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FURZE THE CRUEL

BY

JOHN TREVENA

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Almost everywhere on Dartmoor are Furze, Heather, and Granite. The Furze seems to suggest Cruelty, the Heather Endurance, and the Granite Strength. The Furze is destroyed by fire, but grows again; the Heather is torn by winds, but blossoms again; the Granite is worn away imperceptibly by the rain. This work is the first of a proposed trilogy, which the author hopes to continue and complete with "Heather" and "Granite."

CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTORY](#)

[I.](#) ABOUT THE TAVY FAMILY

[II.](#) ABOUT BRIGHTLY

[III.](#) ABOUT PASTOR AND MASTER

[IV.](#) ABOUT BEETLES

[V.](#) ABOUT THOMASINE

[VI.](#) ABOUT VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

[VII.](#) ABOUT FAIRYLAND

[VIII.](#) ABOUT ATMOSPHERE

[IX.](#) ABOUT A KNAVE AND A FOOL

[X.](#) ABOUT THE VIGIL OF ST. GOOSE

[XI.](#) ABOUT THE FEAST OF ST. GOOSE

[XII.](#) ABOUT THE OCTAVE OF ST. GOOSE

[XIII.](#) ABOUT VARIOUS EMOTIONS

[XIV.](#) ABOUT A STRUGGLE AT THE GATE OF FAIRYLAND

[XV.](#) ABOUT JUSTICE

[XVI.](#) ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

[XVII.](#) ABOUT PASTIMES

[XVIII.](#) ABOUT AUTUMN IN FAIRYLAND

[XIX.](#) ABOUT THE GOOD RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP
[XX.](#) ABOUT THE PASSOVER OF THE BRUTE
[XXI.](#) ABOUT WINTER IN REAL LIFE
[XXII.](#) ABOUT THE PINCH
[XXIII.](#) ABOUT A HOUSE ON THE HIDDEN LANES
[XXIV.](#) ABOUT BANKRUPTS
[XXV.](#) ABOUT SWALING-FIRES
[XXVI.](#) ABOUT "DUPPENGE"
[XXVII.](#) ABOUT REGENERATION AND RENUNCIATION

FURZE THE CRUEL

INTRODUCTORY

ABOUT RAINDROPS

The river of Tavy is a great mountain-carver. From its mud-holes of Cranmere to the walls of Tavistock it is a hewer of rocks. Thenceforth it becomes a gardener, raising flowers and herbs; it becomes idyllic. It goes into Arcadia. And at last it floats ships of war.

There is a story in Hebrew literature of a king called Solomon, a man reputed wise, although a fool with women, who desired to build a temple to his God. There was a tradition which forbade the use of hammer or chisel in the erection of a place of worship, because, according to the Mishna, "Iron is used to shorten life, the altar to prolong it." The stones were not to be hewn. The temple was to be built noiselessly. The narrative suggests that Solomon had the stones cut and shaped at some distance from the building site, which was a decidedly Jesuitical way of solving the problem. Myth suggests that the king sought the aid of Asmodeus, chief of the devils, who told him where he could discover a worm which would split the toughest rock. The introduction of the devil to assist in the building of the temple was no doubt of Persian origin, since Persian thought influenced Hebrew literature just as Grecian thought was later to influence that of Rome. The idea of noiseless building, of an altar created by supernatural powers, of burrowing for minerals and metals without tools, is common to the literature of every country. It is one of the stock tales of folk-lore found everywhere. In one place it is a worm which shatters the mountains; in another a black stone; and in another a herb, such as the innocent forget-me-not, and the various saxifrages of the cottage garden. All the stories agree upon three points: the name of the rock-shatterer signifies irresistible force; it is invariably a small and insignificant object; and it is brought to mankind by a bird. That bird is the cloud; and the worm, pebble, or herb, which shatters mountains is the raindrop.

This is the story of the river Tavy, its tors and cleave, just as the pixy grandmother told it to the little round-eyed ones on a stormy night, when the black-winged raven-cloud was bringing the rain over Great Kneeset, and the whist hounds were yip-yip-yipping upon the "deads"—

"It all happened a long time ago, my impets, a very long time ago, and perhaps I shan't be telling you the story quite right. They say the dates are cut upon the Scorhill Rocks. I couldn't make them out the last time I was there, but then my eyes are getting feeble. You know the Scorhill Rocks, my dears? They are just by the Wallabrook, and near our big dancing stone which the silly mortals call a tolmen. You remember how we danced there on All Hallows E'en. What a beautiful night it was, sure 'nuff! And then you went and pinched the farm maids in their beds, and made them dream of their lovers, mischievous young toads! Well, I don't blame ye, my dears. I liked a bit of a gambol when I was a winikin bit of a pisky maid myself.

"This old Dartymore was a gurt big solid mountain of granite in those days, my pretties. You can't imagine what it was like then, and I can't either. There was no grass on it, and there were no nice vuzzy-bushes to dance round, and no golden blossoms to play with, and no fern to see-saw on, and no pink heather to go to sleep in—and worse and worse, my dears, there wasn't a single pixy in those days either."

"Oh, what a funny old Dartymore!" cried the little round-eyed ones.

"It wasn't an old Dartymore, my pets. It was a brand-new one. There were no bullocks or ponies. There were no bogs and no will-o'-the-wisps. There were no stone remains for stupid mortals to go dafty over, for as you and I know well enough most of 'em are no more stone remains than any other rocks, but are just as the wind and rain made them. There was not a single mortal in those days either, and none of the triumphs of their civilisation, such as workhouses, prisons, and lunatic asylums. There was just the sun and the gurt grey mountain, and right upon the top of the mountain was a little bit of jelly shivering and shaking in the wind."

"But how did it get there?" cried the little round-eyed ones.

"Oh, my loves, you mustn't ask such silly questions. I don't know. Nobody can know. It was there,

and we can't say any more. Perhaps there was a little bit of this jelly on the top of every mountain in the world. I can't tell you anything about that. But this little bit on the top of Dartymore was alive. It was alive, and it could feel the wind and the sun, and it would have kicked if it had got any legs to kick with. You will find it all written on the Scorhill Rocks. I couldn't find it, but it must be there, because they say it is. Well, this little bit of jelly shivered away for a long time, and then one day it began to rain. That was a wonderful thing in those days, though we don't think anything of it now. The little bit of jelly didn't like the rain. If it had been a pixy it would have crawled under a toadstool. If it had been a mortal it would have put up its umbrella. But toadstools and umbrellas hadn't been invented. So the poor thing shivered and got wet, because it was a very heavy shower. They say it lasted for several thousand years. While it rained the little bit of jelly was thinking. At last it said to the rain, 'Where do *yew* come from?' But the rain only replied that it hadn't the least idea.

"'What are ye doing?' went on the bit of jelly; and the rain answered, 'Making the world ready for you to live in.' The piece of jelly thought about that for a million years, and then it said to the wind—the rain had stopped, and it was the First Fine Day—'Someone must have made me and put me here. I want to speak to that Someone. Can't you tell me what to do?'

"'Ask again in a million years,' said the wind.

