after song was called for. Perhaps, indeed, Denasia had a sweeter taste of her power that night than she had ever felt in halls crowded with strangers who had paid a shilling to be amused by her.

The listener most interested in this performance said the least at the time; but he never took his eyes off the singer, and his private decision was, "That young woman is a public singer. Her voice has not been trained for parlours; she has been used to fling its volume through the larger space of halls or theatres. I must look after her." He approached Roland the next day and spoke in guarded terms about Mrs. Tresham's voice. Roland was easily induced to talk, and the result was an offer which was really––if they had known it––the open door to fortune. But it is the fatality of the unlucky to have the spirit of recklessness in their veins and the weakness of prudence in their hearts. Instead of letting events guide them, they have the presumption to think they can guide events. Roland received the offer coolly, and said he would consult Mrs. Tresham on the matter. But, instead of consulting with his wife, he dictated to her after the fashion of the suspicious:

"This man is the manager of a company, I think. He is very anxious for you to sign an agreement. His offer appears to be good, but we know nothing of affairs in New York; it may be a very poor offer. If you have made such an impression on him, you may make a much more pronounced one on others. We will not think of this proposal at all, except as the straw which shows us what a great wind is going to blow."

Denasia was extremely opposed to this view. She quoted the old proverb of "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." She said it would be a sure living during the time they were learning the new country and its opportunities. She begged Roland to let her accept the offer. When he refused, she said that they would live to regret the folly.

The manager thought so also. "For you must understand," he said to Roland, "that I was desirous to engage Mrs. Tresham, not for what she is––which is ordinary––but for the possible extraordinary I see in her if she could have the proper advantages and influences." With the words he bowed a little sarcastically to Mrs. Tresham's husband, and afterward spoke no more to him. And then there came to the foolish young man that sudden chill and foreboding which a

despised opportunity leaves behind it.

But whether we do wisely or foolishly, the business of life must be carried on. They were at the point of landing, and for some days the strange experiences of their new life occupied every moment and every feeling. Then came a long spell of hot weather, such heat as Denasia had never dreamed of. Roland, who had been in Southern Europe, could endure it better; as for Denasia, she lay prostrate with but one idea in her heart––the cool coverts of the Cornish undercliff and the trinkling springs where the blue-bells and the forget-me-nots grew so thickly.

Yet it was necessary that something should be done, and through the blazing heat, day after day, the poor girl was dragged to agencies and managers. But she found no one to make her such an offer as the one so foolishly declined. And the time wore on, and the money in their purse grew less and less, and a kind of desperation made both silent and irritable. Finally an engagement to go “on the road” was secured, and Roland affected to be delighted with it. “We shall see the whole country,” he said, “and we can keep our eyes open for something better.”

Denasia sighed. Disappointment and a sense of wrong and grievous mistake filled her heart and sat upon her face. She submitted as to an irreparable injury, and left New York without the least enthusiasm. “Good fortune knocked at our door,” she said, “and we had not intelligence enough to let him in.” This was all the reproach she gave her husband, and as she said “we” he accepted her generous self-accusation, and finally convinced himself that it was entirely Denasia’s fault that the offer was refused. “But then I do not blame you, Denasia,” he remarked magnanimously; “you had every right to consider yourself worthy of a larger salary.”

They left New York in September and went slowly West. Denasia had a fine physique, but it was not a physique trained to the special labour it had to endure: long days in hot railway cars; hurry and worry at every performance; no seclusion, no time for study; no time to acknowledge headache or weariness; a score of little humiliations and wrongs; a constant irritability at Roland’s apparent indifference to her wretchedness and apparent satisfaction with the company and life into which he was thrown. The men, indeed, all seemed satisfied. They had cigars to smoke, and they told stories and played cards, and so beguiled the weary hours of travel. The women were headachy and tired; they soon threw aside their paper novels and confidential talks. Some of the very young ones––pretty, wilful, inexperienced girls, not yet disillusioned, not yet weary––added flirtation to their amusements. It pained Denasia to see Roland a willing aid to their foolish pastime. She had no fear that her husband would wrong her, but the pretence pained and humbled her.

It was a wearisome seven months, a nightmare kind of life, unrelieved by even a phantom show of success. Men in the Sierras, out on the great Western plains, knew not the sea. They could not be roused to enthusiasm. Fisher-folk and fisher-life were outside their sympathies. They preferred a comic song––a song that hit a famous person, or a political principle, or a Western foible. Miners liked to hear about “Leadville Jim.” It touched their sensibilities when the “Three Fishers who Went Sailing out into the West” made no picture in their minds. Without being a failure, Denasia could not be said to be a success. She was out of her place, and consequently out of sympathy with all that touched her life.

Coming back eastward, while they were at Denver Denasia was stricken with typhoid fever. It was the result of months of unsatisfactory, unhappy labour, of worry and fret and disappointment. Nostalgia also of the worst kind had attacked her. She shut her eyes against the great mountains and endless plains. She wanted the sea. She wanted her home. Above all, she wanted to hide herself in her mother’s breast. Roland had been frequently unkind to her lately. She had been utterly unable to respond to his moods, so different from her own, and she had been more and more pained by the silly attentions he bestowed on others.

At last she could endure it no longer. She had come to a point of indifference. “Leave me and let me die.” This was all she said when Roland was at length forced to believe that her sickness was not temper, or disappointment, or jealousy. The company were compelled to leave her; Roland saw his favourites on the train and then he returned to nurse his sick wife. He found her insensible, and she remained so for many days. Doctors were called, and Roland conscientiously remained by her side; but yet it was all alone that she fought her battle with death. No one went with her into the dark valley of his shadow. She was deaf to all human voices; far beyond all human help or comfort. Through the long nights Roland heard her moaning and muttering, but it was the voice of one at an inconceivable distance––of one at the very shoal of being.

She came back from the strife weak as a baby. Her clear, shrill voice was a whisper. She could not lift a finger. It was an exhausting effort to open her eyes. A new-born child was in every respect more alive and more self-helpful, for Denasia could not by look or whisper make a complaint or a request. She was only not dead. The convalescence from such a sickness was necessarily long and tiresome. The fondest heart, the most unselfish nature must at times have felt the strain too great to be borne. Roland changed completely under it. His love for Denasia had always been dependent upon accessories pleasant and profitable to himself, as, indeed, his love for any human being would have been. While Denasia’s beauty and talent gave him *éclat* and brought him money, he admired Denasia; and while her personality made sweet his private and enviable his public hours, he loved her.

But a wife smitten by deathly sickness into breathing clay––a wife who could give him no delight and make him no money––a wife who compelled him to waste his days in darkness and solitude and unpleasant duties and his money in medicines and doctor’s fees––was not the kind of wife he had given his heart and name to. It was evident to him that Denasia had failed. “She has failed in everything I hoped from her,” he said to himself bitterly one day, as he sat beside the

still, death-like figure; “and there must be an end of this some way, Roland Tresham.”

Financial difficulties were quickly upon him, and though he had written to Elizabeth a most pitiful description of his position, a whole month had passed and there was no letter to answer his appeal. He had momentary impulses to run away from a situation so painful and so nearly beyond his control. But it was fortunately much easier for Roland to be a scoundrel in intent than in reality. His selfish instincts had some nobler ones to combat, and as yet the nobler ones had kept the man within the pale of human affections. There had been one hour when the temptation was very nearly too much for him; and that very hour there came to him two hundred dollars from Elizabeth. It turned him back. Ah, how many a time two hundred dollars would prevent a tragedy! How many a time financial salvation means also moral salvation!

It was midsummer before Denasia was strong enough to return to New York, though she was passionately anxious to do so. “We are so far out of the right way,” she pleaded. “So far! In New York we are nearer home. In New York I shall get well.”

And by this time Roland had fully realised how unfit he was for the vivid, rapid life of the West. The cultivated, gentlemanly drawl of his speech was of itself an offence; his slow, unruffled movements and attitudes, his “ancient” ways of thinking, his conservatism and gentility and ultra-superficial refinement were the very qualities not valued and not needed in a community full of new life, ardent, impulsive, rapid, looking forward, and determined not to look backward.

So with hopes much dashed and hearts much dismayed they re-entered New York. The question of the future was a serious one. They were nearly dollarless again, and even Roland felt that Elizabeth could not be appealed to for some months at least. Denasia was facing the sorrowful hopes of motherhood. For three or four months she could not sing. They restricted themselves to a small back room in a Second Avenue boarding-house, and Roland searched the agencies and the papers daily for something suitable to his peculiar characteristics and capabilities, and found nothing. There was a great city full of people, but not one of them wanting the services of a young gentleman like Roland.

As for Denasia, she was still very weak. July and August tried her severely. Some few little garments had to be made, and this pitiful sewing was all she could manage. She did not lose her courage, however, and if anything touched Roland’s best feelings at this time, it was her unfailing hope, her smiling welcome no matter how frequently he brought disappointment, her brave assurances that she would be quite well before the winter season, and then all would be put right.

In the last days of August the baby was born. Denasia recovered rapidly, but the little lad was a sickly, puny child. He had been wasted by fever, and fretted by anxious cares and by many fears, even before they were his birthright. All the more he appealed to his mother’s love, and Denasia began now to comprehend something of the sin against mother-love which she herself had committed.

Perhaps she permitted her joy in her child to dominate her life too visibly; at any rate it soon began to annoy her husband. He had been so accustomed to all of Denasia’s time and attention that he could not endure to be put off until baby was asleep, or until some trifling want of baby’s had been attended to. He fancied that her attention was divided; that even when she appeared to be listening to his complaints or his intentions, her heart was with the child and her ears listening for its crying. The transient pleasure he had experienced in the little one’s birth soon passed away, and an abiding sense of petty jealousy and wrong took its place.

“You are for ever nursing that crying little creature, Denasia,” he said one day when he returned to their small, warm room in a fever of annoyance at some unappreciative manager. “No one can get your attention for five minutes. You hear nothing I say. You take no interest in anything I do. And the little torment is for ever and for ever crying.”

“Baby is sick, Roland. And who is there to care for him but me?”

“We ought to be doing something. Winter is coming on. Companies are already on the road; you will find it hard to get a position of any kind, soon.”

“I will go out to-morrow. I am strong enough now, I think.”

“I can find nothing suitable. People seem to take an instant dislike to me.”

“That is nonsense! You were always a favourite.”

“I have had to sell most of my jewelry in order to provide for your sickness, Denasia. Of course I was glad to do it, you know that, but–––”

“But it is my duty now, Roland. I will begin to-morrow.”

So the next day Denasia went to the agencies, and Roland promised to take care of baby. A two weeks of exhausting waiting and seeking, of delayed hope and destroyed hope, followed; and Denasia was forced to admit that she had made no impression on the managerial mind. No one had heard of her singing and dancing, and those who condescended to listen were not enthusiastic.

“You see,” said one of the kindest of these caterers for the public’s pleasure––“you see, New Yorkers have no ideas about fisher men and women. If their fish is fresh, that is all that troubles them. If they think about the men who catch it, they very likely think of them as living comfortably in flats with all the modern improvements. A good topical song, a spirited dance––they are the things that fetch.”

In different forms this was the general verdict, and every day she found it harder and harder to return home and meet Roland's eager face as she opened the door. Pretty soon the anxiety became tinctured with complaint and unreasonable ill-temper, and with all the domestic miseries which accompany resentful poverty.

The poor little baby in Roland's opinion was to blame for every disappointment. Its arrival had belated Denasia's application, or if he wanted to be particularly irritating, he accused Denasia of being in such a hurry to return to her child that she did not attend to her most necessary duties. So instead of being a loving tie between them, the poor wailing little morsel of humanity separated very love, while Roland's complaints of it soon really produced in his heart the impatient dislike which at first he only pretended.

He grumbled when left in charge of the cradle. As soon as Denasia was out of sight he frequently deserted his duty, and the disputes that followed hardened his heart continually against the cause of them. And when it came to naming the child, he averred that it was a matter of no importance to him, only he would not have it called Roland. "There had been," he said, "one too many of the Treshams called Roland. The name was unlucky; and besides, the child did not resemble his family. It looked just like the St. Penfer fisher children."

Denasia coloured furiously, but she answered with the moderation of accepted punishment, "Very well, then! I will call him 'John' after my father. I hope he may be as good a man."

Matters went on in this unhappy fashion until the end of October––nay, they continually grew worse, for poverty deepened and hope lessened. Denasia had lost the freshness of her beauty, and she was too simple and ignorant to make art replace nature. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any persuasion could have made her imitate the "painted Jezebel" who had always been one of the most pointed examples of her religious education. In her first experience of public life her radiant health and colouring shamed all meaner aids and had been amply sufficient for the brightest lights and the longest hours. But that fierce ordeal of acclimating under conditions of constant travel and hard work had drained even the magnificent vitality that had been her heritage from generations of seamen, and typhoid and unhappy maternity had robbed her of much of her almost defiant youth, with its indomitable spirit and invincible hope.

She had become by the close of October pale, fragile-looking, and woefully depressed. Roland no longer found her always smiling and hoping, and he called the change bad temper when he ought to have called it hunger. Not indeed hunger in its baldest form for mere bread, but hunger just as killing––hunger for the nourishing delicate food and proper tonics that were just as necessary as bread; hunger for hope, for work, and, above all, hunger for affection.

For Roland had begun privately––yea, and sometimes openly––to call himself a fool. And the devil, who never chooses a wrong hour, sent him at this time an important letter from Elizabeth. In it she told him that Mr. Burrell had died suddenly from apoplexy, and that she had resolved to sell Burrell Court and make her residence in London and Lucerne. She deplored his absence, and said how much she had needed some one of her own family in the removal from Cornwall and in the settlement of her husband's estate; and she sent her brother a much smaller sum of money than she had ever sent before.

When Roland had finished reading this epistle he looked at Denasia. She was walking about the room trying to soothe and quiet the child. It was very ill, and she had not dared to speak about a doctor. Therefore she was feeling hurt and sorrowful, and when Roland said, "Elizabeth's husband is dead," she did not answer him.

"I said that Elizabeth's husband is dead," he angrily reiterated.

"Very well. I am not sorry. I should think the poor man would be glad to escape from her."

"You are speaking of my sister, Denasia––of my sister, who is a lady."

"I care nothing about her. She could always take good care of herself. I am heart-broken for my child, who is ill and suffering, and I can do nothing for his relief––no, not even get a doctor."

Words still more bitter followed. Roland dressed himself and went out. He was not in a mood to do business or to look for business; indeed, there was no need that he should trouble himself for one day when he had Elizabeth's order in his pocket. He turned it into cash, bought the daily newspapers, and, the morning being exquisite, he took the cars to Central Park. But it was not until he was comfortably seated in the most retired arbour that he permitted himself to think.

Then he frankly said over and over: "What a fool I have been! Here am I at thirty-three years of age tied to a plain-looking fisher-girl and her cross, sickly baby. All I hoped for in her has proved a deception. Her beauty has not stood the test of climate. Motherhood, that improves and perfects most women, has personally wrecked her. Her voice is now commonplace. Her songs are become tiresome. She has grown fretful, and all her brightness and hopefulness have vanished. I do not know how to make a living. I may as well admit that my dramatic views are a failure––that is, they are in advance of the times. I can do nothing for myself. But if I had not been married, what a jolly time I might now be having with Elizabeth! London, Paris, Switzerland, and no care or trouble of any kind. Oh, what a fool I have been! How terribly I have been deceived!"

He did not take into consideration Denasia's disappointment. He had no doubt Denasia was telling all her own sorrows to herself and weeping over them and her miserable little baby. After a while he lit a fresh cigar and opened the newspapers. For an hour or two he let his thoughts drift as they led him, and then, as he was folding up one, the following notice met his vision:

“Wanted, a private secretary. A young man who has had a classical education preferred. Call upon Mr. Edward Lanhearne, 9 Fifth Avenue.”

The name struck Roland. He had heard it before. It had a happy memory, an air of prosperity about it. Lanhearne! It was a Cornish name! That circumstance gave him the clew. When he was a boy at Eton, he remembered a Mr. Lanhearne who stayed with his father. “By Jove!” he cried, starting to his feet, “he was an American. What a piece of luck it would be if it should be the same man!” He fixed the address in his mind and went to it immediately.

The house pleased him. It was a large dwelling fronting on the avenue. A handsome carriage was just leaving the door, and in the carriage was a very lovely young woman. The entrance, the reception parlour, the servant who admitted him, all the apparent accessories of the house and household indicated wealth and refinement. What a heaven in comparison with that back room on Second Avenue! For the first time in many a month Roland had a sense of success in what he was going to do, and the feeling gave him a portion of the elements necessary to success.

Mr. Lanhearne received him at once. He was a kindly looking old gentleman, with fine manners and an intelligent face.

“Mr. Tresham,” he said, “I was attracted by your name. I once had a friend––a very pleasant friend indeed, called Tresham.”

“Did he live in London, sir?”

“He did.”

“He was Lord Mayor in the year 18--?”