"'I think I'll go for a walk,' said the piece of jelly. You see, my dears, it was getting tired of sitting still, and besides, it had discovered little bits of things called legs. They had grown while it had been thinking. So it got up, and stretched itself, and perhaps it yawned, and then it went for a long walk. I don't know how long it lasted, for they thought nothing of a few thousand years then; but at last it got back to the top of Dartymore, and found everything changed. The big mountain had been shattered and hewn into cleaves and tors. There were rivers and bogs; grass and fern; vuzzy-bushes and golden blooms. In every part, my dears, the mountain had been carved into tors and cut into gorges; but there were still no pixies, and no mortals. Then the piece of jelly went and looked at itself in the water, and was very much astonished at what it saw. It was a piece of jelly no longer, but a little hairy thing, with long legs and a tail, and a couple of eyes and a big mouth."

"Was it the same piece of jelly? What a long time it lived!" cried the little round-eyed ones. They didn't believe a word of the story, and they were going to say so presently.

"Well, my pretties, it was, and it wasn't. You see, little bits of it kept breaking off all those years, and they had become hairy creatures with long legs and a tail. Part of the original piece of jelly was in them all, for that was what is called the origin of life, which is a thing you don't understand anything about, and you mustn't worry your heads about it until you grow up. The little hairy creature stood beside the Tavy, and scratched its ear with its foot just like a dog. A million years later it used its hand because it couldn't get its foot high enough, and the wise men said that was a sign of civilisation. It was raining and blowing, and presently a drop of rain trickled down the nose of the little hairy creature and made it sneeze.

"'Go away,' said the little hairy creature. 'I wun't have ye tickling my nose.' You see, my dears, it knew the Devonshire dialect, which is a proof that it is the oldest dialect in the world.

"'Let me bide. I be fair mazed,' said the Devonshire raindrop. 'I've been drap-drapping on this old Dartymore for years and years.'

"'You bain't no use. You'm only a drop o' rainwater,' said the little hairy thing.

"'That's all. Only a drop o' rain-water,' came the answer. 'This gurt big mountain has been worn away by drops o' rain-water. These tors were made by drops o' rainwater. These masses of granite have been split by drops o' rain-water. The river is nought but drops o' rain-water.'

"'You'm a liar,' said the little hairy thing. You see, my dears, it couldn't believe the raindrop."

The little round-eyed ones didn't believe it either. They were afraid to say so because Grandmother might have smacked them. Besides, they knew they would not have to go to bed in the pink heather until she had finished her story. So they listened quietly, and pinched one another, while Grandmother went on—

"It was a long time afterwards. There were bullocks and ponies and plenty of pixies, and the little hairy thing had become what is called a primitive man. Tavy Cleave was very much the same as it is now, and Ger Tor was big and rugged, and Cranmere was full of river-heads. The primitive man had a primitive wife, and there were little creatures with them who were primitive children. They lived among the rocks and didn't worry about clothes. But there was one man who was not quite so primitive as the others, and therefore he was unpopular. He used to wander by himself and think. You will find it all upon the Scorhill Rocks, my dears. One evening he was beside the Tavy, which was known in those days as the Little Water, and a memory stirred in him, and he thought to himself: I was here once, and I asked a question of the wind; and the wind said: 'Ask again in a million years.' Someone must have made me and put me here. I want to speak to that Someone. Then the Little Water shouted; and it seemed to say: 'I have worn away the mountain of granite. I have shattered the rocks. Look at me, primitive man! I have given you a dwelling-place. I was made by the raindrops. The cloud brought the raindrops. And the wind brought you, primitive man. That Someone sent you and the wind together. You want to speak to that Someone. You must seek that Someone in a certain place. Look around you, primitive man!'

"So he looked, my dears, and saw what the Little Water had done during those millions of years. On the top of every little mountain it had carved out a tor. They were rough heaps of rock, shapeless, and yet suggesting a shape. They were not buildings, and yet they suggested a building. The primitive man went up on the highest tor, and spoke to that Someone. But, my pretties, I'm afraid you can't understand all this."

The little round-eyed ones were yawning dreadfully. Grandmother was getting wearisome in her old age. They thought they would rather be in bed.

"The primitive man made himself a hut-circle. You see, my dears, the Little Water had taught him. He had become what is called imitative. When he made his hut-circle he just copied the tors. Later on he copied them on a larger scale and built castles. And then the time came when another man stood beside the Tavy and asked: 'I have had dreams of treasure in the earth. How can I get at that treasure?'

"Then the Little Water shouted back: 'Look at me. I have worn away the rocks. I have uncovered the metals. Work in the ground as I have done.'

"So the man imitated the river again and worked in the ground, until he found tin and copper; and the river went on roaring just as it does now. You see, my children, there would have been no river if there had been no raindrops; and without the river no tors and cleaves, no vuzzy-bushes and golden blossoms, no ferns or pink heather, no buildings, no mortals, and no pixies. Dartmore would have remained a cold grey mountain of granite, and the piece of jelly would never have become a primitive man if it hadn't rained."

"But what is the rain doing now?" cried the little round-eyed ones.

"Just the same, my pretties. Making the river flow on and on. And the river is making the cleave deeper, and Ger Tor higher, just as it has always been doing. Only it works so slowly that we don't notice any change. Now you must run away to bed, for it is quite late, and you are gaping like young chickens. Come and kiss your old granny, my dearies, and trot away and have your dew-baths. And when you are tucked up in the pink heather don't be afraid of the black cloud and the raindrops, for they won't harm little pisky boys and maids if they're good. They are too busy wearing away the granite, and cutting the cleaves deeper, and making the mountains higher and our dear old Tavyland stronger and fresher. There, that's all for to-night, my impets. I'll tell ye another story to-morrow."

"Funny old thing, G'an'mother," whispered the little round-eyed ones, while they washed their pink toes in the dew. "She'm old and dafty."

That's the story of river Tavy and its cleave; not all of it by any means, but the pixy grandmother did not know any more. Nobody knows all of it, except that Someone who sent the wind, which swept up the cloud, which brought the rain, which wetted the piece of jelly, which shivered on the top of the big grey mountain of Dartmoor.

The pixy grandmother was right about the primitive man who wanted so much to know things. She was right when she said that the river taught him. He looked about him and he imitated. The river had made him models and he copied them. The tor to which he ascended to speak to that Someone was the first temple and the first altar—made without noise, a temple of unhewn stone, an altar of whole stones over which no man had lifted up any iron. It was the earliest form of religion; a better and purer form than any existing now. It was the beginning of folk-lore. It was the first and best of mysteries: the savage, the hill-top, and the wind; the cloud and the sun; the rain-built temple; the rain-shaped altar. It was the unpolluted dwelling-place which Hebrew literature tried to realise and failed; which philosophers and theocrats have tried to realise and failed; which men are always trying to realise and must always fail, because it is the beginning of things, the awakening of the soul, the birth of the mind, the first cry of the new-born. It is the first of all stories, therefore it cannot die; but the condition can never come again. The story of the rain-shattered rocks must live for ever; but only in the dimly-lighted realm of folk-lore.

Thus, in a sense, Peter and Mary, and the other folk to be described in these pages, are the children of the river, the grandchildren of the cloud and the rain. Ages have passed since the cloud first settled upon Dartmoor and the rain descended. Pandora's box has been opened since then, and all the heavenly gifts, which were to prove the ruin of mortals, escaped from it long ago, except hope left struggling in the hinge. What have the ignorant, passionate, selfish creatures in common with the freshness and purity of the wind and rain? Not much perhaps. It is a change from the summit of Ger Tor, with its wind and rain-hewn altar, to Exeter Cathedral, with its wind instrument and iron-cut sculpture—a change for the worse. It is a change from the primitive man, with his cry to the river, to Mary and Peter, and those who defile their neighbours' daughters, and drink to excess. A change for the worse? Who shall tell? Men cast back to primitive manners. The world was young when the properties of the fruit of the vine were discovered; and we all know the name of the oldest profession upon earth.

The river of Tavy flows on and on, dashing its rain sea-ward. Go upon the spectral mount of Ger Tor. Let it be night and early spring. Let there be full moonlight also. Hear the water roaring: "I have worn away the mountain of granite. I have shattered the rocks. Look at me, civilised man. I have made you a dwelling-place, but you will not have it. You swarm in your cities like bees in a rotten tree. Come back to the wind and the rain. They will cool your passions. They will heal your diseases. Come back to Nature, civilised man."

CHAPTER I

ABOUT THE TAVY FAMILY

"Coop, coop!" called Mary Tavy. "Cooley, cooley! Aw now, du'ye come, my dear. He be proper contrary when he'm minded to," she cried to Farmer Chegwidden as she shook a gorse-bush, which was her shepherd's staff, towards a big goose waddling ahead of her in the path of its own selection, and spluttering and hissing like a damp firework.

"Did ever see such a goosie?" said Mary. "When I wants 'en to go one way he goes t'other. There he goes, down under, to Helmen Barton. If he lays his egg there they'll keep 'en, and say one of their fowls dropped 'en. He wun't come home till sundown. Contrairiest bird on Dartmoor be Old Sal."

"I don't hold wi' old geese," said Farmer Chegwidden. "They'm more trouble than they'm worth. When they gets old they'm artful."

"So be volks," said Mary. "Goosies be cruel human. Old Sal knows as much as we. He'm twenty-two years old. He lays an egg every month. He'm the best mother on Dartmoor, and Peter says he shan't die till he've a mind to." By her continued use of the masculine gender any one might have thought Mary was not quite convinced herself as to her goose's sex; but it was not so really. There is nothing feminine on Dartmoor except tom-cats.

Mary lived with brother Peter close to the edge of Tavy Cleave, a little way beyond Wapsworthy. There was a rough road from the village of St. Peter Tavy, passing round the foot of Lynch Tor, and ending in a bog half-a-mile further on. Ger Cottage—so named because the most prominent feature of the landscape was Ger, or Gurt, Tor—which was the home of the Tavys, the man and the woman, not the river, nor the cleave, nor the stannary town, nor the two villages of that ilk, appeared amid boulders and furze between the rough road and the gorge cut by the river. The cottage, or to be strictly accurate, the cottages, for Peter and Mary had separate apartments, which was quite right and proper, was, or were, in a situation which a house-agent would have been justified in describing as entirely detached. There was no other dwelling-place within a considerable distance. The windows looked out upon romantic scenery, which has been described in somewhat inflated language, six-syllabled adjectives, and mixed metaphors, as something absolute and unassailable; and has been compared to the Himalayas and Andes by excitable young people under commission to write a certain number of words for cheap guide-book purposes. However, the ravine of the Tavy is perhaps the finest thing of its kind on Dartmoor; and "gentle readers" who go abroad every winter have some reason to feel ashamed of themselves if they have not seen it.

When the New Zealander comes to explore England, he will, perhaps,—if he is interested in such things—write letters to such newspapers as may have survived concerning the source of the Tavy. He will probably claim to have discovered some new source which the ignorant and vanished race of Anglo-Saxons never happened on. Most people will say that the Tavy rises at the south side of Cut Hill. Others, who do not wish to commit themselves, will make the safe statement that its source is upon Cranmere. As a matter of fact the Tavy would be a very wise river if it knew its own head. By the time it has assumed any individuality of its own and received its first titled tributary, which is the Rattle Brook, it has come through so many changes, and escaped from such a complicated maze of crevasses, that it would have to be provided with an Ariadne's clue to retrace its windings to its source. In the face of general opinion it seems likely that the Tavy begins its existence rather more than two miles north of its accredited source, at a spot close to Cranmere Pool, and almost within a stone's cast of the Dart. It would be impossible, however, to indicate any one particular fissure, with its sides of mud and dribble of slimy water, and declare that and none other was the river of Tavy in extreme and gurgling infancy.

There is no doubt about the Tavy by the time it has swallowed the Rattle Brook and a few streams of lesser importance, and has entered the cleave which it has carved through the granite by its own endless erosion. It is an exceedingly self-assertive river; passing down with a satisfied chuckle in the hot months, when the slabs of granite are like the floors of so many bakers' ovens; and in the winter roaring at Ger Tor, as though it would say, "I have cut through a thousand feet of granite since I began to trickle. I will cut through a thousand more before the sun gets cold." It is a noble little river, this shallow mountain stream, the proudest of all Dartmoor rivers. More romance has gathered around the Tavy than about all the other rivers in England put together, leaving out the Tamar. The sluggish Thames has no romance to compare with that of the Tavy. The Thames represents materialism with its pleasure-boats and glitter of wealth. It suggests big waistcoats and massive watch-chains. The Tavy stands for the spiritual side. Were the god of wine to stir the waters of each, the Thames would flow with beer; good beer possibly, but nothing better; while the Tavy would flow with champagne. The Tavy is the Rhine of England. It was beside the Tavy that fern-seed could be gathered, or the ointment obtained, which opened the eyes of mortals to the wonders of fairyland. It was on the banks of the Tavy that the pixies rewarded girls who behaved themselves—and pinched and nipped those who didn't. Beside the Tavy has grown the herb forget-me-not, which not only restored sight to the blind, but life also to the dead; and the marigold which, when touched early on certain mornings by the bare foot of the pure-minded, gave an understanding of the language of birds. Many legends current upon the

big Rhine occur also beside the shallow Tavy. There are mining romances; tales of success, struggles, and failures, from the time of the Phoenicians; tales of battles for precious tin; tales of misery and torture and human agony. That is the dark side of the Tavy—the Tavy when it roars, and its waters are black and white, and there are glaciers down Ger Tor. The tiny Lyd runs near the Rattle Brook, the bloody little Lyd in which the torturers of the stannary prison cleansed their horrible hands. The Rattle Brook knew all about it, and took the story and some of the blood down to Father Tavy; and the Tavy roared on with the evidence, and dashed it upon the walls of Tavistock Abbey, where the monks were chanting psalms so noisily they couldn't possibly hear anything else. That was the way of the monks. Stannary Laws and Tavistock Abbey have gone, and nobody could wish for them back; but the Tavy goes on in the same old way. It is no longer polluted with the blood of tin-streamers, but merely with the unromantic and discarded boots of tramps. The copper-mines are a heap of "deads"; and Wheal Betsey lies in ruin; but the Tavy still brings trout to Tavistock, although there are no more monks to bother about Fridays; and it carries away battered saucepans and crockery for which the inhabitants have no further use. This attention on the part of the townsfolk is not respectful, when it is remembered that the Tavy brought their town into being, named it, and has supplied it always with pure water. It is like throwing refuse at one's godfather.