“He was. Did you know him?”

“I am his son. I remember you very well. You went with me and my father to buy my first pony.”

“I did indeed. Mr. Tresham, sit down, sir. You are very welcome. I am grateful for your visit. And how is my old acquaintance? I have not heard of him for many years. We are both Cornishmen, and you know the Cornish motto is ‘One and all.’”

“My father is dead. He had great financial misfortunes. He did not survive them long. I came to America hoping to find a better opening, but nothing has gone well with me. This morning I saw your advertisement. I think I can do all you require, and I shall be very glad indeed of the position.”

“How long have you been in America, Mr. Tresham?”

“More than a year. I went West at once, spent my money, and failed in every effort.”

“To be sure. The West is for physical and financial energies. I think if a young man is to rely on his mental qualities he had better remain East. I am glad you have called upon me. The duties I wish attended to are very simple. You will have to read my mail every morning and answer it as I verbally direct. With the help of printed plates you will arrange my coins and seals and such matters. I wish you also to read the newspapers to me. In a day or two you will find out which articles to read and which to omit. I want a companion for my drives. I want some one to chat with me on my various hobbies––a young man, because young men have such positive opinions, and therefore we shall be likely to come to pleasant disputing. You will have a handsome room, a seat at my table, a place among my guests, and one hundred dollars a month.”

“I am very grateful to you, sir.”

“And I am very grateful to the kind fate which sent you to me. I owe your father for many a delightful day. I am glad to pay my debt to his son. When can you come here?”

“This afternoon, sir.”

“I like that. We dine at seven. I will expect you to dinner. Do you––ahem!––excuse me, Mr. Tresham, perhaps you may require a little money in advance. I shall be pleased to accommodate you.”

“You offer is gracious and considerate, sir. I am glad you made it, although I do not fortunately need to accept it.”

They clasped hands and parted with smiles. Mr. Lanhearne was quite excited over the adventure. He longed for his daughter to come home, that he might tell her what a romantic answer had come to his prosaic advertisement. And Roland was still more excited. The air of the house, its peace, refinement, and luxury appealed irresistibly to him. It was his native air. He wondered how he had endured the vulgarity and penury of his surroundings for so long; how indeed he had borne with Denasia’s shortcomings at all. That refined old gentleman, that quiet, elegant woman whom he had had a glimpse of––these people were like himself, of his own order––he would never weary of them. The class he had voluntarily chosen, the people with whom poverty had compelled him to consort, they affected him now as the memory of a debauch affects a man when it is over.

“I had no business out of my proper sphere,” he said sadly. “Elizabeth was right––right even about Denasia.”

He sat down in Union Square to consider his position, and he came to a very rapid and positive conclusion. He declared to himself: “I will no longer waste my life. Denasia and I have made a great mistake. Together, we shall be poor and miserable. Apart, we shall be happy. I no longer love her. I do not believe she loves me. All the love she can spare from her blustering father and

mother she wastes on that miserable sickly babe, who would be a thousand times better dead than alive. If I leave her she will go back to St. Penfer. I have a hundred dollars; I will give her fifty of them. She can pay a steerage passage out of it or go in a sailing-vessel, or if she does not like that way she has things she can sell. If I give her half of what I have I do very well indeed."

He went rapidly to his home, or room. He knew that Denasia had an engagement to keep, and he hoped that he might be fortunate enough to find her out. It was as he wished: Denasia had gone out and the landlady was sitting beside the baby's cradle. Roland dismissed her with that manner all women declared to be charming, and then he sat down and wrote a letter to his wife. It did not occupy him ten minutes. Some of his clothing was yet very good and fashionable; he packed it in the leather trap which had gone with him to college, and then he sent a little girl for a cab. Without word and without observation he drove away from the scene of so much vexation and disappointment.

The whole life and vicinity had suddenly become horrible to him––Denasia, his child, the shabby landlady, the shabby house, the dirty little grocery at the corner where he had bought his cigars and their small household supplies, the meals cooked there and eaten there, Denasia's attempts at housekeeping––the whole series of memories made him wince and shiver with shame and annoyance. "Thank God it is over!" he said fervently. And he never once thought what an insult he was offering to eternal mercy and justice, in supposing God had anything whatever to do with his flagrant desertion of duty, his shameful abrogation of all the consequences of his own wilful selfishness, and his cruel farewell to the wife and son he was bound to nourish and cherish and defend.

He thought of none of these things. He thought only of the comfort and elegance; the peace, the delicate living, the delicate clothing, the congenial companionship he was going to. He was determined to have a luxurious bath, to be shaved and perfumed, to leave behind him the very dust of his past life. He resolved not to allow himself to remember Denasia. She was to be as if she never had been. He would blot out of his memory all the years she had brightened and darkened. And if any excuse can be found for him, it must be in his supposition that Denasia felt just as he did. She would be grateful to him for taking the initiative––glad to get back to her home and her people, glad to escape a life for which she must have discovered she had neither strength nor vocation.

So he thought, in spite of his resolve not to think. But a man must be even more selfish and reckless than Roland was to take years of his past life and plunge them into oblivion as he would plunge a stone into mid-ocean. In spite of the novelty of his situation, of his delight with his quiet, handsome room, the thought of Denasia would enter where it was forbidden to enter, and he could not help wondering how she would receive his letter, and what steps she would take in consequence of it.

Denasia came home weary and disappointed. She had had a long, silent wait for the person she expected to see, and finally been compelled to accept the fact that he was not coming into town. She was heart-sick, and the paltry loss of the car fare was an addition to her anxiety. That the room was empty and the baby crying did not in any way astonish her. She understood from it that Roland had come home and dismissed the landlady, and then wearied of his watch and gone out again, leaving the child to sleep or to weep as it felt inclined to do. Her first action was to lift it from its bed, nurse and comfort it, and rock it to sleep on her breast.

Then her eyes wandered from her child to a letter lying on the table. The circumstance roused no interest in her mind. She knew from its general appearance that it had been put there by Roland, and it was by no means the first time he had left the child with a letter containing some excuse which he thought valid enough to satisfy Denasia. She looked at it with a little contempt. She expected to find it assert that some one had called for him or had sent him a message involving a possible engagement, and she knew the whole affair would resolve itself into some plausible story, which she would either have to accept or else deny, with the certain addition of a coolness or a quarrel.

So the letter lay until she had put off and away her street costume. Then she took it in her hand and sat down by the open window to read the contents. They were short and very much to the point:

> "DENASIA, MY DEAR:––You have ceased to love me and I have ceased to love you. You are miserable and I am miserable. We have made a great mistake, and we must do all we can to correct it. When you read this I shall be on my way to England. I advise you to go back to your parents for a year. You may in that time recover your beauty and your voice. It may be well then to go to Italy and give yourself an opportunity to obtain the education I see now you ought to have had at the first. But until that is practicable we are better apart. You will find fifty dollars in the white gloves lying on the dressing-case. I advise you to take a sailing-vessel; a long voyage will do you good and will be much cheaper. It is what I have done. Farewell.
>
> "ROLAND."

She read every word and then glanced at the cradle. The child moved. With the letter in her hand she soothed it and then sat down again. She was overwhelmed with the shameful wrong. But to cry out and wring her hands and call in the neighbours to see and hear what things she suffered was not her way. Often she had seen her mother sitting speechless and motionless for hours while her father hung between life and death; it was natural for Denasia to take unavoidable sorrow with the same dumb patience.

Then she began to analyse the specious sentences and to deny the things asserted. "I have not ceased to love. Every hour of the day my life has been a witness to my love. I never said I was

miserable. Nothing had power to make me quite miserable if Roland was kind to me. He is on his way to England. Of course he has gone to his sister. What did her sweet complaints and regrets at not having his help and company mean but 'Come to me, Roland'? She has lost her own husband and now she must have mine. She has always been my evil angel. When she was kindest to me it was only a different way of serving herself. My soul warned me; my father warned me. She is one of those human vampires who suck love, luck, life itself from all near them, and who slay, and rob, and smile, and caress while they do it. And I am to go home for a year and get back my beauty and my voice. I am sorry I ever was beautiful. If I can help it I will never sing another song. Go home and shame my good father and mother for his sake? Go home and be lectured and advised and reproved by every woman in the village? Go home a deserted wife, a failure in everything? No; I will not go home. Nor will I go to Italy. I have had more than enough of singing for my living and his living, too. I will sew, I will wash, I will go to service, I will do anything with my hands I can do; but I will not sing. And I will bring up my boy to work at real work, if it is but to make a horseshoe out of a lump of iron! God! what a foolish woman I have been! What a silly, vain, loving woman! My heart will break! My heart will break! Alone, alone! Sick, helpless, ignorant, alone!"

She closed her eyes and hid her face, and in that darkness gathered together her soul-strength. But she shed no tears. Pale as death, weak and trembling with suppressed emotion, she went softly about the little room putting things in order––doing she scarcely knew what, yet feeling the necessity to be doing something. Thus she came across the white gloves, and she feared to look in them. Her knowledge of Roland led her to think he would not leave fifty dollars behind him. He would take the credit of the gift and leave her to suppose herself robbed by some intruder or visitor.

So she looked suspiciously at the bit of white kid and undid it without hope. The money was there. After all, Roland had some pity for her. The sight of the bills subdued her proud restraint. One great pressure was lifted. No one could now interfere if she sent for a doctor for her sick baby. She could at least buy it the medicine that would ease its sufferings. And so far out was the tide of her happiness that from this reflection alone she drew a kind of consolation.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH IS DAWN.

"In the pettiest character there are unfathomable depths."

"Only one Judge is just, for only one
Knoweth the hearts of men."

Sayeth the book: "There passeth no man's soul
Except by God's permission, and the speech
Writ in the scroll determining the whole,
The times of all men, and the times for each."
––Koran, 3d Chap.

THE Lanhearnes by an old-fashioned standard were a very wealthy family. They were also a large family, though the sons had been scattered by their business exigencies and the eldest daughters by marriage. Only Ada, the youngest child of the house, remained with her father; for the mother had been dead many years, and the preservation of the idea of home was felt by all the Lanhearne children to be in Ada's hands. If she married and went away, who then would keep open the dear old house and give a bright welcome to their yearly visits?

Ada, however, was not inclined to marriage. She was a grave, quiet woman of twenty-two years of age, whose instincts were decidedly spiritual and whose hopes and pleasures had little to do with this world. She was interested in all church duties and in all charitable enterprises. Mission schools and chapels filled her heart, and she paid out of her private purse a good-hearted little missionary to find out for her cases of deserving poverty which it was her delight to relieve.

Roland had never before come in contact with such a woman, and at a distance he gave her a kind of adoration. Young, beautiful, rich, and yet keeping herself unspotted from the world or going into it only to relieve suffering, to dry the tears of childhood, and strengthen the failing hearts of unhappy women. Once while walking with Mr. Lanhearne the old gentleman said: "This is Ada's church. As the door is open let us enter and wait for prayers." So out of the rush and crush of Broadway the old and the young man turned into the peace of the temple. And as they entered Ada rose up from before the altar, and with a pale, rapt face glided into the solitude of her own pew. Neither spoke of the circumstance, but on Roland's mind it made a deep impression. At that hour he realised how beautiful a thing is true religion and how holy a

thing is a woman pure of heart, calmly radiant from the very presence of God.

In spite of the unhappy memories of the past, in spite of the worrying thoughts which would intrude concerning Denasia, he was not at this time very happy. Certainly not happy enough to contemplate a long continuance of the life he was leading, but well satisfied to pass the winter in its refined and easy seclusion. He knew that Elizabeth would be in London until June, and he resolved to remain in New York until she left for Switzerland. He would then join her at Paris and spend the summer and autumn in her company; beyond that he did not much trouble himself.

He had, indeed, a vague dream of then quietly visiting Denasia and determining whether it would be worth while to educate her for grand opera. For the idea had taken such deep root in his mind that he could not teach himself to regard the future without it, and now that Elizabeth had full control of her riches, he did not contemplate any difficulty about money matters. He still believed in Denasia's voice, and he had seen that her dramatic talents were above the average; so even in the charmed atmosphere of the Lanhearne home, he could still think with pleasure of being the husband of a famous prima donna.

He was sure that Denasia had returned to St. Penfer. He knew that ever since they came to America she had written at intervals to her parents, and though it was indeed a labour of love for either John or Joan to write a letter, Denasia had had several communications from them. Evidently, then, she had been forgiven, and he had no doubt that for the sake of her child she hurried homeward as soon as it was possible for her to secure a passage.

Still he allowed three weeks to pass ere he made any inquiries. During those three weeks his own life had settled into very easy and pleasant ways. He breakfasted alone or with Mr. Lanhearne. Then he read the morning papers aloud and attended to the mail. If the weather were favourable, this duty was followed by a stroll or drive in the park. Afterward he was very much at leisure until dinner-time, and at nine o'clock Mr. Lanhearne's retirement to his own room gave him those evening hours which most young men consider the desirable ones. Roland generally went to some theatre or musical entertainment. There was always the vague expectation of seeing and hearing Denasia, and he scarcely knew whether his disappointment was a pleasure or an annoyance.

At the end of the third week he ventured to the Second Avenue house. The room they had occupied was dark. He watched it until midnight. If Denasia had been singing anywhere, she would certainly have returned to her child before that hour. The next night he sent a messenger to inquire for her address, and the boy said, "It was not known. Mrs. Tresham had left two weeks before. She had spoken of England, but it was not positively known that she had gone there."

"She is likely in St. Penfer by this time," mentally commented Roland, and the thought gave him comfort. He did want Denasia and the baby to be taken care of, and he knew they would want no necessary thing in John Penelles' cottage. But it was this very certainty of Denasia's return to England which really detained Roland in America. He had no desire to meet John Penelles until time had healed the wound he had given John's daughter. John would be sure to seek him out in London, and there might be no end of trouble; but John would not come to America, nor would he be likely in the summer season to leave the fishing and seek him either in Paris or Switzerland. As for Elizabeth, she knew from her brother's letters that he had deceived and left his wife, and she had, of course, thought it proper to offer a feeble remonstrance, but Roland knew right well she would never betray his hiding-place.

So Roland lived on week after week in luxurious thoughtlessness. Mr. Lanhearne grew very fond of him, and Ada, in spite of her numerous objects of charitable interest, found it singularly pleasant to discuss with so handsome and intelligent a companion religious topics on which their opinions were widely apart. Indeed, she honestly accepted the evident duty of leading him back to the safe and narrow road of creditable dogmas. And with such a fair, earnest teacher it was easy, it was natural for Roland to affect an interest in the subject he did not really feel.

Dangerous ground for both, but especially so for the lovely young woman whose sincerity and singleness of purpose led her to believe that a very natural and womanly instinct was the prompting of a spiritual concern for an immortal soul wandering from the right path. Roland as a hypocrite, affecting a piety he despised, would not have been either so captivating or so dangerous as Roland honestly ignorant and doubtful, yet willing to be taught and convinced.

Dangerous ground for both, for both constantly assured themselves there was no danger. Ada Lanhearne was not a woman that any man could approach with laughter or half-concealed flirtation. And Roland had no desire to overstep the boundary her noble presence inspired. Also, Denasia held him by the mysterious strength of the marriage tie. Apart from her and relieved of the petty cares which degraded their love, he forgot her shortcomings and thought more and more frequently of her affectionate, forgiving heart. The radiance of her youthful beauty was still in his memory, and the haunting charm of her voice called him at all kinds of incongruous hours. He awoke at night with the silvery cry of "Caller Herrin'" in his ears. At the dinner-table he heard her light musical laugh ring through the decorous, quiet room, and often when discussing an old Roman coin with Mr. Lanhearne he felt her hand upon his shoulder, and feared to turn lest her face should confront him.

Ada's beaming eyes, and soft voice, and mystical rapture of holy enthusiasm touched him on quite a different side of his nature. She made him long to be good––he was almost afraid he would become good if he dwelt too much in her presence. And he did not desire to be so––not

just yet. But as she talked so earnestly to him of righteousness, and duty and the life to come, it was impossible that he should not in some way respond. And when his handsome eyes were shadowed with feeling and his gay face and manner subdued to the gravity of the subject, it was equally impossible for the young teacher not to be moved by the evidences of her own eloquent persuasion.

After all, much must be left to the imagination; the situation was so full of possibilities, so absolutely free of all wrong conditions, so ready to yield itself to many wrong conditions. Roland's days went by in a placid sameness, which did not become fretting, because he knew he should end its pleasant monotony of his own free will in a very few weeks. And Ada had never before been so happy. Why should she ask herself the reason? To question fate is not a fortunate thing, at any rate; she felt a reluctance to begin a catechism with her feelings or her surroundings.