The Tavy is unhappily named, so is its brother the Taw—both being sons of Mother Cranmere—if it is true their names are derived the one from the Gaelic *tav*, the other from the Welsh *taw*. The root word is *tam*, which appears appropriately enough in Thames, and means placid and spreading. The Tavy and the Taw are anything but that. They are never placid, not even in the dog-days. They brawl more noisily than all the other rivers in Devon. Perhaps they were so named on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle; because it is so obvious they are not placid. The river Tavy has a good deal of property. Wherever it winds it has bestowed its name. The family of Tavy is a very ancient one. It was rich and important once, possessing a number of rights, many valuable mines, much romance, to say nothing of towns abbeys, and castles; but, like most old families, it has decayed, and its property is not worth much now. It possesses Tavy Cleave; the villages of St. Peter and St. Mary (they were twins, exceedingly healthy in their youth, but growing feeble now); Mount Tavy, which is of no importance; Tavystoc, the fortified place upon the Tavy, which has been turned into Tavistock and has become famous, not for its Abbey, nor for its great men, but solely and simply for its Goose Fair; and Mary and Peter Tavy, who were not made of cob, or granite, or water, or tin, or any of those other things which made the fortune of the Tavy family, but were two simple animals of the human race, children of the river out of that portion of Dartmoor which it owns, two ignorant beings who took life seriously enough and were like the heather and gorse which surrounded them. Evolution has accomplished such marvels that Peter and Mary may possibly have been lineally descended from antediluvian heather and gorse; or perhaps Nature had intended them for heather and gorse, and while making them had come across a couple of shop-soiled souls which were not of much use, and had stirred them into the mixture which, after a certain treatment only to be explained by a good deal of medical dog-Latin, resulted in Mary and Peter being brought forth as divine images upon the edge of Tavy Cleave.

Peter and Mary were savages, although they would have used strange language had any one called them so. They did not display their genealogical tree upon their cottage wall. Had they done so it would have shown, had it been accurate, that they were descended from the Gubbingses, who, as every man knows, were as disreputable a set of savages as have ever lived. This pedigree would have shown that a certain young Gubbings had once run away with a certain Miss Gubbings to whom he was attached, and with whom he was probably related more or less intimately. Fearing capture, as they had conveyed from the gorge of the Lyd as much of the portable property of their connections as they could conveniently handle, the young couple assumed the name of Tavy from the river beside which they settled. They had a number of little Tavies, who, it was said, founded the villages of Peter Tavy and Mary Tavy, which good Christians subsequently canonised; and who, by intermarriage without much respect for the tie of consanguinity, or for such a form of religious superstition as a marriage service—if, indeed, they had ever heard of such a thing—became in time a rival band of Scythians almost as formidable to law-abiding commoners as their relations in Gubbings Land. Peter and Mary were direct descendants of these pleasant people. They didn't know it, however. It was just as well they were in ignorance, because knowledge of the truth might have turned their heads. The chief of the Gubbings was a king in his own land; therefore Peter and Mary would certainly have boasted that they were of royal blood; and Peter would assuredly have told his neighbours that if every man had his rights he would be occupying the throne of England. He would have gone on acquiring knowledge concerning those things which appertain unto ancient families, and no doubt would have conferred upon himself, although not upon Mary, a coat-of-arms such as a sheep in one quarter, a bullock in another, a bag of gold in the third, and in the fourth a peaceful commoner's head duly decollated, with the motto: "My wealth is in other men's goods." Peter would have become an intolerable nuisance had he known of his royal ancestry.

Mary was quite a foot taller than her brother. Peter was like a gnome. He was not much more than four feet in height, with a beard like a furze-bush, a nose like a clothes-peg, and a pair of eyes which had probably been intended for a boar, but had got into Peter by mistake. His teeth were much broken and were very irregular; here a tooth like a tor, there a gap like a cleave. In that respect he resembled his neighbours. Dartmoor folk have singularly bad teeth, and none of them submit to dentistry. They appear to think that defective teeth are necessary and incurable evils. When they are ill they send for the doctor at once; but when they have toothache they grin and bear it. Perhaps they know that dentists are mercenary folk, who expect to be paid for their

labours; whereas the doctor who has any claim to respectability works solely for the love of his profession, and is not to be insulted by any proposal of payment. A doctor is a sort of wandering boon-companion, according to the Dartmoor mind. There is nothing he enjoys so much as being called from his bed on a bitter winter's night, to drive some miles across the moor that he may have a pleasant chat with some commoner who feels dull. He will be invited to sit by a smouldering peat-fire, and the proposal, "Have a drop o' cider? you'm welcome," will fall gratefully upon his ears. He will be encouraged to talk about certain ailments, and to suggest remedies for the same. Then he will be pressed to finish the crock of cider, and be permitted to depart. After such hospitality he would be a base-minded man if he made any suggestion of a fee. Peter had often consulted a doctor, but he could not remember ever parting with cash in return for advice. The doctor could not remember it either.

Peter generally wore a big leather apron, which began somewhere about the region of his neck and finished at his boots. He had taken it, in a fit of absent-mindedness, out of the blacksmith of Bridestowe's smithy some years ago. He was a bit of a traveller in those days. Peter often boasted of his wanderings. That expedition to Bridestowe was one of them. It would have been six miles across the moor from Tavy Cleave, and yet Peter had made light of it. He had done much greater things. He had put to silence one of those objectionable, well-washed, soft-handed, expensively-dressed creatures who call themselves gentlemen. One of these had described to Peter his wanderings about the world, mentioning such fabulous countries as India, China, Mexico, and Peru. Peter listened in an attitude which expressed nothing if not contempt. He allowed the traveller to go on some time before crushing him. "I've travelled tu," he said at last. Then, with the manner of one dropping a brick upon a butterfly, he added, "I've been to Plymouth." Peter often mentioned that the traveller had nothing more to say.

Peter had been absent-minded when he procured the blacksmith's apron, somewhat after the manner of his early ancestors who had inhabited Lyd Gorge or Gubbings Land. He was liable to such fits. They were generally brought on by beer. One evening Mary had sent him to a farm—or rather he had permitted her to send him—with a can and a string-bag in order that he might receive payment of a debt in the form of ducks' eggs and buttermilk. On the way Peter became absent-minded. The attack was fully developed by the time he reached the farm. He forced the eggs into the can and poured the buttermilk into the string-bag.

Mary also must have been made during a fit of Nature's temporary insanity. She had been started as a man; almost finished as one; then something had gone wrong—Nature had poured the buttermilk into the string-bag, so to speak, and Mary became a female to a certain extent. She had a man's face and a man's feet. Larger feet had never scrambled down Tavy Cleave since mastodons had gone out of fashion. The impression of Mary's bare foot in the snow would have shocked a scientist. She was stronger than most men. To see Mary forking fern, carrying furze-reek, or cutting peat was a revelation in female strength. She wore stout bloomers under a short ragged skirt; not much else, except a brown jersey. The skirt was discarded sometimes in moments of emergency. She was flat-chested, and had never worn stays. She was as innocent concerning ordinary female underwear as Peter; more so, perhaps, for Peter was not blind to frills. Mary would probably have worn her brother's trousers sometimes, had it not been for that muddle-headed act of Nature, which had turned her out a woman at the last moment. Besides, Peter was a foot shorter than his sister, and his legs were merely a couple of pegs.

Somewhere in his head Peter despised Mary. He did not tell her so, or she might have beaten him with a furze-bush. He was far superior to her. Peter could read, write, and reckon with a dangerous facility. He was also an orator, and had been known to speak for five minutes at a stretch in the bar-room. He had repeated himself certainly, but every orator does that. Peter was a savage who knew just enough to look civilised. Mary was a savage who knew nothing and was therefore humorous. It was education which gave Peter the upper hand, Mary could not assert her superiority over one who read the newspapers, spoke in a bar-room, and described characters on a piece of paper which would convey a meaning to some one far away.

Ger Cottage, or the twin huts occupied by the Tavys, had been once hut-circles, belonging to the aboriginal inhabitants of Dartmoor. They were side by side, semi-detached as it were, and the one was Peter's freehold, while the other belonged to Mary. They had the same legal rights to their property as rabbits enjoy in their burrows. Legal rights are not referred to on Dartmoor, unless a foreigner intervenes with a view to squatting. "What I have I hold" is every man's motto. The hut-circles had been restored out of all recognition. They had been enlarged, the walls had been built up, chimneys made, and roofs covered with furze and held in place by lumps of granite had been erected. Peter and Mary were quite independent. Peter was the best housewife, just as Mary was the best farmer. Peter also called himself a handy man, which was merely another way of saying that he was no good at anything. He would undertake all kinds of jobs, ask for a little on account, then postpone the work for a few years. He never completed anything. Mary was the money-maker, and he was really her business-manager. Mary was so ignorant that she never wondered how Peter got his money. It was perfectly simple. Peter would sell a twelve-pound goose at eightpence a pound. When he collected the money it naturally amounted to eight shillings. When he paid it over to Mary it had dwindled to five shillings. "Twelve times eight be sixty," Peter would explain. "Sixty pence be five shilluns." Mary knew no better. Then Peter always asked for a shilling as his commission, and Mary had to give it him. Peter had studied ordinary business methods with some success; or perhaps it came to him naturally. He had some ponies also. There is plenty of money in pony-breeding as Peter practised it. He would go out upon the moor, find a young pony which had not been branded, drive it home without any ostentation, and shut it-up in

his linhay. After a time he would set his own brand upon it and let it run loose. When the annual pony-drift came round he would claim it, subsequently selling it at Lydford market for five pounds. Sometimes he would remove a brand, and obliterate all traces of it by searing his own upon the same spot; but he never went to this extreme unless he was hard pressed for money, because Peter had certain religious convictions, and he always felt when he removed a brand that he was performing a dishonest action.

The only other member of the Tavy family was Grandfather. He was the reprobate. Peter and Mary had morals of their own, not many, but sufficient for their needs; but Grandfather had none. He was utterly bad; a wheezing, worn-out, asthmatic old sinner, who had never been known to tell the truth. Grandfather was always in Peter's hut. Mary had often begged for him to keep her company at nights, but Peter steadfastly refused to let the old rascal leave his quarters. So Grandfather lived with Peter, and spent his time standing with his back to the wall, wheezing and chuckling and making all sorts of unpleasant noises, as if there was some obstruction on his chest which he was trying always to remove.

Grandfather's hands were very loose and shaky, and his face was dreadfully dirty. Peter washed it sometimes, while the old fellow wheezed and groaned. Sometimes Peter opened his chest and examined Grandfather's organs, which he declared were in a perfectly healthy condition. There appeared to be no excuse for Grandfather's mendacious habits. He had got into the way of lying years back, and could not shake it off. Grandfather was well over a hundred years old, and he was not the slightest use except as a companion. Some people would have been afraid of him, because of his unpleasant noises, but Peter and Mary loved him like dutiful grandchildren. They recognised in Grandfather the true Gubbings spirit. He was a weak, sinful creature like themselves.

Grandfather had commenced life as a clock, but he had soon given up that kind of work, or something had occurred to turn him from a useful career; just as Peter had been meant for some sort of quadruped, and Mary had been a man up to the last possible moment. Some evil spirit must have entered into Grandfather; a malicious impet from the Tavy river perhaps; or possibly the wild wind of Dartmoor had passed down the cleave one day, to enter Grandfather's chest and intoxicate him for ever. The fact remained that Grandfather was hopelessly bad; he was a regular misanthrope; his ticks were so many curses, his strikings were oaths. He did his best to mislead the two grandchildren, although it didn't matter much, because time is of no account on Dartmoor. "He'm a proper old brute, Gran'vaither," Peter would say sometimes, but never in the old clock's hearing.

Mary's mission in life was to breed geese. She had been sent into the world for the express purpose of supplying folk with savoury meat stuffed with sage and onions at Christmas time. She succeeded admirably. She was the best goosewoman on Dartmoor, and her birds were always in demand. One year Peter had obtained a shilling a pound for three unusually fine young birds; but Mary didn't know that. She fattened her geese, and incidentally Peter also.

"They'm contrairy birds," observed Farmer Chegwidden, while he smoked and rested himself upon a boulder, watching Mary's efforts to collect her flock. "Never goes the way us want 'em to. Like volks," he added, with philosophic calm. He might have been assisting Mary, only he didn't believe in violent exercise which would not be suitably rewarded.

"Volks calls 'en vulish, but they bain't. They'm just vull o' human vices," said Mary, flopping to and fro and waving her furze-bush.

"They'm vulish to look at," explained Farmer Chegwidden.

"'Tis their artful way. Peter looks vulish tu, and he knows plenty. More'n any of they goosies, I reckon. Coop, coop! Drat the toad! I'll scat 'en."

The leader of the feathered choir was off again. Chegwidden could have headed it off, only he had finished his day's work. He managed to summon up the energy to remark, "They gets over the ground surprising, wi' their wings spread."

"He'm a proper little brute. I wun't waste no more time over 'en," said Mary, as she wiped her forehead with a bunch of fern. "He'll come home when he've a mind to, and lay his egg in the linny likely, where Peter'll tread on 'en in the morning. Peter be cruel clumsy wi' his boots. Will ye please to step inside, Varmer Chegwidden?"

"I mun get home. Got the bullocks to feed."

"Fine bullocks tu. I seed 'em down cleave last night. Cooney, cooney! Come along home, my purty angels. Wish ye good-night, Varmer Chegwidden."

"Why du'ye call 'em angels?" asked the farmer, making strange sounds of laughter behind his hand.

"Aw now, I'll tell ye. There was a lady down along, a dafty lady what painted, and her come to Peter, and her ses, 'I wants they goosies to paint.' Well, us wouldn't have it. Us thought her wanted to paint 'em, one of 'em red, 'nother green likely, 'nother yellow maybe, and it might be bad for their bellies. But us found her wanted to put 'em on a picture. Her had got a mazed notion about the cleave and resurrection, wi' angels flapping over, and her wanted my goosies for angels. Peter ses he didn't know goosies were like angels. Knows a lot, Peter du."

"Angels be like gals," declared Chegwiddden. "Like them gals to Tavistock what pulls the beer, wi' pert faces and vuzzy hair. That's what angels be like. I've seed the pictures in a Bible."

"Aw now. Us couldn't make she out," went on Mary. "The lady said 'twas just the wings her wanted. Her said angels ha' got goosies' wings, and us couldn't say 'em hasn't, 'cause us ain't seed any. Her knew all about it. So Peter druve the goosies down cleave, and her painted 'em for angels sure 'nuff. Us never knew angels has goosies' wings, but the lady knew. Her was sure on't."

Mary stalked towards the hut-circles at the head of her row of geese, grave, waddling, self-important, and blissfully unconscious of anything in the nature of sage and onions. There was a touch of humour about the procession. It was not altogether unlike the spectacle to be witnessed in certain country boroughs of the mayor and corporation walking into church.