So the Christmas came and went, and the days lengthened and the cold strengthened, and there was so much misery among the poor that Ada's time and money were taxed to their uttermost use and ability. And the suffering she saw left its shadow on her fair face. She was quieter because her thoughts were deep in her heart and did not therefore readily resolve themselves into words. The mystery of the whole creation suffering together oppressed and solemnized her life, for it was no hearsay of cold, and hunger, and wretchedness that touched Ada. She sat down on the cold hearths with broken-hearted wives and mothers, and held upon her knees the little children ready to perish. Money she gave to the uttermost, but with the money something infinitely more precious––love, like that which made the Christ put His hand upon the leper as well as heal him; womanly sympathy, which listened patiently to tales of intolerable wrongs and to the moans of extreme physical suffering.

In her own home she seldom spoke of these experiences. Mr. Lanhearne did not altogether approve of them. Like the centurion of old, he thought it was sufficient to "speak the word only," that is, to give the money necessary to relieve suffering. And he did not see why his child's life should be shadowed by carrying the griefs of others. So there was very seldom any talk on these matters, unless Ada required assistance. Then she spoke with such clear sincerity and pathos that her father felt it to be a privilege to be her right hand, and for the time being was probably as enthusiastic as herself. But these were rare occasions; Ada was too wise and considerate to stretch a generous or a gentle emotion until it failed.

One bitterly cold night in February Roland returned to Lanhearne House in a particularly unhappy mood. He had been down-town as far as Twenty-third Street, and had been subjected to all the depressing influences of the cold, brown-stony city, swept by that most cruel of winds––the east wind which comes with a thaw. The sullen poor, standing desperate and scornful at the street corners, seemed to cast a malevolent eye upon his handsome, well-clothed person. There had been a terrible accident, followed by a fire, somewhere in the city, and the raw, cutting air was full of its horror. As he passed a group of men, a poor shivering creature said passionately, "Accident indeed! All accidents are crimes!" The friction of the interests and wills encompassing him evolved an atmosphere which he had no strength to antagonise. He simply submitted to its worry and restlessness and unhappy discontent, and so carried the spirit home with him.

It was met on the threshold by influences that drove it back into the desolate street. The warm, light house and the peace and luxury of his own room soothed his mental sense of something wrong. And when he descended to the parlour, he was instantly encompassed by soft warmth, by firelight and gaslight, by all the visible signs and audible sounds of sincere pleasure in his advent. Mr. Lanhearne had a new periodical to discuss, and Ada, though unusually grave, lifted her still face with the smile of welcome on it.

She had, however, an evident anxiety, and Mr. Lanhearne probably divined its origin, for after dinner was over he said: "Ada, I saw your little missionary here, late. Is there anything very wrong?"

"I was just going to tell you, father. Mr. Tresham may listen also, it can do him no harm. Mrs. Dodge came to tell me of a most distressing case. She was visiting an old patient in a large tenement, and the woman told her to call at the room directly above her. As she went away she did so. It was only four o'clock then, but in that place quite dark. When she reached the door she heard a voice praying––heard a voice thanking God amid sobs and tears––oh, father, what for? For the death of her baby! Crying out in a passion of gratitude because it was released from hunger and cold and suffering!"

Mr. Lanhearne covered his face, and Roland looked at Ada with his large eyes troubled and misty. The girl was speechless for a moment or two, and Roland watched her sympathetic face and saw tears drop upon her clasped hands. Then she resumed: "Mrs. Dodge entered softly. The mother was sitting on a chair with her dead baby across her knees. There was no fire, no candle in the room, but the light from an oil-lamp in a near window fell upon the white faces of the mother and her dead child. There is no need to tell you that Mrs. Dodge quickly made a fire, cooked the poor famished creature a meal, and then prepared the dead child for its burial. But she says the mother is distracted because she cannot buy it a grave and a coffin. I have promised to do that; you will help me, father? I know you will."

"To be sure I will, Ada. To be sure, my dear one! I will help gladly. Has the poor, sorrowful woman no husband to comfort her in this extremity?"

"She says he is dead. Her history is a little out of the common. She is an English woman and was

a public singer. The name she is known by is Mademoiselle Denasia––but that, of course, is not her real name."

A quick, sharp cry broke from Roland's lips. He was grey as ashes. He trembled visibly and stood up, though his emotion compelled him instantly to reseat himself. He was on the point of losing consciousness. Mr. Lanhearne and Ada looked at him with anxiety, and Mr. Lanhearne went to his side.

"I am better," he said with a heavy sigh. "I knew––I knew this poor woman! I told you I was once on the road with a company. She was in it. Her husband was a brute––a mean, selfish, cowardly brute––he ought to be dead. I should like to help her––to see her––what is the street? the number? Excuse me––I was shocked!"

"I see, Mr. Tresham," answered Ada, kindly. She had some ivory tablets by her side, and she looked at them and said, "It is a very long way––One Hundred and Seventieth Street––here is the address. I shall be glad if you can do anything to help. I am sure she is worthy––she has had good parents and been taught to pray."

"My dear Ada," said Mr. Lanhearne, "sorrow forces men and women down upon their knees; even dumb beasts in their extremity cry unto God, and He heareth them. And as for being worthy of help––if worthiness were the condition, which of us durst pray for consolation in the hour of our trouble? God has a nobler scale. He sends his rain upon the just and the unjust, and He never yet asked a suppliant, 'Whose son art thou?'"

Roland was grateful for this little discussion. It gave him a minute or two in which to summon his soul to face the position. He was able when Mr. Lanhearne ceased speaking to say:

"Mademoiselle Denasia is a Cornish woman. She comes from a village not far from where my father lived. I feel that I ought to stand by her in her sorrow. I shall be glad to do anything Miss Lanhearne thinks it right to do."

The subject was then dropped, but Roland could take up no other subject. With all his faults, he was still a creature full of warm human impulses. There was nothing of the cold, calculating villain about him. He was really shocked at the turn events had taken. Mr. Lanhearne, who knew the world of men which Ada did not know, mentally accused his handsome, sympathetic secretary of some knowledge of the unfortunate singer which it would be best not to investigate; but Ada thought his emotion to be entirely the outcome of an unusually tender and affectionate nature.

The incident affected the evening unhappily. Roland was not able either to talk or read, and Mr. Lanhearne, out of pure sympathy for the miserable young man, retired to his own apartment very early. This was always the signal for Roland's dismissal, and five minutes after it Mr. Lanhearne, looking from his window into the bleak, wind-swept street, saw Roland rapidly descend the steps and then turn northward.

"I was sure of it," he whispered. "There is more in this affair than meets the ear, but I like the young man, and why should I rake among the ashes of the past? Which of us would care for an investigation of that kind?" Then he sat down before his fire and mentally followed Roland to the bare loneliness of that poor home where death and the mother sat together.

For once Roland feared to call, "Denasia!" He hesitated at the foot of the narrow stair and then went softly to the door. All within was still as the grave, but a glimmer of pale light came from under the ill-fitting door. He might be mistaken in the room, but he resolved to try. He turned the handle and there was an instant movement. He went forward and Denasia stood erect, facing him. She made no sound or sign of either anger, or astonishment, or affection. All her being was concentrated on the clay-cold image of humanity lying so strangely still that it filled the whole place with its majesty of silence.

He closed the door softly and said "Denasia! Oh, Denasia!"

She did not answer him, but sinking on her knees by the child, began to sob with a passionate grief that shook her frail form as a tree is shaken by a tempest.

"My dearest! My wife! Forgive me! Forgive me! I thought you were in St. Penfer. As God lives, I believed you were with your mother. I intended to come to you, I did, indeed! Denasia, speak to me. I will never leave you again––never! We will go back to England together. I will make you a home there. I will love and cherish you for ever! Forgive me, dear! I am sorry! I am ashamed of myself! I hate myself! I do not wonder you hate me also."

"No, no! I do not hate you, Roland. I am lost in sorrow. I cannot either love or hate."

"Let me bear the sorrow with you, coward, villain that I am!"

"You did not mean to be either. You were tired of misery––men do tire. I would have tired, too, only for my baby. Oh, Roland! Roland! Roland! my love, my husband!"

Then––ah, then. No one can put into mere common words the great mystery of forgiveness. It is not in words. Heart beat against heart, eyes gazed into eyes, souls met upon clinging lips, and the sweet compact of married love was renewed in the clasping of their long-parted hands. They sat down together and spoke in soft, sad voices of the great mistakes of the past. Until the midnight hour they wept and talked together, and then Denasia said:

"In a short time a poor woman who is nursing at the Gilsey House will be here. She is on duty until twelve o'clock, but as soon as she is released she promised to come and sit with me. So you must leave me now, Roland. It is useless to explain to my neighbours our relationship. They

would look at you and me and think evilly. I would not blame them if they did. When all is over I will come to you; until then I will remain alone. It is best so."

Nevertheless Roland lingered and pleaded, and when he finally consented to her wish, he left all the money he had in her hands. She looked at the bills with a sad despair. "All these!" she whispered, "all these for a grave and a coffin! There was nothing at all to help him to live."

"Nothing could have saved him, Denasia. He was born under sentence of death. He has been ill all his poor little life. My darling, believe that it is well with him now."

Yet her words and tears troubled him, and he bade her good-night, and then returned so often that the woman Denasia had spoken of passed him in the narrow entry, and he paused and watched her go to his wife's room. Even then he did not hurry to his own home. He went down the side street, and stood looking at the glimmering lamp in the sorrowful place of death until he became painfully aware of the terribly damp, cold wind searching out and chilling life, even to the very marrow of the bones. Then he remembered that he had come out in his dress boots, consequently his feet were wet and numb, and he had a fierce pain under his shoulder. A sudden, uncontrollable fear went to his heart like a death-doom.

He had to walk a long way before he found any vehicle, and when, after what seemed a never-ending period of torture, he reached his room, he knew that he was seriously ill. But the house had settled for the night; he had a reluctance to awaken the servants; he hoped the warmth would give him ease; he was, in fact, quite unacquainted with the terrible malady which had seized him. In the morning he did not appear, and after a short delay Mr. Lanhearne sent him a message.

Roland was, however, by this time in high fever and delirious. The news caused a momentary hesitation and then a positive decision. The hesitation was a natural one––"Should not the young man be sent to the hospital?" The decision came from the cultivated humanity of a good heart––"No. Roland was 'the stranger within the gates,' he was a countryman, he was more than that, he was a Cornishman." In a few moments Mr. Lanhearne had sent for his own physician and a trained nurse, and he went himself to the side of the sick man until help arrived.

Toward night Roland became very restless, and with a distressing effort constantly murmured the word "Denasia." Mr. Lanhearne thought he understood the position exactly, and he had a very pardonable hesitation in granting the half-made request. But the monotonous imploring became full of anguish, and he finally took his daughter into his councils and asked what ought to be done.

"Denasia ought to be here," answered Ada. "I have her address. Let Davis go for her."

"But, my dear! you do not understand that she may––that she is, perhaps, not what we should call a good woman."

"Dear father, who among us all is good? Even Christ said, 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good save one, that is God.' We know nothing wrong of her with certainty. Why not give her the benefit of the doubt? Are we not compelled to be thus generous with all our acquaintances?"

So Denasia was sent for. She was sitting alone in her comfortless room. The baby was gone away for ever. Thinking of the lonely darkness of the cemetery, with the cold earth piled high above the little coffin, she felt a kind of satisfaction in her own shivering solitude and silence. She was as far as possible keeping with the little form a dreary companionship. Yet she had been expecting Roland and was greatly pained at his apparent neglect.

When Davis knocked at the door she said drearily, "Come in." She thought it was her husband at last.

"Are you Mademoiselle Denasia?" inquired a strange voice.

A quick sense of trouble came to her; she stood up and answered "Yes."

"There is a gentleman at our house, Mr. Tresham; he is very ill indeed. He asks for you constantly. Mr. Lanhearne thinks you ought to come to him at once."

"I am ready."

She spoke with a dreary patience and instantly put on her cloak and hat. Not another word was said. She asked no questions. She had reached that point where women arrest all their feelings and wait. The splendid house, the light, the warmth, all the evidences of a luxurious life about, moved her no more than if she was in a dream. A great sorrow had put her far above these things. She followed the servant who met her at the door without conscious volition. A woman going to execution could hardly have felt more indifference to the mere accidentals of the way of sorrow. And when a door was swung softly open, she saw no one in the room but Roland. Roland helpless, unconscious. Roland even then crying out "Denasia! Denasia!"

The physician, Mr. Lanhearne, and his daughter stood by the fireside, and when Denasia entered Ada went rapidly to her side.

"We are glad you have come," she said kindly. "You see how ill Mr. Tresham is. You are his countrywoman––his friend, I think?"

"I––am––his––wife."

She said the words with a pathetic pride, and Ada wondered why they hurt her so terribly. Like four swords they pierced her heart and cut away from it hope and happiness. She went back to

her father's side, and leaned her head on his shoulder, and felt like one holding despair at bay. And oh, how grateful to her was the secret silence of the night! Then she wept as a little child weeps who has lost its way. By her anguish and her sense of loss for ever she was taught that Roland had become nearer and dearer than she had ever suspected. And the knowledge was a revelation of sorrow. Her delicate conscience shivered in the shadow of a possible wrong and the bitterness of the might-have-been she was to fight without ceasing.

She felt no anger toward Denasia, however. Denasia was only the hidden rock on which her frail, unknown love-bark had struck and gone down. And she was constrained to admit that, so far as she herself was concerned, Roland was innocent. She had, indeed, often felt hurt at his restraint and want of response. In her pure, simple heart she had called it pride, shyness, indifference; but she understood now that this poor, weak soul had at least not lacked honour.

So that there was in this apparently peaceful, comfortable home two vital conflicts going on: the struggle of a noble soul to slay love, the struggle of unpitying death to slay life. About the ninth day Roland, though weak, had some favourable symptoms, and there were good hopes of his recovery. He talked with Denasia at intervals, and assured of her forgiveness and love, slept peacefully with his hand in his wife's hand.

A few days later, however, he appeared to be much depressed. His dark, sunken eyes gazed wistfully at Mr. Lanhearne, and he asked to be alone with him for a little while. "I am going to die," he said, with a face full of vague, melancholy fear. The look was so childlike, so like that of an infant soul afraid of some perilous path, that Mr. Lanhearne could not avoid weeping, though he answered:

"No, my dear Roland. The doctor says that the worst is over."

Roland smiled with pleasure at the fatherly dropping of the formal "Mr.," but he reiterated the assertion with a more decided manner. "I am going to die. Will you see that my wife goes back to England to her father and mother?"

"I will. Is there anything else?"

"No. She knows all that is to be done. Comfort her a little when I am dead."

"My dear Roland, we are going to Florida as soon as you are able."

"I am going to a country much farther off. I will tell you how I know. All my life long a figure formless, veiled, and like a shadow has come to me at any crisis. When I was striving for honours at my college it whispered, 'you will not succeed.' When I went to my first business desk it brought me the same message. The night before I sailed for America it stood at my bedside, and I heard the one word, 'failure.' This afternoon it told me, 'you have come to the end of your life.' Then my soul said, 'Oh, my enemy, who art thou?' And there grew out of the dimness the likeness of a face."

For a few moments there was a silence painful and profound. Roland closed his eyes, and from under their lids stole two large tears––the last he would ever shed. And Mr. Lanhearne was so awed and troubled he could scarcely say:

"A face! Whose face, then, Roland?"

"My own! My own!" and he spoke with that patience of accepted doom which, while it carries the warrant of death, has also death's resignation and dignity.

After this revelation there was a decided relapse, and after a few more days of suffering, of hope, and despair had passed, the end came peacefully from utter exhaustion. Mr. Lanhearne was present, but it was into Denasia's eyes that Roland gazed until this sad earth was lost to vision, and the dark, tearless orbs, once so full of light and love, were fixed and dull for evermore.

"It is all past! It is all over!" cried Denasia, "all over, all over! Oh, Roland! Roland! My dear, dear love!" and Mr. Lanhearne led her fainting with sorrow from the place of death.

And in another room, in a little sanctuary of holy dreams and loving purposes, Ada knelt in a transport of divine supplication, praying for the dying, praying for the living, consecrating her own wounded heart to the service of all women wearing for any reason the crown of sorrow, or drinking of the cup of Gethsemane, or treading alone the painful road which leads from Calvary to paradise. For herself asking only with a sublime submission––

"Nearer, my God, to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SORROW BRINGS US ALL HOME.

"Look in my face. My name is Might-have-been:
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell."

"Was *that* the landmark?

. . . . . .

"But lo! the path is missed; I must go back
And thirst to drink when next I reach the spring
Which once I stained ...
Yet though no light be left, nor bird now sing
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,
That the same goal is still on the same track."

––ROSETTI.

ROLAND TRESHAM was buried beside his son, and the friends and the places that had known him knew him no more. There were only strangers to lay him in the grave. His wife was too worn out with watching and grief to leave her bed; his sister was far away. Mr. Lanhearne and two or three gentlemen whose acquaintance Roland had made at the club of which Mr. Lanhearne was a member paid the last pitiful rites, and then left him alone for ever.