"Goosies be cruel human," said Mary.

CHAPTER II

ABOUT BRIGHTLY

Up the road from Brentor to St. Mary Tavy came Brightly, his basket dragging on his arm. He was very tired, but there was nothing unusual in that. He was tired to the point of exhaustion every day. He was very hungry, but he was used to that too. He was thinking of bread and cheese and cider; new bread and soft cheese, and cider with a rough edge to it. He licked his lips, and tried to believe he was tasting them. Then he began to cough. It was a long, heaving cough, something like that of a Dartmoor pony. He had to put his basket down and lean over it, and tap at his thin chest with a long raw hand.

Nobody wanted Brightly, because he was not of the least importance. He hadn't got a home, or a vote, or any of those things which make the world desire the presence of people. He was only a nuisance, who worried desirable folk that he might exist, though the people whom he worried did not ask him to live. Brightly was a purveyor of rabbit-skins. He dealt in rubbish, possibly because he was rubbish himself. He tramped about Dartmoor, between Okehampton and Tavistock, collecting rabbit-skins. When he was given them for nothing he was grateful, but his stock of gratitude was not drawn upon to any large extent. It is not the way of Dartmoor folk to part with even rubbish for nothing. To obtain his rabbit-skins Brightly had to dip his raw hand beneath the scrap of oilcloth which covered his basket, and produce a horrible little red and yellow vase which any decent-minded person would have destroyed at sight. Brightly bore most things fairly well, but when, on one occasion while climbing over the rocks, he had dropped the basket and all the red and yellow vases were smashed to atoms, he had cried. He had been tired and hungry as usual, and knew he had lost the capital without which a man cannot do business. The dropping of that basket meant bankruptcy to Brightly.

The dealer in rabbit-skins was not alone in the world. He had a dog, which was rubbish like its master. The animal was of no recognised breed, although in a dim light it called itself a fox-terrier. She could not have been an intelligent dog, or she would not have remained constant to Brightly. Her name was Ju, which was an abbreviation of Jerusalem. One Sunday evening Brightly had slipped inside a church, and somewhat to his surprise had been allowed to remain, although a sidesman was told off to keep an eye upon him and see that he did not break open the empty poor-box. A hymn was sung about Jerusalem the golden, a piece of pagan doggerel concerning the future state, where happy souls were indulging in bacchanalian revels, and over-eating themselves in a sort of glorified dairy filled with milk and honey. The hymn enraptured Brightly, who was, of course, tired and famished; and when he had left the warm church, although without any of the promised milk and honey, he kept on murmuring the lines and trying to recall the music. He could think of nothing but Jerusalem for some days. He went into the public library at Tavistock and looked it up in a map of the world, discovered it was in a country called Palestine, and wondered how many rabbit-skins it would cost to take him there. Brightly reckoned in rabbit-skins, not in shillings and pence, which were matters he was not very familiar with. He noticed that whenever he mentioned the name of Jerusalem the dog wagged her tail, as though she too was interested in the dairy produce; so, as the animal lacked a title, Jerusalem was awarded her. Brightly thought of the milk and honey whenever he called his poor half-starved cur.

Presently he thought he had coughed long enough, so he picked up his basket and went on climbing the road, his body bent as usual towards the right. At a distance he looked like the half of a circle. He could not stand straight. The weight of his basket and habit had crooked him like an oak branch. He tramped on towards the barren village of St. Mary Tavy. There was a certain amount of wild scenery to be admired. Away to the right was Brentor and the church upon its crags. To the left were piled the "deads" of the abandoned copper-mines. The name of Wheal Friendship might have had a cheerful sound for Brightly had he known what friendship meant. He didn't look at the scenery, because he was half blind. He could see his way about, but that was all. He lived in the twilight. He wore a big pair of unsightly spectacles with tortoise-shell rims. His big eyes were always staring widely behind the glasses, seeing all they could, which was the little bit of road in front and no more.

Brightly was known about that particular part of the moor which he frequented as the Seal. Every one laughed whenever the Seal was mentioned. Brightly's wardrobe consisted chiefly of an old and very tightly-fitting suit of black, distinctly clerical in cut. They had been obtained from a Wesleyan shepherd in exchange for a pair of red and yellow vases to embellish the mantel of the nonconforming parlour. Rain is not unknown upon Dartmoor, and in the neighbourhood of St. Mary Tavy it descends with pitiless violence. Brightly would be quickly saturated, having no means of protecting himself; and then the tight clerical garments, sodden and sleek and shining, would certainly bear some resemblance to the coat of a seal which had just left the sea; a resemblance which was not lessened by his wizened little face and weary shuffling gait.

Brightly did not think much while he tramped the moor. He had no right to think. It was not in the way of business. Still, he had his dream, not more than one, because he was not troubled with an active imagination. He tried to fancy himself going about, not on his tired rheumatic legs, but in a little ramshackle cart, with fern at the bottom for Ju to lie on, and a bit of board at the side bearing in white letters the inscription: "A. Brightly. Purveyor of rabbit-skins"; and a lamp to be lighted after dark, and a plank for himself to sit on, and a box behind containing the red and yellow vases. All this splendour to be drawn by a little shaggy pony. What a great man he would be in those days! Starting forth in the morning would be a pleasure and not a pain. Frequently Brightly babbled of his hypothetical cart. He felt sure it must come some day, and so he had begun to prepare for it. He had secured the plank upon which he was to sit and guide the pony, and every autumn he cut some fern to put at the bottom of the cart should it arrive suddenly. The plank he had picked up, and the fern had been cut upon the moor. He had clearly no right to them. The plank had probably slipped out of a granite cart, and the fern belonged to the commoners. There was plenty of it for every one, but, as the commoners would have argued, that was not the point. They had a right to cut the fern, and people like Brightly have no right to anything, except a cheap funeral. Brightly had no business to wander about the moor, which was never made for him, or to kick his boots to pieces against good Duchy of Cornwall granite. All the commoners cheated the Duchy of Cornwall, while they loyally cheered the name of the Duke. They took his granite and skilfully evaded payment of the royalty, and prayed each Sunday in their chapels for grace to continue in honesty; but the fact of their being commoners, some of them having the privilege of the newtake, and others not having the privilege but taking it all the same, made all the difference. They had to assert themselves. When it came to a question of a few extra shillings in the money-box, or even of a few extra pence, minor matters, such as petty tyrannical ordinances of law and Church, could take their seats in a back corner and "bide there." Brightly had no privileges. He had to obey every one. He was only a worm which any one was at perfect liberty to slice in half with a spade.

Brightly had a home. The river saw to that; not the Tavy, but the less romantic Taw. Brightly belonged to the Torridge and Taw branch of the family. On the Western side of Cawsand are many gorges in the great cleave cut by the Taw between Belstone and Sticklepath. There narrow and deep clefts have been made by the persistent water draining down to the Taw from the bogs above. In the largest of these clefts Brightly was at home. The sides were completely hidden by willow-scrub, immense ferns, and clumps of whortleberries, as well as by overhanging masses of granite. The water could be heard dripping below like a chime of fairy bells. In winter the cleft appeared a white cascade of falling water, but Brightly's cave was fairly dry and quite sheltered. He was never there by day, and at night nobody could see the smoke of his fire. He had built up the entrance with shaped stones taken from the long-abandoned cots beside the old copper-mines below. The cleft was full of copper, which stained the water a delightful shade of green. Brightly had furnished his home with those things which others had thrown away. He had long ago solved the difficulty of cooking with a perforated frying-pan, and of turning to practical uses a kettle with a bottom like a sieve.