Ada sat with the sorrowful widow. Her innocent heart was greatly troubled lest her interest in Roland, though known only to herself, had been an unintentional wrong. In every possible way she strove to atone for Roland's happiness in her home and her own happiness in Roland's presence. When she mentally contrasted these conditions with the miserable conditions of the deserted wife and dying child, she felt as if it would be impossible to balance the unkind and unmerited difference. That she was not specially drawn to Denasia only forced from her a more generous concern for the unhappy woman. And when death or sorrow tears from life the mask of daily custom, then, without regard to the accidents of birth, we behold ourselves, all alike sad seekers among the shadows after light and peace.

And undoubtedly sympathy is like mercy; it blesses those who give it as well as those who receive. As Ada and Denas talked of the great mysteries of life and death, their souls felt the thrill of comradeship. Denas was usually reticent about her own life, yet she opened her heart to Ada, and as the two women sat together the day after the funeral, the poor widow spent many hours in excusing the dead and in blaming herself.

She spoke honestly of her vanity, of her desire to get the better of Elizabeth by taking her brother from her, of the satisfaction she felt in mortifying the pride of the Burrells and the Treshams––even of her impatience and ill-temper with Roland because he was not able to conquer the weaknesses which were as natural to him as the blood in his body or the thought in his brain; because he could not alter the adverse circumstances which, as soon as they touched American soil, began to close around them.

"And my great grief is this," she cried, wringing her long, wasted hands: "he has died before his time and he has gone so far away that he neither sees my repentance nor hears my words of remorseful sorrow."

"Would you desire the dead to see your sorrow, Mrs. Tresham?" said Ada. "Sorrow is for the living, not for the dead."

"Oh, it is not enough to be seen by the living! I want the dead to know that I grieve! When I have wept on my mother's breast and knelt at my father's feet, I shall still long for poor Roland to know that I am sorry for the cross looks and cross words and all the petty discomforts which drove him from me––drove him to death before his time; that is the cruellest thing of all."

Mr. Lanhearne entered the room as she spoke, and he sat down and answered her: "To die before one's time, before one has seen and heard, and enjoyed and suffered the full measure of life, may seem hard, Mrs. Tresham, but there is something in this respect much harder. I have just been with a man who has lived after his time. The grave has swallowed up all his loves and all his joys, and he alone is left of his family and friends. Over such lingering lives thick, dark shadows fall, I can assure you. They have the loneliness of the grave without its quiet sleep and its freedom from unkindness and suffering. Let me advise you, as soon as you can bear the journey, to go to your own people. It was your husband's desire."

"I know it was, sir. I have fought hunger and sorrow and death like a cat. But there is no need to continue the fight. I will go to the good father and mother that God gave me. I will weep no more rebellious tears. I will surrender myself and wait for His comfort. I am but a poor, suffering woman, but I know the hand that has smitten me."

And Ada bowed her head and repeated softly:

"They are most high who humblest at God's
knees
Lie loving God, and trusting though He
smite."

Then they spoke of the sea-journey, and Denas wished to go away as soon as possible. "I shall get some money as soon as I arrive in London," she said. "Lend me sufficient to pay my passage there."

"You have no occasion to borrow money, Mrs. Tresham," said Mr. Lanhearne. "There is a sum due your husband which will be quite sufficient to meet all your expenses home. I will send a man to secure you a good berth. Shall it be for Saturday next?"

"I can go to-morrow very well."

"No, you cannot go to-morrow, Mrs. Tresham," answered Ada. "You must have proper clothing to travel in. If you will permit me, I will attend to this matter for you at once."

And though the proper clothing was a very prosaic comfort, it was a tangible one to Denas. She was grateful to find herself clothed in that modest, sombre decency which her condition claimed; to have all the small proprieties of the season and the circumstances, all the toilet necessities which are part of the expression of a refined nature. For the poor lady who pitifully lamented the calamity which had "reduced her to elegance" indicated no slight deprivation; proper clothing for the occasions of life being both to men and women one of those great decencies demanded by an austere and suitable self-respect.

Faithfully did this good father and daughter fulfil to the last tittle the demands of their almost super-sensitive hearts and consciences, and if they sighed with relief when the duty was over, the sigh only proved the duty to have been beyond the line of self-satisfaction and a real sacrifice to the claims of a common humanity. Mr. Lanhearne then turned his thoughts gladly toward Florida. He felt that the invasion of so much strange sorrow into his home had altered its atmosphere, and that he was human enough to be a little weary in well-doing. Ada was also glad to escape the precincts haunted by the form and the voice which it pained her conscience to remember and pained her heart to forget. So in a few more days the large brown house was closed and dark, and "the tender grace of a day that was dead" was gone for evermore. The land of sunshine was before them, and many of their friends were already there to give them welcome; yet Ada's soul kept repeating, with a ceaseless, uncontrollable monotony, one sad lament––

"Ah, but alas! for the smile that never but one face wore!
Ah, for the voice that has flown away like a bird to an unknown
shore!
Ah, for the face––the flower of flowers––that blossoms on earth no
more!"

She tried to hush this inner voice, to reason it into silence, to dull its aching echo with song or speech or notes of loftier tones; but it would not be quieted. And when she was left alone, when there was no one near to comfort or strengthen, a great silence fell upon her. For she indulged no stormy sorrow; her grief was a still rain that fertilised and made fragrant her higher self. In her maiden heart she had had a dream of being crowned with bride-flowers, and lo! it was rue, and thyme gone to seed, and dead primroses that garlanded her sad, unspoken love. But she wore them with a sweet, brave submission, not affecting to disbelieve that time would surely heal love's aching pain. For she knew that goodness was omnipotent to save and to comfort.

In the mean time, as the Lanhearnes sailed southward Denas sailed eastward, and in less than a couple of weeks half the circumference of the world was between the lives so strangely and sorrowfully brought together. Denas landed in Liverpool early in the morning, and without delay went to London. She had business with Elizabeth, and she felt constrained and restless until it should be accomplished. She hesitated about going to the house in which she had spent with Roland so many happy and sorrowful days, but when she entered the cab the direction to it sprang naturally from her lips.

And there was already in her heart that tender fear that she might forget, the fear that all who have loved and lost have trembled to recognise, the fact that her sorrow might have an end, that she might learn to dispense with what was once her life, that a little vulgar existence with its stated meals and regular duties and petty pleasures would ever fill the void in her love and life made by Roland's death.

So she tried, in the very place of her sweet bride memories, to bring back the first passion of her widowed grief. She tried to fill the empty chair with Roland's familiar form and the silent space with his happy voice. Alas! other thoughts would intrude; considerations about Elizabeth's attitude, about her home, about her future. For she knew that this part of her life was finished; that nothing could ever bring back its conditions. They had been absolutely barren conditions. Her duties as a wife and a mother were over. Her career as a singer was over. No single claim of friendship or interest from its past bound her. When she had seen Elizabeth these last years of her being and doing would be a shut book. Nothing but her change of name and, perhaps, a little money would remain to testify that Denas Penelles had ever been Denasia Tresham.

Do as she would, she could not keep these thoughts apart from her memories of her lover and her husband. She arrested her mind continually and bade herself remember the days of her gay bridal, or else those two lonely graves far beyond the western sea; and then, ere she was aware, her memories of the past had become speculations about the future. And she was abashed by this arid, incurable egotism in the most secret place of her soul. She felt it making itself known continually in her hard determination to make the best of things; she knew that it was this feeling which was determined to close the death chamber, to deny all torturing memories; which said, in effect, “what is finished is finished, and the dead are dead.”

But the conflict wearied her almost to insensibility. She was also physically exhausted by travel, and the next day she slept profoundly until nearly the noon hour. It had been her intention to see Elizabeth in the morning, and she was provoked at her own remissness, for what she feared in reality happened––Elizabeth was out driving when she reached her residence. The porter thought it would be six o’clock ere she could receive any visitor, “business or no business.”

Denas said she would call at six o’clock, and charged the man to tell his mistress so.

But the visit and the engagement passed from the servant’s mind. In fact, he had, as he claimed, a very genteel mind. Callers who came in a common cab did not find an entry into it. Elizabeth returned in due season from her drive, drank a cup of tea, and then made her evening toilet. For Lord Sudleigh was to dine with her, and Lord Sudleigh was the most important person in Elizabeth’s life. It was her intention, as soon as she had paid the last tittle of mint, anise, and cummin to Mr. Burrell’s memory, to become Lady Sudleigh. Everyone said it was a most proper alliance, the proposed bride having money and beauty and the bridegroom-elect birth, political influence, and quite as much love as was necessary to such a matrimonial contract.

Elizabeth, however, in spite of her pleasant prospect for the evening, was in a bad temper. The bishop’s wife had snubbed her in the drive, and her dressmaker had disappointed her in a new costume. The March wind also had reddened her face, and perhaps she had a premonition of trouble, which she did not care to investigate. When informed that there was a lady waiting to see her on important business, she simply elected to let her wait until her toilet was finished. She had a conviction that it was some officious patroness on a charity mission––someone who wanted money for the good of other people. And as there are times when we all feel the claims of charity to be an unwarrantable imposition, so Elizabeth, blown-about, sun-browned, snubbed, disappointed, and anxious about her lover, was not, on this particular occasion, more to blame for want of courtesy than many others have been.

Finally she descended to the drawing-room and was ready to receive her visitor. There was a very large mirror in the room, and pending her entrance Elizabeth stood before it noticing the set and flow of her black lace dress, its heliotrope ribbons, and the sparkle of the hidden jets upon the bodice. Some heliotrope blossoms were in her breast, and her hands were covered with gloves of the same delicate colour. Denas saw her thus; saw her reflection in the glass before she turned to confront her.

For a moment Elizabeth was puzzled. The white face amid its sombre, heavy draperies had a familiarity she strove to name, but could not. But as Denasia came forward, some trick of head-carriage or of walking revealed her personality, and Elizabeth cried out in a kind of angry amazement:

“Denas! You here?”

“I am no more Denas to you than you are Elizabeth to me.”

“Well, then, Mrs. Tresham! And pray where is my brother?”

“Dead.”

“Dead? dead? Impossible! And if so, it is your fault, I know it is! I had a letter from him––the last letter––he said he was coming to me.”

She was frightfully pale; she staggered to a sofa, sat down, and covered her face with her gloved hands. Denasia stood by a table watching her emotion and half-doubting its genuineness. A silence followed, so deep and long that Elizabeth could not endure it. She stood up and looked at Denasia, reproach and accusation in every tone and attitude. “Where did he die?” she asked.

“In New York.”

“Of what did he die?”

“Of pneumonia.”

“It was your fault, I am sure of it. Your fault in some way. My poor Roland! He had left you, I know that; and I hoped everything for his future.”

“He had come back to me. He loved me better than ever. He died in my arms––died adoring me. His last work on earth was to give me this list of property, which I shall require you either to render back or to buy from me.”

Elizabeth knew well what was wanted, and her whole soul was in arms at the demand. Yet it was a perfectly just one. By his father’s will Roland had been left certain pieces of valuable personal property: family portraits and plate, two splendid cabinets, old china, Chinese and Japanese carvings, many fine paintings, antique chairs, etc., etc., the whole being property which had either been long in the Tresham family or endeared to it by special causes, and therefore left personally to Roland as the representative of the Treshams. At the break up of the Tresham home after his father’s death, Roland had been glad to leave these treasures in

Elizabeth's care, nor in his wandering life had the idea of claiming them ever come to him. As for their sale, that would have been an indignity to his ancestors below the contemplation of Roland.

Fortunately Mr. Tresham's lawyer had insisted upon Mrs. Burrell giving Roland a list of the articles left in her charge and an acknowledgment of Roland's right to them. "Life is so queer and has so many queer turns," he said, "that nothing can be left to likelihoods. Mrs. Burrell is not likely to die, but she may do so; and then there may be a new Mrs. Burrell who may make trouble, and I can conceive of many other complications which would render nugatory the intentions of the late Mr. Tresham. The property must, therefore, be set behind the bulwark of the law." Elizabeth herself had acknowledged this danger, and she had done all that was required of her in order to keep the Tresham family treasures within the keeping of the Treshams.

She was now confronted with her own acknowledgment and agreement, or at least with a copy of it, and she was well aware that it would be the greatest folly to deny the claim of Roland's wife. But the idea of robbing her beautiful home for Denasia was very bitter to her. She glanced around the room and imagined the precious cabinets and china, the curious carvings and fine paintings taken away, and then the alternative, the money she would have to pay to Denasia if she retained them, came with equal force and clearness to her intelligence.

"Mrs. Tresham," she said in a conciliating voice, "these objects can be of no value to you."

"Roland told me they were worth at least two thousand pounds, perhaps more. There is a picture of Turner's, which of–––"

"What do you know about Turner? And can you really entertain the thought of selling things so precious to our family?"

"Roland wished you to buy them. If you do not value them sufficiently to do so, why should I keep them? In my father's cottage they would be absurd."

"Your father's cottage? You are laughing at me!"

"I am too sorrowful a woman to laugh. A few weeks ago, if I had had only one of these pictures I would have sold it for a mouthful of bread––for a little coal to warm myself; oh, my God! for medicine to save my child's life or to ease his passage to the grave."

"I had forgotten the child. Where is he?"

"By his father's side."

"That is well and best, doubtless."

"It is not well and best. What do you know? You have never been a mother. God never gave you such sorrowful grace."

"We will return to the list, if you please. What do you propose to do?"

"I have spoken to a man in Baker Street who deals in such things. If you wish to buy them and will pay their fair value I will sell them to you, because Roland desired you to have them. If you do not wish to buy them or will not pay a fair price I will remove them to Baker Street. There are others who will know their value."

"I advanced Roland a great deal of money."

"You gave him it. You demanded and accepted his thanks. The sums all told would not pay for the use of the property."

"I shall do right, of course. Bring the man you have spoken of to-morrow afternoon, and I also will have here an expert of the same kind. I will pay you whatever they decide is a proper sum."

"That will satisfy me."

"I am sorry affairs have come to this point between us. I tried to be kind to you. I think you have been very ungrateful."

"You were kind only to yourself. You never were a favourite in St. Penfer. Other ladies did not often call upon you. In me you had a companionship which you could control, you had your sewing done for next to nothing, you had the news of the town brought to you. You played upon my restless disposition, my love of fine clothing, my ambition to be some one greater than Denas Penelles, and as soon as good fortune came to you and you had everything you desired, you found me a bore, a claimant on your sense of justice which you did not like to meet. Understand that the fact of wearing silk and jewelry does not give you the right to take up an immortal soul and play with it or cast it aside as you find it convenient. I owe you the deepest grudge. You made me dissatisfied with my own life, you showed me the pleasant vistas of a different life, and when I hoped to enter with you, I found myself outside and the door shut in my face. You have always tried to make Roland dissatisfied with me. You insinuated, you deplored, in every letter to him. You stabbed while you pretended to kiss me. I found you out long ago. Everyone finds you out. You never had a friend. You never will have one."

She spoke with that pitiless scorn which is the language of suppressed passion. Elizabeth only lifted her eyebrows and turned away from her. And Denasia knew that she had made a mistake, and yet she did not regret it. There are times when it is a relief to be angry, whether we do well to be so or not; when to lose the temper is better than to keep it. Of course there are great and beautiful souls with whom nothing turns to bitterness, but the soul of Denasia was not one of these. It had been born ready to feel and ready to speak, and regarded it as something of a

virtue to do so.

She left Elizabeth's house in a very unhappy mood, and at a rapid walk proceeded to her lodging in Bloomsbury. She would have felt the confinement of a cab to be intolerable, but it was a relief to set her personality against the friction of a million of encompassing wills. And in a short time she succumbed to that condition of electricity which they evolve, and permitted herself to be moved by it without considering her steps.

At length she was hungry, and she turned into a place of refreshment and ate with more healthy desire than she had felt for many months, and then the restless, fretting creature within was pacified, and she resolved to walk quietly to her room and sleep before she suffered herself to think any more. But as she was following out this plan she came to a famous theatre, and the name at the entrance attracted her. "I will be my own judge," she said. "I will see, and hear, and be more unmerciful to myself than any other could be."

So she entered the place and sat throughout three scenes. She did not wait for the final act. There was no necessity. She had arrived at her verdict. It was in her eyes and attitude when she left the building, but she gave it no voice until she sat weary and sad before the glimmering fire in her room.

"I could be Queen of England as easily as I could be a prima donna," she said mournfully. "There was perhaps a time––perhaps––perhaps, when youth and beauty and love could have helped me, but that time has gone for ever."

She said the words slowly, and the weight of despair was on each one. For she realised that in her case effort had brought forth no lasting fruit and that endurance had been without avail, and she was exceedingly sorrowful. For there is a singular vitality in the idea of public singing or acting when once it has taken root in any nature, and Denasia had been subject that night to one of its periods of revival. She had told herself that "she would probably have a thousand pounds; that she could go to Italy and pay for the best teachers; that it would please Roland if he knew, if he remembered, for her to do so; that it would annoy Elizabeth in many ways if she became a singer; that she would show the world it was possible to sing and act and yet be in every respect womanly, pure-hearted, and blameless before God and man."

These and many such ideas had filled her mind at intervals all the way across the Atlantic, and her passionate renunciation of the stage, made that miserable day when Roland deserted her, began to lose its reasonableness and therefore its sense of obligation. After her interview with Elizabeth, the question of money to carry out such intentions was practically settled, and she had, therefore, only to arrive at a positive personal conclusion. Once or twice in her public career she had received what her heart told her was a just criticism. It had not been a very flattering one, and Roland had passionately denied its justice. But she felt that the hour had now come when she must have the truth and accept the truth.

So she had tested herself by the natural and acquired abilities of the greatest singer of the day. It was, perhaps, a pitiless standard, but she felt that her safety demanded its extremity. Her comparisons made her burn with shame at her own shortcomings. She wondered how Roland could have been so deceived, how he could have hoped or believed in her at all. She forgot that circumstances had quite altered Roland's first intentions, and that in following out his secondary ones less distinctive talent was sufficient. On their marriage if he had taken her, as he proposed, to Italy; if the three last restless, miserable years had been spent in repose, in a favourable climate under fine instructors, with a happy, satisfied, hopeful affection to stimulate and support her ambition––ah, then all of Roland's hopes might have been fulfilled. But lack of patience as much as lack of money had brought final failure. The blossom had been gathered and worn with but small *éclat*, and there was now no hope of fruit.

Full of such sombre thoughts, she turned up the lights and looked at herself. Gone was her radiant beauty, her splendid youth; gone also her buoyant spirit and invincible courage. That night as she sat there alone she buried for ever this hope of a life for which she was not destined. Yet it was while sitting on that very hearth together Roland and she had felt the joy of her first triumph at Willis Hall. She could remember every incident of her return home the night of her brilliant *début*. How Roland had praised her and loved her. Neither of them then thought the temporary success to be the first downward step from their original grander ideal; the first step toward a miserable failure. Now it was clear enough. Alas! alas! Why cannot joy, as well as sorrow, open the eyes? Why are they only washed clear-seeing with tears?

When the hopeless ceremony was over and she had fully accepted the lot before her, she rose and with tear-filled eyes looked around the place of her renunciation. She felt as if her husband ought to have some consciousness of her disappointment; as if the longing in her heart should bring him to her side. Where was he? Where had he gone to? "Roland! Roland!" she whispered, and the silence beat upon her heart like the blows of a hammer. Was he present? Did he hear her? She felt until she reached the very rim of conscious feeling, and then? Alas! nothing but a mighty mystery looming beyond.

Weary and exhausted with emotion, she lay down and slept, and in the morning the courage born of a resolved mind was with her. When she had finished her business with Elizabeth, then there was her father and her mother and her real life again. She must go back and take it up just where she had thrown it down. And this humiliating duty was all that her own way had brought her. Never again would she take her destiny out of the keeping of the good God who orders all things well. On this resolution she stayed her heart, and somehow in her sleep there had come to her a conviction that the time of smiles would surely come back to her once more.

For God giveth His children in their sleep, and the sorrowful wake up comforted, and the weak strong, because some angel has visited them and “they knew it not.”

Elizabeth was quite prepared for her visitor. She was, indeed, anxious to get the affair settled and to dismiss Denasia from her life for ever. Her lawyer and appraiser were busy when Denasia arrived, and without ceremony each article specified in Roland’s list was examined and valued. Elizabeth offered her sister-in-law no courtesy; she barely bowed in response to her greeting, and there was a final very severe struggle as to values. Mrs. Burrell had certainly hoped to satisfy Denasia with a thousand pounds, but the official adjustment was sixteen hundred pounds, and for this sum Roland’s widow, who was irritated by her sister-in-law’s evident scorn and dislike, stubbornly stood firm.

It is probable that Elizabeth would also have turned stubborn and have suffered the articles to go to the auction-room had not her personal pride and interests demanded the sacrifice. But she had already introduced Lord Sudleigh to these family treasures, and she could not endure to go to Sudleigh Castle and take with her no heirlooms to be surety for her respectability. So that, after all, Denasia won her rights easily, because a man whom she had never seen and never even heard of pleaded her case for her. But she had no exceptional favour. It is the people whom we do not know that are often our helpers. It is the people who seem to have no possible connection with us that are often the tools used by fate for our fortune.

When the transaction was fully over and Denasia had Elizabeth’s cheque in her pocket the day was nearly over. The business agents left hurriedly and Denasia was going with them, when Elizabeth said: “Return a moment, if you please, Mrs. Tresham. I have heard nothing from you about my brother. I think it is your duty to give me some information. I am very miserable,” and she sat down and covered her face. Her sobs, hardly restrained, touched Denasia. She was sorry for the weeping woman, for she knew that if Elizabeth had loved any human creature truly and unselfishly, it was her brother Roland.

“What can I tell you?” she asked.

“Something to comfort me, if you are not utterly heartless. Had he doctors? help? comforts of any kind?”

“He had everything that money and love could procure. He died in Mr. Lanhearne’s house. I was at his side. Whatever could be done by human skill to save his life was done.”

“Did he name me often?”

“Yes.”

“And you never said a word––never would have done––you were going away without telling me. How could you be so cruel?”

“It was wrong. I should have told you. He spoke often about you. In his delirium he believed himself with you. He called your name three times just before he died; it was only a whisper then, he was so weak.”

Elizabeth wept bitterly, and Denasia, moved by many memories, could not watch her unmoved. After a wretched pause she said:

“Good-bye! You are Roland’s sister and he loved you. So then I cannot really hate you. I forgive you all.”

But Elizabeth did not answer. The loss of her brother, the loss of her money––she was feeling that this woman had been the cause of all her sorrows. Grief and anger swelled within her heart; she felt it to be an intolerable wrong to be forgiven. She was silent until Denasia was closing the door, then she rose hastily and followed her.

“Go!” she cried, “and never cross my path again. You have brought me nothing but misery.”

“It is quite just that I should bring you misery. Remember, now, that if you do a wrong you will have to pay the price of it.”

Trembling with anger and emotion, she clasped her purse tightly and called a cab to take her to her lodging. The money was money, at any rate. A poor exchange for love, certainly, but still Roland’s last gift to her. It proved that in his dying hours he loved her best of all. He had put his family pride beneath her feet. He had put his sister’s interest second to her interest. She felt that every pound represented to her so much of Roland’s consideration and affection. It was, too, a large sum of money. It made her in her own station a very rich woman. If she put it in the St. Penfer bank it would insure her a great deal of respect. That was one side of the question. The other was less satisfactory. People would speculate as to how she had become possessed of such a sum. Many would not scruple to say, “It was sinful money, won in the devil’s service.” All who wished to be unkind to her could find in it an occasion for hard sayings. In small communities everything but prosperity is forgiven; that is never really forgiven to anyone; and though Denasia did not find words for this feeling, she was aware of it, because she was desirous to avoid unnecessary ill-will.

She sat with the cheque in her hand a long time, considering what to do with it. Her natural vanity and pride, her sense of superior intelligence, education, travel, and experience urged her to take whatever good it might bring her. And she went to sleep resolving to do so. But she awoke in the midnight with a strange sense of humiliation. In that time of questions she was troubled by soul-inquiries that came one upon another close as the blows of a lash. She was then shocked at the intentions with which she had fallen asleep. The little vanities, and

condescensions, and generosities which she had planned for her own glory––how contemptible they appeared! And in the darkness she could see their certain end––envy and hatred for herself and dissatisfaction and loss of friends for her father and mother. Had she not already given them sorrow enough?

Her right course was then clear as a band of light. She would deposit the money at interest in a London bank. She would say nothing at all about its possession. Before leaving for St. Penfer she would buy a couple of printed gowns, such as would not be incongruous with her surroundings. She would go back to her home and village as empty-handed as she left them––a beggar, even, for a little love and sympathy, for toleration for her wanderings, for forgiveness for those deeds by which she had wounded the consciences and self-respect of her own people and her own caste.

This determination awoke with her in the morning, and she followed it out literally. The presents she had resolved to buy in order to get herself a little favour were put out of consideration. She purchased only a few plain garments for her own every-day wearing. She left her money with strangers who attached no importance to it; and, with one small American trunk holding easily all her possessions, she turned her face once more to the little fishing village of St. Penfer by the Sea.

CHAPTER XV.

ONLY FRIENDS.

"Stay at home, my heart, and rest,
Home-keeping hearts are happiest;
For those that wander they know not
where
Are full of trouble and full of care––
To stay at home is best."

––SONG.

"... Those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our
day;
Are yet a master-sight of all our
seeing."

––WORDSWORTH.

ONLY those who have experienced the sensation can tell how strange and sad is the feeling with which the soul turns away from a destiny accomplished. When Denas had deposited her money in the Clydesdale Bank and made the few purchases she thought proper and prudent, she felt that one room of the house of life was barred for ever against her return to it.

For a few years her experiences had been strangely interwoven with those of the Treshams. To what purpose? Why had they been so? As far as this existence was concerned, it seemed a relationship that might well have been omitted. But who can tell what circumstances went before it or what were to follow? For all human beings leave behind them as they go through life a train of events which are due either to impulses originating in a previous existence or are the seeds of events which are to be perfected in a future one; what we sow, that we shall surely reap.

Leaving London, such thoughts of something final, at least as far as this probation was concerned, greatly depressed Denas. "Never more, never more," was the monotonous refrain that sprang from her soul to her lips. But it is a wise provision of the Merciful One that the past, in a healthy mind, very soon loses its charm, and the things that are present take the first place.

"I cannot bring anything back. I do not think I would bring anything back if I could. I have been very unhappy and restless in the past. Every pleasure I had was tithed by sorrow. Roland loved me, but I brought him only disappointment. I loved Roland, and yet all my efforts to make him happy were failures. Roland has been taken from me. Our child has been taken away from me. Elizabeth I have put away––death could not sever us more effectually. I am going back to my own people and my own life, and I pray God to give me a contented heart in it."

These were the colour of her reflections as the train bore her swiftly to the fortune of her future years. She had no enthusiasm about them. She thought she knew all the possibilities they kept. She looked for no extraordinary thing, for no special favour to brighten their uniform

occupations and simple pleasures. She had taken the first train she could, without considering the time of its arrival in St. Penfer. She told herself that there would be a certain amount of gossip about her return, and that it could not be avoided by either a public or private arrival. Still, she was glad when the sun set and the shadows of the night were stretched out––glad that the moon was too young to give much light, and that it was quite nine o'clock when the St. Penfer station was reached.

A few people were on the platform, but none of them were thinking of Mrs. Tresham, and the woman so simply dressed and veiled in black made no impression on anyone. She left her trunk in the baggage-room and went by the familiar road down the cliff-breast. It had been raining, of course, and the ground was heavy and wet; but the sky was clear, and the half-moon made a half-twilight among the bare branches and shed a faint bar of light across the ocean.

At the last reach she stood still a moment and looked at the clustered cottages and the boats swaying softly on the incoming tide. A great peace was over the place. The very houses seemed to be resting. There was fire or candle light in every glimmering square of their windows; but not a man, or a woman, or a child in sight. As she drew near to her father's cottage, she saw that it was very brightly lighted; and then she remembered that it was Friday night, and that very likely the weekly religious meeting was being held there. That would account for the diffused quiet of the whole village.

The thought made her pause. She had no desire to turn her home-coming into a scene. So she walked softly to the back of the little house and entered the curing shed. There was only a slight door––a door very seldom tightly closed––between this shed and the cottage room. She knew all its arrangements. It was called a curing shed, but in reality it had long been appropriated to domestic purposes. Joan kept her milk and provisions in it, and used it as a kind of kitchen. Every shelf and stool, almost every plate and basin, had its place there, and Denas knew them. She went to the milk pitcher and drank a deep draught; and then she took a little three-legged stool, and placing it gently by the door, sat down to listen and to wait.

Her father was talking in that soft, chanting tone used by the fishers of St. Penfer, and the drawling intonations, with the occasional rise of the voice at the end of a sentence, came to the ears of Denas with the pleasant familiarity of an old song.

As he ceased speaking some woman began to sing "The Ninety-and-Nine," and so singing they rose and passed out of the cottage and to their own homes. One by one the echoes of their voices ceased, until, at the last verse, only John and Joan were singing. As they finished, Denas looked into the room. Joan was lifting the big Bible covered with green baize. Between this cover and the binding all the letters Denas had sent them were kept, and the fond mother was touching and straightening them. John, with his pipe in one hand, was lifting the other to the shelf above his head for his tobacco-jar. The last words of the hymn were still on their lips.

Denas opened the door and stood just within the room, looking at them. Both fixed their eyes upon her. They thought they saw a spirit. They were speechless.

"Father! Mother! It is Denas!"

She came forward quickly as she spoke. Joan uttered one piercing cry. John let his pipe fall to pieces on the hearthstone and drew his child within his arms. "It be Denas! It be Denas! her own dear self," he said, and he sat down and took her to his breast, and the poor girl snuggled her head into his big beard, and he kissed away her tears and soothed her as he had done when she was only a baby.

And then poor Joan was on the rug at their feet. She was taking the wet stockings and shoes off of her daughter's feet; she was drying them gently with her apron, fondling and kissing them as she had been used to do when her little Denas came in from the boats or the school wet-footed. And Denas was stooping to her mother and kissing the happy tears off her face, and the conversation was only in those single words that are too sweet to mix with other words; until Joan, with that womanly instinct that never fails in such extremities, began to bring into the excited tone those tender material cares that make love possible and life-like.

"Oh, my darling," she cried, "your little feet be dripping wet, and you be hungry, I know, and we will have a cup of tea. And, Denas, there be such a pie in the cupboard. And a bowl of clotted cream, too. It is just like the good God knew my girl was coming home. And I wonder who put it into my heart to have a mother's welcome for her? And how be your husband, my dear?"

"He is dead, mother."

"God's peace on him!"

"And the little lad, Denas––my little grandson that be called John after me."

"He is dead, too, father."

Then they were speechless, and they kissed her again and mingled their tears with her tears, and John felt a sudden lonely place where he had put this poor little grandson whom he was never to see.

Then Denas began to drink her warm tea and to talk to her parents; but they said no words but kind words of the dead. They listened to the pitiful taking-away of the young man, and before the majesty of death they forgot their anger and their dislike, and left him hopefully to the mercy of the Merciful. For if John and Joan knew anything, they knew that none of us shall enter paradise except God cover us with His mercy.

And not one word of all her trouble did Denas titter. She spoke only of Roland's great love for her; of their trials endured together; of his resignation to death; of her own loneliness and suffering since his burial; and then, clasping her father's and mother's hands, she said:

"So I have come back to you. I have come back to my old life. I shall never act again. I shall sing no more in this world. That life is over. It was not a happy life. Without Roland it would be beyond my power to endure it."

"You be welcome here as the sunshine. Oh, my dear girl, you be light to my eyes and joy to my heart, and there is no trouble can hurt me much now."

Then Joan said: "'Twas this very morning I put clean linen on your bed, Denas. I swept the room, and then made the pie, and clotted the cream, and I never knew who I did it for. Oh, Denas, what a godsend you do be! John, my old dear, our life be turned to sunshine now."

And long after Denas had fallen asleep they sat by their fire and talked of their child's sorrow, and Joan got up frequently and took a candle and, shading it with her hand, went and looked to see if the girl was all right. When Denas was a babe in the cradle, Joan had been used to satisfy her motherly longing in the same way. Her widowed child was still her baby.

In the morning John went from cottage to cottage and told his friends to come and rejoice with him. For really to John "the dead was alive and the lost was found." And it was a great wonderment in the village; men nor women could talk of anything else but the return of Denas Tresham. Many were really glad to see her; and if some visited the poor, stricken woman thinking to add a homily to God's smiting, they were abashed by her evident suffering, by her pallor and her wasted form, and the sombre plainness of her black garments. For some days life was thus kept at a tension beyond its natural strain, and Joan and her daughter had no time to recover the every-day atmosphere. But no excitement outlasts the week's perchances and changes, and after the second Sunday all her acquaintances had seen Denas, and curiosity and interest were at their normal standard.

All her acquaintances but Tris Penrose. Denas wondered that he did not come to see her, and yet she had a shy dislike to make inquiries about him. For the love of Tris Penrose for Denas Penelles had been the village romance ever since they were children together, and she feared that a word from her about him might set the women to smiling and sympathising and to taking her affairs out of her own hands.

As the home-life settled to its usual colour and cares, Denas became conscious of a change in it. She saw that her father went very seldom to sea, that he was depressed and restless, and that her mother, in a great measure, echoed his moods. And she was obliged to confess that she was terribly weary. There was little housework to do, except what fell naturally to Joan's care, and interference with these duties appeared to annoy the methodical old woman. The knitting was far ahead, there were no nets to mend; and when Denas had made herself a couple of dresses, there seemed to be no work for her to do. And she was not specially fond of reading. Culture and study she could understand if their definite end was money; but for the simple love of information or pleasure books were not attractive to her.