Brightly reached the moor gate. On the other side was the long straggling village of St. Mary Tavy. Beside the gate was a heap of refuse. Brightly seated himself upon it, because he thought it was the proper place for him.

"I be cruel hungry, Ju," explained Brightly.

"So be I," said the dog's tail.

"Fair worn to bits tu," went on Brightly.

"Same here," said the tail.

"Wait till us has the cart," said Brightly cheerily, placing the rabbit-skins upon the dirt beside him. "Us won't be worn to bits then. Us will du drie times the business, and have a cottage and potato-patch, and us will have bread and cheese two times a day and barrel o' cider in the linny. Us will have fat bacon on Sundays tu."

Brightly did not know that ambition is an evil thing. It was ridiculous for him to aspire to a cottage and potato-patch, and bread and cheese three times a day. Kindly souls had created stately mansions for such as he. There was one at Tavistock and another in Okehampton; beautiful buildings equipped with all modern conveniences where he could live in comfort, and not worry his head about rabbit-skins, or about Ju, or about such follies as liberty and independence, or about such unnecessary aids to existence as the moorland wind, his river Taw, the golden blossoms of the gorse, the moonlight upon the rocks, and the sweet scent of heather. Brightly was an unreasonable creature to work and starve when a large stone mansion was waiting for him.

"Us ha' come a cruel long way, Ju," said the little man, descending from his dream. "Only two rabbit-skins. Business be cruel bad. Us mun get on. This be an awkward village to work. It be all scattery about like."

Brightly rose with some alacrity. The moor gate rattled. The hand of the village constable was upon it, and the eyes of that official, who was to Brightly, at least, a far more considerable person than the Lord Chief Justice, were regarding the vagabond with a suspicion which was perfectly natural considering their respective positions.

"Good-evening, sir," said Brightly with deep humility. The policeman was not called upon to answer such things as Brightly. He condescended, however, to observe in the severe tones which his uniform demanded: "Best be moving on, hadn't ye?"

Brightly agreed that it was advisable. He was well aware he had no right to be sitting upon the heap of refuse. He had probably damaged it in some way. The policeman had his bicycle with him, as he was on his way to Lydford. Brightly stood in a reverential attitude, held the gate open, and touched his cap as the great man rolled by. The constable accepted the service, without thanks, and looked back until the little wanderer was out of sight. Such creatures could be turned to profitable uses after all. They could be made to supply industrious village constables with opportunities for promotion. They could be arrested and charged with house-breaking, rick-burning, or swaling out of season; if such charges could not be supported, they could be summoned for keeping a dog without a licence. The policeman made a note of Brightly, as business was not very flourishing just then. There was the usual amount of illegality being practised by the commoners; but the village constable had nothing to do with that. Commoners are influential folk. A man could not meddle with them and retain his popularity. The policeman had to be polite to his social superiors, and salute the elders of Ebenezer with a bowed head, and wink violently when it was incumbent upon him so to do.

Dartmoor has no reason to be proud of St. Mary Tavy, as it is quite the dreariest-looking village upon the moor. Even the river seems to be rather ashamed of it, and turns away as if from a poor relation. St. Peter, over the way, is much more cheerful. They were well-to-do once, these two. They were not only saints, but wealthy, in the good days when the wheals were working and the green stain of copper was upon everything. Now they have come down in the world. The old gentleman lets lodgings, and the old lady takes in washing. They have put away their halos, dropped their saintly prefix, and it is exceedingly improbable that they will ever want them again. They always found it hard work to live up to their reputations; not that they tried very much; but now they are both easy and comfortable as plain everyday folk, neither better nor worse than their neighbours Brentor and Lydford. Peter is a fine, rugged old gentleman; but Mary is decidedly plain with age. There is nothing tender or pleasant about her. She is shamelessly naked; without trees or bushes, and the wheal-scarred moor around is as bald as an apple. The wind comes across her head with the blast of ten thousand bagpipes; and when it rains upon St. Mary—it rains!

Brightly knew all about that rain. He had often played the Seal upon that wild road, and had felt the water trickling down his back and making reservoirs of his boots; while people would stand at their windows and laugh at him. Nobody had ever asked him to come in and take shelter. Such an idea would never have occurred to them. Ponies and bullocks were out upon the moor in all weathers, and every winter some died from exposure. Brightly was nothing like so valuable as a pony or bullock, and if he were to die of exposure nobody would be out of pocket.

Brightly went from cottage to cottage, but there were no rabbit-skins that day. There seemed to be a rabbit famine just then. Lamps were lighted in windows here and there. When the doors were opened Brightly felt the warmth of the room, smelt the glowing peat and the fragrant teapot, and sometimes saw preparations for a meal. What a wonderful thing it must be, he thought, to have a room of one's own; a hearth, and a mantelpiece holding china dogs, cows with purple spots, and photographs of relations in the Army; a table covered with rare and precious things, such as waxen fruit beneath a dome of glass, woollen mats, and shells from foreign lands; a clock in full working order; a dresser stocked with red and green crockery; and upon the walls priceless oleographs framed in blue ribbon, designed and printed in Austria, and depicting their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, simpering approvingly at a scarlet Abraham in the act of despatching a yellow Isaac with a bright-blue scimitar. Brightly sighed as each door was closed upon him, and each smoky little paradise disappeared. He was having a run of bad luck. Ju knew all about it. She put what was left of her tail between her legs and shivered. No doubt she wished she had been born into the world a genuine dog, and not a mongrel; just as Brightly sometimes wished he had been born a real human being, and not a poor thing which dealt in rabbit-skins.

He reached the top of the village. The road heaved above him, and then came the bare upland. He could do no more that evening. There was no food, or fire, or shelter for him. He knew of a barn in which he could sleep at Brentor, but it was too late to go back there. Darkness was coming on. Brightly did not require to feel in his pocket to discover the state of his finances. He knew he had just twopence.

There was a gate beside him, and on the other side a row of very small whitewashed cottages one room high, which had been built for miners in the days when Mary Tavy had been a saint and prosperous; they were then occupied by assorted families. Brightly stumbled through and knocked at the door of the first. It was opened by a young woman nursing a baby; another was hanging to her skirts; a third sprawled under the table; there was a baby in a cradle, another

wrapped upon a chair. It appeared to be a congress of babies. The place was crawling with them. It was a regular baby-warren. They had been turned out wholesale. Even Brightly felt he had come to the wrong place, as he asked the extraordinarily fertile female if she would give him a cup of tea and piece of bread for one penny.

The answer was in the negative. The woman was inclined to be hysterical, which was not surprising considering her surroundings. She was alone in the house, if she could be called alone when it was hardly possible to step across the floor for babies which were lying about like bees under a lime-tree. Brightly was known as a vagabond. He looked quite the sort of man who would murder her and all the children. She told him to go away, and when he did not move, because he had not heard, she began to scream.

"I'll send for policeman if ye don't go. You'm a bad man. Us knows ye. Coming here to scare me, just as I be going to have a baby tu. 'Twill be cross-eyed, poor dear, wi' yew overlooking me. Get along wi' yew, or I'll call neighbours."