So in a month she had come to a place in her experience when it was a consolation to think of that sixteen hundred pounds in London. She might yet find it necessary to her happiness; for without some change she could not much longer endure the idleness and monotony of her life. Fortunately the change came. One morning a woman visited the cottage, and the sole burden of her conversation was the lack of a school in St. Penfer by the Sea to which the fisher-children might go in the morning.

"Here be my six little uns," she cried, "and up the cliff they must hurry all, through any wind or weather, or learn nothing. And then they be that tired when they do get home again, they be no use at all about the bait-boxes or the boats. There be sixty school-going children in the village, and I do say there ought to be a school here for them."

And suddenly it came into the heart of Denas to open a school. Pay or no pay, she was sure she would enjoy the work, and that afternoon she went about it. An empty cottage was secured, a fisher-carpenter agreed to make the benches, and at an outlay of two or three pounds she provided all that was necessary. The affair made a great stir in the hamlet. She had more applications for admission than the cottage would hold, and she selected from these thirty of the youngest of the children.

For the first time in many months Denas was sensible of enthusiasm in her employment. But Joan did not apparently share her hopes or her pleasure. She was silent and depressed and answered Denas with a slight air of injury.

"They have agreed to pay a penny a week for each child," Denas said to her mother.

"Well, Denas, some will pay and some will never pay."

"To be sure. I know that, mother. But it does not much matter."

"Aw, then, it do matter, my girl––it do matter, a great deal." And Joan began to cry a little and to arrange her crockery with far more noise than was necessary.

"Dear mother, what is it? Are you in trouble of any kind?"

"Aw, then, Denas, I be troubled to think you never saw your father's trouble. He be sad and anxious enough, God knows. And no one to say 'here, John,' or 'there, John,' or give him a helping hand in any way."

“Sit down, mother, and tell me all. I have seen that father’s ways are changed and that he seldom goes to the fishing. I hoped the reason was that he had no longer any need to go regularly.”

“No need? Aw, my dear, he has no boat!”

“No boat! Mother, what do you mean to tell me?”

“I mean, child, that on the same night the steamer *Lorne* was wrecked your father lost his boat and his nets, and barely got to land with his life––never would have done that but for Tris Penrose, who lost all, too––and both of them at the mercy of the waves when the life-boat reached them. Aw, my dear, a bad night. And bad times ever since for your father. Now and then he do get a night with Trenager, or Penlow, or Adam Oliver; but they be only making a job for him. And when pilchard time comes, ’tis to St. Ives he must go and hire himself out––at his age, too. It makes me ugly, Denas. My old dear hiring himself out after he have sailed his own boat ever since man he was. And then to see you spending pounds and pounds on school-benches and books, and talking of it not mattering if you was paid or not paid; and me weighing every penny-piece, and your father counting the pipefuls in his tobacco-jar. Aw, ’tis cruel hard! Cruel! cruel!”

“Now, then, mother, dry your eyes––and there––let me kiss them dry. Listen: Father shall have the finest fishing-boat that sails out of any Cornish port. Oh, mother, dear! Spend every penny you want to spend, and I will go to the church town this afternoon to buy father tobacco for a whole year.”

“Let me cry! Let me cry for joy, Denas! Let me cry for joy! You have rolled a stone off my heart. Be you rich, dear?”

“Not rich, mother, but I have sixteen hundred pounds at interest.”

“Sixteen hundred silent pounds, and they might have been busy, happy, working pounds! Aw, Denas, what hours of black care the knowing of them might have saved us. But there, then––I had forgotten. The money be dance money and theatre money, and your father will not touch a penny of it. I do know he will not.”

“Mother, when I stopped singing––when I left the theatre for ever I had not in my purse one half-penny. Roland gave me fifty dollars; that came from Elizabeth––that was all I had. When it was gone, Roland was employed by Mr. Lanhearne. I told you about him.”

“Yes, dear. How then?”

“Roland’s father left him pictures and silver plate and many valuable things belonging to the Treshams, and when Roland died they were mine. Elizabeth bought them from me. They were worth two thousand pounds; she gave me sixteen hundred pounds.”

“Why didn’t you tell father and me? ’Twas cruel thoughtless of you.”

“No, no! I wanted to come back to you as I left you––just Denas––without anything but your love to ask favour from. If I had come swelling myself like a great lady, worth sixteen hundred pounds, how all the people would have hated me! What dreadful things they would have said! Father would have had his hands full and his heart full to make this one and that one keep the insult behind their lips. Oh, ’twould have been a broad defiance to evil of every kind. I did think, too, that father had some money in St. Merryn’s Bank.”

“To be sure. And so he did. But there––your aunt Helen’s husband was drowned last winter, and nothing laid by to bury him, and father had it to do; and then there was a mortgage on the cottage, and that was to lift, or no roof to cover Helen and her children. So with this and that the one hundred pounds went away to forty pounds. That be for our own burying. There be twenty pounds of yours there.”

“Mine is yours!” Then rising quickly, she struck her hands sharply together and cried out: “One and All! One and All!”[4]

And Joan answered her promptly, letting the towel fall from her grasp to imitate the sharp smiting of the hands as with beaming face she repeated the heart-stirring cry.

“One and All! One and All! Denas. Aw, my girl, there was a time when I said in my anger I was sorry I gave you suck. This day I be right glad of it! You be true blood! Cornish clean through, Denas!”

“Yes, I be true Cornish, mother, and the money I have is honest money. Father can take it without a doubt. But I will see Lawyer Tremaine, and he shall put the sum I got in the St. Penfer *News*, and tell what I got it for, and none can say I did wrong to take my widow right.”

“I be so happy, Denas! I be so happy! My old dear will have his own boat! My old dear will have his own boat!”

“Now, mother, neither you nor I can buy a boat. Shall we tell father and let him choose for himself?”

Joan knew this was the most prudent plan, but that love of “surprise pleasures” which is a dominant passion in children and uneducated natures would not let Joan admit at once this solution of the difficulty. How could she forego the delight of all the private consultations; of the bringing home of the boat; of the wonder of the villagers; of John’s happy amazement? She could not bear to contemplate the prosaic, commonplace method of sending John to buy his own boat when it was within the power of Denas and herself to be an unseen gracious providence to

him. So after a moment's thought she said: "There be Tris Penrose. It will be busy all and happy all for him to be about such a job."

"I have not seen Tris since I came home. He is the only one who has not come to say welcome to me."

"Aw, then, 'twas only yesterday he got home himself. He has been away with Mr. Arundel on his yacht."

"You never told me."

"You never asked. I thought, then, you didn't want Tris to be named."

"But what for shouldn't I name Tris?"

"La! my dear, the love in Tris' heart was a trouble to you. You were saying that often."

"But Tris knows about fishing-boats?"

"Who knows more?"

"And what kind of a boat father would like best?"

"None can tell that as well."

"And Tris is home again?"

"That be true. Ann Trewillow told me, and she be working at the Abbey two days in the week."

"Has Mr. Arundel bought the Abbey?"

"He has done that, and it be made a grand place now. And when Tris lost his boat trying to save your father's life and boat, Mr. Arundel was with the coast-guard and saw him. And he said: 'A fine young man! A fine young man!' So the next thing was, he spoke to Tris and hired him to sail his yacht. And 'tis far off, by the way of Giberaltar, they have been––yet home at last, thank God!"

"Tris will be sure to come here, I suppose?"

"Ann Trewillow told him you were home––a widow, and all; he will be here as soon as he can leave the yacht. It is here he comes first of all as soon as he touches land again."

"Then we will speak to him about the boat."

"To be sure. And I do wish he would hurry all and show himself. New boats be building, but the best may get sold––a day might make a difference."

"And now, mother, you must try and lift the care from father's heart. Let him know, some way, that money troubles are over and that he may carry his head up. You can do it––a little word––a little look from you––he will understand."

"Aw, then, Denas, a smile is enough. I can lift my eyelids, and he'll see the light under them and catch it in his heart. John isn't a woman. Thank God, he can be happy and ask no questions––trusting all. Your father be a good man to trust and hope."

Then the day, that had seemed to stretch itself out so long and wearily, was all too short for Joan and Denas. They talked about the money freely and happily, and Denas could now tell her mother all the circumstances of her visit to Elizabeth. They were full of interest to the simple woman. She enjoyed hearing about the dress Elizabeth wore; about her house, her anger, her disappointment, and hard reluctance to pay money for the treasures she had begun to regard as her own.

So the morning passed quickly away, and in the afternoon Denas went into the village to look after her school-room. It was such a lovely spring day. The sky was so blue, the sea was so blue, the earth was so green and sweet, and the air so fresh and clear that Denas could not but be glad that she was alive to be cheered by them. Not for a very long time had she felt so calmly happy, so hopeful of the future, so resigned to the past.

After her business in the village was over she walked toward the cliff. She had some idea that it would be pleasant to go up to the church town, but just where the trees and underwood came near to the shingle a little bird singing on a May-thorn beguiled her to listen. Then the songster went on and on, as if it called her, and Denas followed its music; until, by and by, she came to where the shingle was but a narrow strip, and the verdure retreated, and the rocks grew larger and higher; and, anon, she was at the promontory between St. Penfer and St. Clair.

It would now be impossible to go up the cliff and back again before tea-time, and she sat down to rest a little before returning home. She sat longer than she intended, for the dreamy, monotonous murmur of the waves and the stillness and solitude predisposed her to that kind of drifting thought which keeps assuring time: "I am going directly."

She was effectually roused at last by the sound of a clear, strong voice whistling a charming melody. She sat quite still. A conviction that it was Tris Penrose came into her heart. She wondered if he would notice––know––speak to her. Tris saw her figure as quickly as it came within his vision, and as quickly as he saw it he knew who was present. He ceased whistling and cried out cheerily:

"Denas? What, Denas?"

She stood up then and held out her hands to him. And she was startled beyond measure by the Tris that met her gaze. Naturally a very handsome man, his beauty was made most attractive by

a sailor suit of blue broadcloth. His throat was open to the sea breeze, a blue kerchief tied around it in a sailor's knot. And then her eyes wandered to his sun-browned face, close-curling black hair, and the little blue, gold-trimmed cap set upon the curls. The whole filled her with a pleasant wonder. She made a little time over his splendour, and asked if he was going to the pilchard fishing in such finery. And he took all her hurried, laughing, fluttering remarks with the greatest good-humour. He said, indeed, that he had been told she was home again, and that he wore the dress because he was coming to see her.

Then they sat down, and she told Tris what she desired to do for her father, and Tris entered into the project as enthusiastically as if he was a child. Never before had Tris felt so heart-satisfied. It was such a joy to have Denas beside him; such a joy to know that she was free again; such a joy to share a secret with her. And gradually the effusiveness of their first meeting toned itself down to quiet, restful confidence, and then they rose together and began to walk slowly toward the cottage. For of course Joan was to be consulted, and besides, Tris had a present for her in his pocket.

The westering sun sent level rays of sunshine before them, and they tried involuntarily to step in it as they used to do when they were children. Tris could not help a smile as they did so, and then one of those closely personal conversations began whose initial point is always: "And do you remember?" Tris remembered everything, and especially one Saturday when they ran away together to a little fairy cove and made boats all day long. Yes, every movement of that happy day was in Tris' heart, and he told Denas that the same pebbly shore was still there, and that often he fancied he heard on it the beat of their little pattering, naked feet, and wished that they could have been children upon the shore for ever, and ever, and evermore.

"I do not think that would have been nice at all, Tris," answered Denas. "It is better to be grown up. You were only good to play with then. I could not have asked you to go and buy a boat for father, could I?"

And Tris looked at her sweet, pale face, and noting how the pink colour rushed into her cheeks to answer his looks, thought how right she was, and that it was much better to have Denas a woman to be loved than a child to be played with.

And somehow, after this, they had no more words to say, and Tris walked at her side under his old embarrassment of silence. Nor could Denas talk. If she tried to do so, then she raised her eyes, and then Tris' eyes looking into hers seemed to reproach her for the words she did not say. And if she kept her eyes on the shingle, she still felt Tris to be looking at her, questioning her, loving her just as he used to do––and she could not bear it––never! never! At the first opportunity she must make Tris understand that they could only be friends––friends only––and nothing, positively nothing more.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "DARLING DENAS."

"... Good the more
Communicated, the more abundant grows."

––Milton.

"So the boat was built. Aw, they wouldn't be hoult;
And every trennel and every boult
The best of stuff. Aw, didn' considher
The 'spense nor nothin'––not a fig!
And three lugs at her––that was the rig––
And raked a bit, three reg'lar scutchers,
And carried her canvas like a ducherss.
Chut! the trim is in the boat.
Ballast away! but the trim's in the float––
In the very make of her! That's the trimming!"

––T. E. Brown.

MONEY in the bank is all the comfort to the material life that a good conscience is to the moral life. Joan was restored to her best self by the confidence her child had given her, and John entering his cottage in the midst of a happy discussion between Denas, Tris, and his wife, felt as if the weight of twenty years suddenly dropped away from him. He thought it

was Tris who brought the sunshine, and he rejoiced in it, and induced the young man to tell them about the yacht's trip and the old cities on the Mediterranean which he had visited.

Everyone sees strange places with their own mental and spiritual sight, and Tris had seen Genoa and Venice and Rome and Corinth from the standpoint of a Cornish Methodist fisherman. But apart from this partiality he had made sensible observations of the strange ways of building and living, and had come to the conviction that Cornish people held the great secret of a happy life. As for the Mediterranean itself, Tris considered it "a jade of a sea, nohow worth the praise it got."

"You may read the Cornish seas like a book, John," he said, "but this Mediterranean be this way––you have to watch it every minute. Turn your back on it for a bite or a sup, and it will get the better of you some way, and, most likely of all, with one of its dirty white squalls. Then I tell you, John, it is all hands to reef! Quick! and if a single breadth of canvas be showing, it is a rip and a roar and the death of the yacht and of every man in her."

"And what of the yacht herself, Tris? Be she good-tempered and good-mannered?"

"She do behave herself beautiful. The seas may fly over her cross-trees, but if you make her trig she comes to her bearings like a shot to its mark; shakes herself as if she was ready for a race, and then away she do go––just like a sea-gull for a fish."

So they talked the evening away, and Denas listened and watched the handsome yachtsman, kindling and laughing to the tales he told. And when he went away she felt, as others did, the sudden fall in the mental temperature and the chill and silence that follow any unnatural excitement. But Denas, as well as John and Joan, were too simple for such considerations. They only felt the change, and were sure that it was Tris who brought the sunshine, and so, when he went, took it away with him.

But after this night there was a different atmosphere in John Penelles' cottage. John's unhappiness had been mainly caused by the sight of his wife's anxiety and sorrow; and if Joan was her old self, John was not the man to let the loss of his boat and his position make him miserable. For in this little cottage the wife held the same mighty power that the wife holds in all finer homes––the power to either make her husband weak and sorrowful or to strengthen his heart for anything. When Joan smiled, then John could not only enjoy the present, but he could also bravely face the future. For when a man can trust in his wife, then he can hope in his God and all things are possible to him.

Denas also caught the trick of hoping and of being happy. She opened her school with thirty scholars and found out her vocation. No one could doubt the voice which had called her to this work; she went to it as naturally as a bird goes to build its nest. She loved the children and they loved her. At the end of the first week she found herself compelled to make her number forty. The sweet authority pleased her. The children's affection won her. Her natural power to impart what knowledge she had gave her the sense of a benefaction. Such loving allegiance! Such bigoted little adherents! Such blind disciples as Denas had! In a couple of weeks she was the idol of every child in St. Penfer by the Sea, and as mothers see through their children, she was equally popular with the children of larger growth.

One very singular incident of this popularity was the fact that every child, without special intent, without the slightest thought of offence, called their beloved teacher Denas Penelles. For a time she corrected the mistake, but the name Tresham was strange and unfamiliar. They looked at her with wide-open eyes and then went back to the old word. Denas perceived that they heard her called Penelles in their homes, and that it was useless to take offence where none was intended. Yet the inferred wrong to her dead husband wounded her and rekindled in her heart the fire of old affection.

"They want me to forget his very name," she thought angrily, and the natural result was a determination to nurse with greater fondness the memory which time and circumstances were daily doing their best to efface.

In the mean time all had been going on satisfactorily about the new fishing-smack. Tris had taken Mr. Arundel into his confidence. He wished to have his permission to make a careful selection and to attend to all matters connected with its proper transfer. And though that gentleman's own feelings did not lie upon the surface of his nature or explain themselves in childlike secrets and surprises, he could understand and almost envy the wealth of emotions and illusions that demanded such primitive expressions.

So he permitted Tris to absent himself frequently for such a laudable purpose. Indeed, Mr. Arundel had seen the death of John's boat, and this point of interest enabled him to feel something of the pleasure and importance which centred around the boat now building to take its place. For Tris had found in a yard ten miles north just the very kind of smack John had always longed for––a boat not built by mathematical measurements, but a wonderful, weatherly, flattish smack; that with a jump would burst through a sea any size you like, and keep right side up when the waves were fit to make a mouthful of her.

She was building for the pilchard season and was to be ready for the middle of June. And at length she was finished and waiting to be brought to her own harbour. If she had been a living, loving human creature, her advent could not have been more eagerly longed for. Yet there had been a short period of coolness between Tris and Denas, for Tris in some moment of enthusiasm had gone beyond the line Denas had marked out for him. And then she had been cold and silent and Tris had been miserable. Joan, also, had taken the young man rather scornfully to task.

“Tris,” she said, “you be as knowing about a woman as Peter Mullet was, and he was hanged for a fool. Be you looking to sow and reap in the same month?”

“Not as I know by, but––but–––”

“But you be so blind in love you could not see a hole in a ladder or tell the signs on a woman’s face. Denas be ’fraid of her own self. Let her be. Let her be. If you do say a word now about your love she will run back and hide herself in an old love––that be a woman’s way. See, now! As the old love quails the new love will fetch up––but time given for quailing, Tris, for all that. Denas had a sight of trouble, Tris; she may well be feared to try matrimony again.”

“I would try and make her happy. I would be a good husband.”

“Husbands! husbands! Tris, they be like pilchards––the bad ones are very bad and the best ones be but middling.”

Then the loving fellow said with a big sigh that he would wait––but tired of waiting and going away again, and back only when God and Mr. Arundel said so.

“Aw, then,” answered Joan, “a good thing. Women have to miss a man before they know they love him. Give Denas time to miss you, Tris, and when the boat is home be a bit careless like. If she do wonder and worry a little––a good thing for her. Women they be made up of contraries, but sweet as blossoms and as good as gold for all that, Tris.”

On the twenty-fourth all was ready to bring home the boat. The boat had been sold to Denas Tresham, the money paid, and the deed of transfer to John Penelles ready made out. There had also been prepared a paper for the St. Penfer *News*, which was to appear that day, and which Lawyer Tremaine said would supply a ten-days’ holiday gossip for the citizens. And no day specially made for so happy an event could have been lovelier. The sea was dimpling all over in the sunshine; there was just the right wind, and just enough of it, to let Tris reach harbour in the afternoon. John wondered at the air of excitement in his cottage. Joan was singing, Denas had her best dress on, and both had been busy making clotted cream, and junket, and pies of all kinds.

In fact, John was a little depressed by this extravagance of light hearts. He did not think the money Denas got from her school warranted it, and he was heart-sick with the terrible fear that the busy season was at hand and that he had found nothing to do. Adam Oliver’s two nephews from Cardiff had come to help him, and that shut one place; and neither Trenager nor Penlow had said a word to him, and his brave old soul sank within him.

“And what be in the wind with you women I know nothing of,” he said fretfully, “but you do have some unlikely old ways.”

“What way be the wind, John, dear?”

“A little nor’ard, what there be of it––only a capful, though.”

“Aw, then, John, look to the nor’ard, for good luck do come the way the wind blows.”

“Good luck do come the way God sends it, Joan.”

“And many a time and oft it do be coming and us not thinking of it.”

John nodded gravely. There was little hope in his heart, but he went as usual to the pier and stood there watching the boats. Most of them were now ready for the fishing. When the men on the lookout saw the shadow of a dark cloud coming on and on over the sea, when they waved the signal-bush right and left over their heads and sweeping their feet, then they would out of harbour and shoot the seine. John was very anxious. His lips were moving, though he was silent. His body was mindful of the situation, his soul was praying.

“That be a strange boat,” said Penlow after a long gossip; “well managed, though. The man at her wheel, whoever he be, knows the set of the tide round here as well as he knows his cabin. I wonder what boat that be?”

John had no heart to echo the wonder. Another strange boat, doubtless, bringing more fishers. He said it was getting tea-time, he would go along. He knew that if the fish were found and there was a seat in a boat it would be offered him. He would not give his mates the pain of refusing or of apologising. The next day he would go to St. Ives.

When he reached his cottage he saw Joan and Denas on the door-step watching the coming boat. Their smiles and interest hurt him. He walked to the hearth and began to fill his pipe. Then Denas, with a large paper in her hand, came to his side. She slipped on to his knee––she laid her cheek against his cheek––she said softly, and oh, so lovingly:

“Father! father! The boat coming––did you see her?”

“To be sure, Denas. I saw her, my dear.”

“She is your boat, father––yours from masthead to keel! All yours!”

He looked at her a moment and then said:

“Speak them words again, Denas.”

She spoke them again, smiling with frank delight and love into his face.

“Thank God! Now tell me about it! Joan, my old dear, come and tell me about it.”

Then they sat down together and told him all, and showed him the St. Penfer *News* containing Lawyer Tremaine’s statement regarding the property which had come of right to Denas. And

John listened until the burden he had been carrying rolled quite away from his heart, and with a great sigh he stood up and said loudly, over and over again, “Thank God! Thank God! Thank God!” Then, as if a sudden hurry pressed him, he cried––“Come, Joan! Come, Denas! Let us go to the pier and welcome her home.”

She was just tacking to reach harbour when they mingled with the crowd of men and women already there. And Ann Trewillow was calling out: “Why, it is Tris Penrose at her wheel!” Then as she came closer a man shouted: “It be the *Darling Denas*. It must be John Penelles’ boat. To be sure it be John’s boat!” This opinion was reached by an instant conviction, and every face was turned to John.

“It be my boat, mates. Thank God and my little girl. It be my boat, thank God!”

And then Tris was at the slip, and the anchor down and all the men were as eager about the new craft as a group of horsemen could possibly be about the points of some famous winner. Tris had to tell every particular about her builder and her building, and as the fishers were talking excitedly of these things, Joan gave a general invitation to her friends, and they followed her to the cottage, and heard the St. Penfer *News* read, and had a plate of junket[5] and of clotted cream.

And they were really proud and glad of what they heard. Denas had made herself so beloved that no one had a grudging or, envious feeling. Everyone considered how she had come back to them as if she had been penniless; “and teaching our little ones too––with sixteen hundred pounds at her back! Wonderful! Wonderful!” said first one and then another of the women. Indeed, if Denas had thought out a plan to make herself honoured and popular, she could hardly have conceived of one more in unison with the simple souls she had to influence. They could not sleep for talking about it. Denas Penelles was a veritable romance to them.

“And fair she was and fair she be!” said Mary Oliver, a good woman, with not a pinch of pride in her make-up. “And if Tris Penrose win her and she win him, a proper wedding it will be––a wedding made by their guardian angel. I do think that.” And the group of women present answered one and then another, “A proper wedding it will be, to be sure.”

In the evening there was a great praise-meeting at John’s cottage; for in St. Penfer all rejoicing and all sorrow ended in a religious meeting. And Denas and Tris sang out of the same hymn-book, and sat side by side as they listened to John’s quaintly eloquent tribute to the God “who did always keep faith with His children.” “I was like to lose sight of my God,” he cried, “but my God never did lose sight of me. God’s children be well off, He goes so neighbourly with them. He is their pilot and their home-bringer. I did weep to myself all last night; but just as His promise says, joy did come in the morning.” And then John burst into song, and all his mates and neighbours with him.

And it is in such holy, exalted atmospheres that love reaches its sweetest, fairest strength and bloom. Tris had no need of words. Words would have blundered, and hampered, and darkened all he had to say. One look at Denas as they closed the book together––one look as he held her hand on the door-step, and she knew more than words could ever have said. She saw through his eyes to the bottom of his clear, honest soul, and she knew that he loved her as men love who find in one woman only the song of life, the master-key of all their being.

She expected Tris would come and see her the next day, but Ann Trewillow brought word that he had sailed with Mr. Arundel. Tris had been expecting the order, and the yacht had only been waiting for guests who had suddenly arrived. Denas was rather pleased. She was not yet ready to admit a new love. She felt that in either refusing or accepting Tris’ affection she would be doing both herself and Tris an injustice. A love that does not spring into existence perfect needs cautious tending; too much sunshine, too much care, too constant watching will slay it. There must be time given for it to grow.

Without reasoning on the matter, Denas felt that absence would be a good thing. She was afraid of being driven by emotion or by circumstances into a mistaken position. And she had now an absorbing interest in her life. Her school was a delight. No consideration of money qualified her pleasure in her pupils. She was eager to teach all she knew. She was eager to learn, that she might teach more. As the weeks went by her school got a local fame; it was considered a great privilege to obtain a place in it.

Good fortune seemed to have come to St. Penfer by the Sea when Denas came back to it. Never had there been a more abundant sea-harvest than that summer. The *Darling Denas* brought luck to the whole fleet. She was a swift sailer, always first on the fishing-ground and always first in harbour again; and it was a great pleasure to Denas to watch her namesake leading out and leading home the brown-sailed bread-winners of the hamlet. When the time and the tide and the weather all served, Denas might now often be seen, with her mother and the rest of the fishermen’s wives, standing on the wind-blown pier watching the boats out in the evening.

There had been a time when she had positively declined the loving ceremony––when she had hated the thought of any community in such feelings––when the large brown faces of the wives and mothers and the sad patience of their attitude had seemed to her only the visible signs of a poor and sorrowful life. And even yet, as she stood among them she was haunted by a rhyme she had read in some picture paper years ago––a rhyme that so pathetically glanced at love that dwelt between life and death that she never could see a group of fishermen’s wives on the pier watching the boats outside without saying it to herself:

"They gazed on the boats from the pier,
ah, me!
Till their sails swelled in the wind,
Till darkness dropped down over the sea
And their eyes with tears were blind.
Then home they turned, and they never
spoke,
These daughters and wives of the fisher-
folk."

But years and experience had taught her the falsehood of extremes; she knew now that life has many intermediate colours between lamp-black and rose-pink, and that if the fisherman's wife had hours of anxious watching, she had also many hours of such rapturous love as comes sparingly to others––love that is the portion of those who come back from the very grave with the shadow of death on their face.

In the autumn Tris returned for a few days, but he was so busy that he could not leave the yacht. She was being provisioned and put in order for the long Mediterranean winter voyage, and Tris was in constant demand. But John and Joan and Denas walked over to St. Clair to bid him good-bye. And never had Tris looked so handsome and so manly. His air of authority became him. In a fishing-boat men are equal, but on this lordly pleasure-boat it was very different. Tris said to one man go and to another come, and they obeyed him with deference and alacrity. This masterful condition impressed Denas greatly. She thought of Tris with a respect which promised far more than mere admiration for his beauty or his picturesque dress.

After Tris was gone the winter came rapidly, but Denas did not dread it. Neither did John nor Joan. John looked upon his boat as a veritable godsend. What danger could come to him on a craft so blessed? All her takes were large and fortunate. The other boats thought it lucky to sail in her wake. On whatever side the *Darling Denas* cast her bait, they knew it was right to cast on that side also.

Joan was happy in her husband's happiness; she was happy in her unstinted housekeeping; she was now particularly happy in Denas' school. The little lads and lasses brought all their news, all their joys and sorrows to Denas; and when Denas went home every day, Joan, with her knitting in her hands, was waiting to give her a dainty meal and to chat with her over all she had heard and all she had done.

And Denas was happy. When she mentally contrasted this busy, loving winter with the sorrows of the previous one, with the hunger and cold and poverty, the anguish of death and the loneliness, she could not but be grateful for the little home-harbour which her storm-tossed heart had found again. If she had a regret, it was that she could not retain her hold upon her finished life. Every time she asked her heart after Roland, memory gave her pictures in fainter and fainter and fainter colours. Roland was drifting farther and farther away.

She could no longer weep at his name. A gentle melancholy, a half-sacred remoteness invested the years in which he had been the light of her life. For

"When the lamp is
shattered,
The light in the dust lies
dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is
fled."

Mercifully, youth has this marvellous elasticity. And the children filled all the vacant places in her life. For as yet she did not think much nor at all decidedly about Tris. If Roland was slipping away from memory, Tris by no means filled her heart. Yet she was pleased when Ann Trewillow's little maid Gillian told her one morning:

"Master Arundel's yacht be come into harbour safe and sound, and Captain Tris, he be brave and hearty, and busy all to get ashore again. And my mother do say Mr. Arundel he be going to marry a fine lady, and great doings at the Abbey, no doubt. And mother do say, too, that Captain Tris will be marrying you. And I was a brave bit frightened at that news, and I up and answered mother: 'It bean't so. Miss Denas likes better teaching us boys and girls.' I said that, and wishing it so with all my heart."

And Denas, seeing that the boys and girls were looking anxiously at her for an assurance of this position, said positively:

"I am happier with you, children, than I could be with anyone else, and I do not intend to marry at all."

"Never? Say never!"

"Well, then––never."

Yet there was a faint longing in her heart for love all her own. A man can love what others love, but a woman wants something or someone to love that is all her own. And she was interested enough in Tris' return to dress with more than usual care that evening. She felt sure he would

come, and she put on her best black gown and did not brush the ripples out of her front hair, but let the tiny tendrils soften the austere gravity of her face and make that slight shadow behind the ears which is so womanly and becoming.

About seven o'clock she heard his footsteps on the shingle and the gay whistle to which they timed themselves. Joan went to the door to welcome him. Denas stood up as he entered, and then, meeting his ardent gaze, trembled and flushed and sat down again. He sat down beside her. He told her how much already he had heard of her gracious work in the village. He said it was worth going to France and Italy and Greece, only to come back and see how much more lovely than all other women the Cornish women were. And by and by he took from his pocket the most exquisite kerchief of Maltese lace and a finely-carved set of corals. Denas would have been less than a woman had she not been charmed with the beautiful objects. She let Tris knot the lovely silky lace around her throat, and she went to her mirror and put the carved coral comb among her fair, abundant tresses, and the rings in her ears, and the necklace and the locket round her white slender throat.

Then Tris looked at her as if he had met a goddess in a wilderness; and Joan, with her hands against her sides, congratulated and praised herself for having given to St. Penfer by the Sea a daughter so lovely and so good.

CHAPTER XVII.

DENAS.

"She that is loved is safe; and he that is loved is joyful."

––Bishop Taylor.

"No pearls, no gold, no stones, no corn, no spice,
No cloth, no wine, of Love can pay the price;
Divine is Love, and scorneth worldly pelf,
And can be bought with nothing but itself."

––Heywood.

"To-morrow, Love, as to-day,
Two blent hearts never astray;
Two souls no power may sever;
Together, O Love, for ever!"

––Rossetti.

DURING the summer which followed, Tris was much at home. Mr. Arundel did not go to Norway; he was in London with the lady whom he intended to marry, until the end of the season, and afterward frequently at her country home in Devonshire. Tris had then his opportunity and he did not neglect it. But he was an impulsive young man, and very often lost the ground on Monday that he had gained on Sunday. All of love's fitful fevers and chills tormented him, and then he tormented Denas. He was jealous of every moment of her time, of every kind word and look she bestowed on others. The school offended, the children irritated his conception of his own rights. He was as thoroughly unreasonable and Denas as thoroughly contradictory as was necessary for the most tantalising of love affairs.

About the beginning of the summer, just before the pilchard season, Jacob Trenager died. He was a Pentrath man, and of course "went home" for his burying. It did not seem an event likely to affect the lives of Tris and Denas, and yet it did have a very pleasant influence upon their future. In some far-back generation a Trenager had saved the life of an Arundel, and ever since, when any adult of one family was buried an adult of the other threw the first earth upon the coffin, in token of their remembrance and of their friendship. Mr. Arundel was aware of the tradition, and he desired to perpetuate it. He was, perhaps, actuated by some religious respect for the customs and feelings of his ancestors; he was, undoubtedly, considerate of the fact that he had just bought a valuable estate in the midst of these old clannish fisher-folk, and well aware that such a trifling concession to their prejudices might in a future Parliamentary struggle be of preponderating value to him.

So, in accord with his expressed desire, Trenager's funeral was observed with all the ancient ceremonies. His mates from the numerous villages around carried him all the way on his bier to

Pentrath; carried him by the sea-shore, singing hymns as they went. A great crowd of men and women were in the procession, and the old church at Pentrath was full to overflowing. Jacob's forefathers for centuries back lay in Pentrath church-yard, and there were old people living in the town who remembered Jacob casting the first earth on the present Mr. Arundel's father's coffin, and who wondered whether the son would do the same kindness for the fisherman.

The day after Jacob's death it was noticed in St. Penfer that a strange gentleman called upon Denas, and that Denas went up the cliff-breast with him and remained in the church town for the greater part of the day. And for the next two days the same thing occurred. Probably John and Joan knew the meaning of these visits, but they said nothing in response to the numerous "I wonders" of their acquaintances. However, on the day of the funeral the secret was made evident. The strange gentleman was the organist of Pentrath church, and his visit to Denas was made to induce her to sing a portion of the funeral service; and St. Penfer being nearer than Pentrath, they had gone to St. Penfer church to practise.

Nothing, however, was said of the intention, because Denas had not felt sure that at the last moment she would be able to fulfil her promise. But in the preliminary practice she quite recovered her self-possession, and the long rest had given to her voice a maturity of sweetness and power that made it a delight to exercise it. She thought with a pleasant pride of the solemn joy she was going to give; nor was she oblivious of the fact that her father and mother and Tris would have an opportunity to listen to her singing music worthy of the noblest voice to interpret.

It was a warm, sunshiny day. The church windows were all open, and the rustle of the trees in the church-yard, the hum of the bees, the songs of the birds, the murmur of the town beyond, came through them. Mr. Arundel stood at the foot of the coffin, Jacob's family at the head; the crowd of fishers filled the old pews and aisles to overflowing. Suddenly there was a burst of triumphant melody. It filled the church and lifted the souls of all present up, and up, far beyond, and far

"Above the smoke and stir of this dim
spot
Which men call earth."

"*I know that my Redeemer liveth!*"

Higher and higher the clear, strong voice rang out the joyful assurance, till every heart swelled to rapture and every eye was wet with holy tears.

"*I know that my Redeemer liveth!*"

And as Denas sang the blessed affirmation, the organ pealed out its noble symphony, and men and women lifted wet faces heavenward, until to the last majestic confident strain––

"*Yet in my flesh shall I see God*"––

the coffin was lifted and the mourners and the singer followed it to the open grave.

Never before had Denas had such joy in God's pleasant gift of a melodious voice. To look at her father's and mother's faces was a happiness sufficient. The adoration of Tris, the delight and gratitude of her friends, the conviction that she had lifted for a few moments mortal men above their mortality and made them realise that they should "yet see God," was in itself a recompense beyond anything she had ever dreamed of. Nor could she put aside the comparisons that naturally came from this effort of her power. To sing holily and loftily, to sing in––

"... Strains that might create a
soul
Under the ribs of death"––

How dear to heaven and earth such saintly melody! How different from the––

"Midnight song and
revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity"

that had once appeared an elysium of musical ravishment to her.

Tris walked home with Denas, and this evening they came very close to each other. And then, at the close of it, Tris unfortunately said some words which showed how bitterly he regarded the years that had been stolen from him by Roland Tresham. And Denas resented the anger shown to this paling, dying shade of her memory, and the next day Tris went away with Mr. Arundel and did not return for full five weeks.

But Mr. Arundel had been so much interested in the singer as to ask from Tris all that he could

tell him of the life of Denas. And Tris, like all lovers, was only too glad to talk of the girl he adored; so as they sat together at midnight on the lonely sea, with the full moon above them, they grew very confidential. Tris told all the story of his love, and Mr. Arundel told Tris about the beauty and accomplishments of the woman he was going to marry; and there was, in this way, a kind of intimacy established which resulted in a financial proposition making the question of marriage a very easy and happy one to Captain Tristram Penrose, of the yacht *Spindrift*.

That five weeks of lonely heartache taught Denas that Tris had become a very dear portion of her life, and when he returned he found it more easy than he had dared hope to induce her to bury for ever the strange years which a strange love had somehow slipped into her sheaf of life. And she promised Tris to let them fall from out her grasp, all the vain regrets, the vain hopes, the vain love which were garnered in them.

Then Tris told her that he had signed a contract with Mr. Arundel for five years, and that a portion of this contract was the use of the stone cottage on the hill beyond the Abbey––the pretty home covered with clematis and jasmine vines and surrounded by a lovely garden. He said if Denas would share it with him he would make it as beautiful within as it was without, and that he would love her more and more fondly to the last moment of his life. He spoke with all the simple passion of his nature and circumstances; but his heart was hot behind his words, and Denas gave herself freely to their persuasion.

They were sitting on the rocks by the sea-side as she did so; the waves were breaking at their feet; the boats were lying on the horizon; the village was as quiet as a painted village. She gave her heart and hand to Tris there; she suffered him at last to take her to his heart and kiss her; she intoxicated him with rapture by shyly kissing him in return. Then they went back to the village together. Joan was asleep in her chair. John was away with the boats. They both kissed Joan and Tris called her “mother.” And Joan said she had just been dreaming of such a joy, and she blessed them and then went to the door and looked toward the *Darling Denas*. If she could only see her old dear upon the deck, she thought she could send a thought, a thanksgiving, that would somehow, some way, reach him.

In a few days after this happy understanding, Mr. Arundel had apparently an equally joyful surprise. Something happened, and the days of his waiting were over, and he was to be married immediately. Then it was, in Cornish phrase, “busy all” to get the yacht overhauled and well victualled. For the young couple were going to spend the winter on the Mediterranean coasts, and Tris was as much interested in the preparations as was possible to be, even though the unexpected change disarranged and postponed his own plans.

For there had absolutely been in Tris’ mind a resolution to marry Denas before he went on the winter’s cruise. Of course, in making this resolution he had never taken into account the contrary plans of Denas and Joan, neither of whom was disposed to make any haste about the marriage.

“Love do soon die if there be no house for him to live in,” said Joan; “and I do feel to think that the furnishing of the house be the first thing. And that not to be done in a week or a month, either. Ham-sam work have no blessing or happiness with it. To be sure not. Why would it?”

Denas held the same opinions, so Tris went away and left the furnishing of the house to Denas and Joan. They would have all the winter to prepare the napery and crockery and consult about carpets and furniture. For now that he was to become a married man and a householder, Tris was quite inclined to take all the domestic and social consideration his position gave him. Mr. Arundel, in placing such a pretty home at the service of his captain, required by the very gift a suitable acceptance of it.

And no one but a mother can tell with what delightful pride Joan entered into this duty. She had never bought carpets and stuffed furniture before. The china tea-service would not let her sleep for three nights, she was so divided between the gold and white and the pink and gold. All the little niceties of the dining-room and the sitting-room––the American kitchen utensils which to Joan seemed marvellous and beautiful, the snowy curtains at every window, the white-handled knives and the plated silver––all these things held joys and surprises and never-ending interest to the happy mother.

Between these duties and her school, the long winter months passed happily away to Denas. The school, indeed, troubled her in a certain way. Who was to keep it together? John also had formed it into a Sunday-school and was greatly delighted with the work. But a really good work never falls through; there is always someone to carry it on, and one day Denas was visited among her pupils by the Wesleyan preacher from St. Penfer. He was astonished at her methods and her success, and he represented the claims of such a school with so much force to the next district meeting that they gladly appointed a teacher to fill the place of Denas. It cost her a little pang to resign her authority; but her marriage was drawing near, and it would necessarily be followed by her removal to St. Clair, and it was important that the children should be provided for.

About the end of March she had a letter from Tris. The yacht was then at Gibraltar on its return passage, and Tris might be looked for within a few days. But the house was nearly ready and all her personal preparations were made. Such as pertained to the ceremony and their future life they would make together when Tris returned home. Never had father, and mother, and daughter, been so happy and so closely one. Joan had grown young again. John sang from morning to night. Denas had the loveliness of love transfiguring the loveliness of mere physical

beauty. It was busy all and happy all within the Penelles' cottage during those days of expectation.

One morning Joan was going through the whole house before the grand final preparations, and for some reason she opened a closet usually little regarded––a closet full of those odds and ends families do not like to destroy. The first thing she lifted was that picture of Denas as "Mademoiselle Denasia in Pinafore." It had been her pride and comfort in sorrowful days now overpast, and she laid it upon the table and stood looking at it. Denas entered the room while this act of tender reminiscence was going on. She did not at first perceive or understand the object of it. But when she reached her mother's side and saw the yellow, faded presentment, her face flushed crimson, and with flashing eyes she covered the picture with her hands.

"Why did you keep it? Oh, mother, how could you!"

"Aw, then, Denas, 'twas my only comfort many a day and many a time. Don't take it away––Denas! Denas!"

"I will not have it in the house––'tis a shame to me; it breaks my heart; how could you, mother?" and she drew the paper away, and walking to the fire, threw it upon the coals. It burned slowly, browning gradually from the dancing feet to the tips of the fingers meeting above the head.

With a white, sad face she watched it burn to a brown film that the upward draught of the chimney carried out of her sight. Joan also watched the immolation, and she was a little angry at it. That picture of Mademoiselle Denasia was one of Joan's secret idols. No one likes to watch the destruction of their idols, and Joan was hardly pacified by the kisses and loving words with which Denas extenuated her act. For an hour or two she had an air of injury. She had been in the habit of showing this picture with an air of serious secrecy and with many sighs to any new acquaintance or strange visitor, and its destruction really put a stop to this clandestine bit of egotism; for who would believe such an improbable story without the pictured Denasia to prove it?

Denas regarded the incident as a happy omen. As she watched the picture turn to cinder, she buried fathoms deep below the tide of her present life all the restless, profitless, half-regretful memories it represented. A word or two said by the preacher the day he visited her school had clung to her consciousness as a burr clings to wool. They were speaking of the education necessary for the class of children gathered there, and Denas, after naming the studies pursued, said: "They are sufficient for the life before them;" then, with an involuntary sigh, she added, "It is a very narrow life."

And perhaps the minister had heard something of her story, for he answered gravely: "God knows just where He wants every soul. That is the life, that is the school, for that soul, and no life is too narrow. The humblest will afford

"'The common round, the trivial
task
Which furnish all we ought to
ask––
Room to deny ourselves.'

Mrs. Tresham, that is the grand lesson we are sent here to learn; self-denial, as against self-pleasing and self-assertion."

Denas only said, "Yes, sir;" but she took the words into her heart and found herself repeating them a hundred times a day.

Tris came home just before Easter. The spring was in his heart, the spring was in his life and love. The winds, the young trees, the peeping crocus-buds, were part and parcel of Denas and of his hopes in her. What charming walks they took to their home! What suggestions and improvements and alterations they made! No two young thrushes, building their first nest, could have been more interested and more important. Mr. and Mrs. Arundel had remained in town for the Easter holidays, and Tris was very nearly lord of all his time. He rather thought Mr. Arundel had purposely left him so at this happy epoch, and the idea gave him the more pleasure in his light duties.

There was a great deal of good-natured discussion about the proper date for this wonderful wedding. Tris acted as if it was the first wedding in the world. He was sure everyone in St. Penfer and St. Clair would be disappointed beyond comfort unless they had a chance to be present. He thought, therefore, that Easter Sunday would be the day of days in this respect. All the boats would be in harbour. All the women and children would have their new gowns and bonnets on. There would be a special service in the chapel––and then, finally:

"The house be ready, mother, and I be ready, and Denas be ready, and what are we waiting for?"

And as John, and Joan, and Tris were of one mind, what could Denas do but be of the same mind? After all, the great anxiety was the weather. The restless way in which Tris queried of the winds and watched the clouds almost made John angry. "You do be enough to beckon a storm, Tris," he cried. "Let be! Let be!" Yet for all that John himself walked oftener to his door than was his custom, and looked seaward and windward in a furtive kind of way, very amusing to the women, who saw clearly through his anxiety.

But even the weather sometimes comes up to our hopes and is even better than our expectations. Easter Sunday broke in a royal mood of sunshine. There was not a breath of wind; the sea was like a sea of sapphire sprinked with incalculable diamonds; the boats lay lazily swinging on the tide-top; the undercliff was in its Easter green and white. The lark set the bride-song going, and so woke up the thrush, and the thrush called to the blackbird, and the woods soon rang with music.

The ceremony was to be in the St. Clair chapel, and at nine o'clock Tris came in the yacht's boat for his bride and her parents. The boat had been freshly painted white. The four sailors who were to row her were in snow-white duck and blue caps and kerchiefs. Tris had on his best uniform––blue broadcloth and gilt buttons. Tris was handsome enough and proud and happy enough to have set off a fisher's suit of blue flannel; but he trod like a prince and looked like a young sea-god in his splendid array.

It had been thought best for the bride to go to St. Clair by sea. There was no carriage available, and the walk to St. Clair was long and apt to be wet from the last tide. And nobody wanted the bride-dress to be soiled. Besides which, the sea-way gave the St. Penfer people an opportunity to set her off with waving kerchiefs and a thousand good wishes; and it also gave the people of St. Clair an opportunity to welcome her in the same manner. Those who did not know about such things and who were wickedly reckless concerning signs and omens––which sailor and fisher folk never are––said this seaward road to the church might have been avoided and the bride's gown kept sweetly fresh and unruffled by Denas simply dressing in her own house. But Denas knew well that it was unlucky; for the bride in her bride-dress must go into her house before she comes out of it.

The chapel was crowded up to the pulpit steps, all but John's pew, which was empty until the bride's party took possession of it. It was a sight to make men and women happy only to look at Joan Penelles' face. John tried to preserve a grave look, but Joan beamed upon every man and woman present. When the little stir of their entrance had subsided, then the Easter service went joyously on. It was known that the wedding was to be solemnized between the sermon and the benediction, and though the sermon was a very good one, all thought it a little long that morning. For there is something about a bridal, and a bride, and a bridegroom, that is perennially fresh and young.

But at length the happy moment arrived. Tris rose and offered his hand to Denas. Then Denas also rose and let her long cloak fall down, and put her bonnet off her head, and walked by Tris' side to the communion table. John and Joan proudly followed. All with curious interest watched the bride, for few then present had ever seen a bride so bride-like. And well might the handsome sailor be proud of her as she stood beside him robed in white, lustrous silk, with lilies at her breast and the gleam of scarlet corals in her fair hair and at her white throat.

Let those who have been so blessed as to live through such moments imagine them. And, alas! for those who cannot say with a smile, "I know; I know." In this marriage, the bride and bridegroom's joy was doubled by being so enthusiastically shared. It was not only the preacher who gave them the benediction; they walked through an atmosphere so full of kindness and good-will and good wishes that they could do nothing at all but smile, and smile, and smile again to the "God bless you, dears," which greeted them at every step.

Then the clerk spread open the book and the preacher put the pen into the bride's hand. She looked at her husband; she looked at her mother; she hesitated a moment, and then wrote boldly––not Denasia––but––

"*Denas.*"

Neither father nor mother disputed the name. They certified it with their own names, and then passed with their children into the sunshine. The congregation were waiting outside. They parted and made a way between them for the bride and the bridegroom to take; and so standing there, watched them go hand-in-hand up the hillside to the pretty vine-covered house which was to be their future home. To mortal eyes they seemed to walk alone, but they did not. They had right welcome company, for––

"Love took them softly by the hand,
  Love led them through their own dear door,
And showed them in the sea and land
  Beauty they had not known before––
    Never before: O Love! sweet Love!

"And now it cannot pass away;
  They see it wheresoe'er they go;
And in their hearts by night and day
  Its gladness singeth to and fro,
    By night and day: O Love! sweet Love!"

FOOTNOTES:

[1] T. E. Brown, M.A.

[2] “Atalanta in Calydon.”

[3] Family, race.

[4] The effect of this Cornish sentiment upon the Cornish heart is mighty, as it is past reasoning about. A Cornish friend of mine was in a silver mine among the Andes, and looking at the big, bearded men around, he suddenly called out “One and All!” In an instant four of the men had dropped their tools and were holding his hands in as brotherly fashion as if the tie of blood was between them. It is, indeed, one of those shibboleths of race which move the soul to its most ancient depths. The malign influences which destroy even the domestic affections touch not the deeper sense of race. Age only increases its intensity, and being a purely unselfish love, we may believe that it survives death and claims the heritage of eternity.

[5] Junket is made of fresh milk, spirits, spices, sugar; curdled with rennet and eaten with clotted cream.

Transcriber Notes

Typographical inconsistencies have been changed and are listed below.

Hyphenation standardized.

Otherwise, archaic and variable spelling is preserved, including Rosetti/Rossetti and Giberaltar. Author's punctuation style is also preserved.

Transcriber Changes

The following changes were made to the original text:

Page 25: Was 'wth' (She sat down in a large chair **with** her back to the light and shut her eyes.)

Page 93: Added double quote (Some will never come back **again!'"**)

Page 98: Added period (with such evident enjoyment that she gave an appetite to the **others.**)

Page 98: Was 'Bobert' (After breakfast **Robert** Burrell said he would delay his visit)

Page 154: Was 'guiver' (It made his brown face blanch and his strong, stern mouth **quiver** with mental anguish.)

Page 174: Was 'beatiful' (her open throat, and **beautiful** bare arms lifted to the basket upon her head)

Page 207: Was 'indorsed' (of that brutal conservatism which makes Englishmen suspicious of everything not **endorsed** by centuries of use and wont.)

Page 297: Was 'ocupations' (She looked for no extraordinary thing, for no special favour to brighten their uniform **occupations** and simple pleasures.)

Page 308: Was 'sayng' ("La! my dear, the love in Tris' heart was a trouble to you. You were **saying** that often.")

Page 344: Was 'fom' (and the walk to St. Clair was long and apt to be wet **from** the last tide.)

paragraph 1.E below.

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