Brightly begged her pardon in his soft voice and went. He knew it was no use trying the other cottages. The woman with the army of children would only follow from door to door, and describe how he had insulted her. He made his way to the top of the village and sat upon the hedge. Ju crouched beside him and licked his boots. It was a fine evening, only they were too hungry to appreciate it properly.

"Us mun get food, or us wun't tramp far in the morning," said Brightly. "This wind du seem to mak' a stomach feel cruel empty."

"Makes a dog's stomach empty too, father," said the eloquent tail of Ju.

"Us will go to the shop, and get what us can for a penny. Mun keep one penny for to-morrow," said Brightly.

He turned his dim eyes towards the road. A horse was trotting up the long hill, and presently he saw it; a big ugly grey with a shaggy coat. Brightly knew who it was approaching him, and had there been time he would have hidden, because he was afraid of the man who rode. "It be Varmer Pendoggat," he whispered. "Don't ye growl, Ju."

Possibly the rider would have passed without a word, but the grey horse saw the creatures upon the hedge and shied, crushing the rider's leg against one of the posts opposite. This was unfortunate for Brightly, as it was clearly his fault. Quaint objects with big spectacles and rabbit-skins have no business to sit upon a hedge in the twilight. He had frightened the horse, just as he had frightened the woman with a family. The horse had hurt his master, and Pendoggat was not the sort of man to suffer patiently.

There is a certain language which must not be described. It may be heard to perfection in the cheap enclosures at race-meetings, in certain places licensed to sell beer, at rabbit-shoots, and in other places where men of narrow foreheads come together and seem to revert to a type of being which puzzles the scientist, because there is nothing else in the entire animal world quite like it. Pendoggat made use of that language. He had a low forehead, a scowling face, small eyes, which looked anywhere except at the object addressed, bushy black moustache, and high cheek-bones. He never laughed, but when he was angry he grinned, and spittle ran down his chin. He was a strong man; it was said he could pick up a sack of flour with one hand. He could have taken Brightly and broken him up like a rotten stick. Most people were respectful to Pendoggat. The village constable would have retired on a pension rather than offend him.

"I be sorry, sir. I be cruel sorry," muttered poor shivering Brightly. "I did bide still, sir, and I told the dog to bide still tu. I hopes you hain't hurt, sir. Don't ye be hard on I, sir. Us have had a bad day, and us be hungry, sir."

Pendoggat replied with more of the same language. He tried to destroy Ju with his thick ground-ash, but the wise cur escaped. Then he sidled the horse towards the hedge, and crushed Brightly against its stones. He saw nothing pathetic in the poor thin creature's quivering face and half-blind eyes; but he obtained some enjoyment out of the piping cry for mercy. Brightly thought he was going to be killed, and though he didn't mind that much, he did not want to be tortured.

"Don't ye, sir. Don't ye hurt I," he cried. "I didn't mean it, sir. I was biding quiet. You'm hurting I cruel, sir. I'll give ye two vases, sir, purty vases, if yew lets I go."

Pendoggat struck his horse, and the animal started back. Brightly reached his raw hand up the hedge and lifted his basket tenderly. It was like losing flesh and blood to part with his vases, but freedom from persecution was worth any ransom. He removed the oil-cloth. What was left of the light softened the hideous ware and made the crude colouring endurable.

"Tak' two, sir," said Brightly piteously. "Them's the best, sir."

"Give me up the basket," Pendoggat muttered.

The shivering little man lifted it. Pendoggat snatched at the handle, pulled out a vase, and flung it against the stone hedge. There was a sharp sound, and then the road became spotted with red and yellow fragments.

This was something which Brightly could hardly understand. It was too raw and crude. He stood in the road, with his hands swaying like two pendulums against his thin legs, and wondered why

the world had been made and what was the object of it all. There was another crash, and a second shower of red and yellow fragments. Pendoggat had selected his pair of vases, and he was also enjoying himself. He looked up and down, saw there was no one in sight; Dartmoor is a wild and lawless place, and nobody could dictate to him. He was a commoner; master of the rivers and the granite. Brightly said nothing. He lifted a red hand for his basket, which contained what was left of his capital, but Pendoggat only struck the clumsy fingers with his ground-ash. It was darker, but a wild gleam was showing over what had been Gubbings Land. The moon was coming up that way.

"I'll learn ye to scare my horse," growled Pendoggat. "I saw you shake your hand at him. I heard you setting on the dog. If I was to give you what you deserve, I'd—" He lifted his arm, and there was another crash, and more flesh and blood were wasted.

"Don't ye, sir," cried Brightly bitterly. "It be ruin, sir. I tored they once avore, and 'twas nigh a month 'vore I could start again. I works hard, sir, and I du try, but I've got this asthma, sir, and rheumatism, and I can't properly see, master. I've been in hospital to Plymouth, sir, but they ses I would never properly see. 'Tis hard to start again, master, and I ain't got friends. Don't ye tear any more, master. I'll never get right again."

Pendoggat went on smashing the vases. There were not many of them, not nearly enough to satisfy him. The last was shattered, and he flung the basket at Brightly, hitting him on the head, but fortunately not breaking his spectacles. Brightly wanted to be alone; to crawl into the bracken with Ju, and think about many things; only Pendoggat would not let him go.

"Hand up those rabbit-skins," he shouted. He was growing excited. Smashing the vases had put passion into him.

"I've tramped ten miles for they, master. Sourton to Lydford, and Lydford to Brentor, and Brentor to Mary Tavy. Times be very bad, sir. Ten miles for two rabbit-skins, master."

"Hand them up, or I'll break your head."

Brightly had to obey. Pendoggat flung the skins across the saddle and grinned. He passed his sleeve across his lips, then put out his arm, seized Brightly by the scarf round his neck, and dragged him near. "If I was to give ye one or two across the head, 'twould learn ye not to scare horses," he said.

Brightly shivered a little more, and lifted his wizened face.

"Got any money? Tell me the truth, or I'll pull the rags off ye."

"Duppence, master. 'Tis all I has now you'm torn the cloam and got my rabbit-skins. If it warn't for the duppence I don't know what me and Ju would du."

"Hand it over," said Pendoggat.

"I can't, master. I can't," whispered Brightly, gulping like a dying fish.

"Hand it over, or I'll strangle ye." Then in a fit of passion he dragged Brightly right across the saddle and tore his pocket open. The two copper coins fell into his hand. He dropped Brightly upon the red and yellow fragments, which cut his raw hands, then hit his horse, and rode on triumphing. He had punished the miserable little dealer in rubbish; and he fancied Brightly would not venture to frighten his horse again.

Pendoggat rode up to the high moor and felt the wind. He was about to strike his horse into a canter, when a spectre started out of the gloom, a wizened face reached his knee, an agonised voice cried: "Give I back my duppence, master. Give I back my duppence."

Pendoggat shivered. He did not enjoy the sound of that voice, or the sight of that face. He thought of death when he saw that face. Brightly was only one of the mean things of the earth, and mean things make a fuss about trifles. That face and that voice all over the loss of twopence! Probably the wretched thing was mad. Honest men are often frightened when they see lunatics.

"Us be cruel hungry, master. Us have eaten nought all day. Us have lost our cloam and our rabbit-skins. Give I back my duppence, master. I'll work for ye to-morrow."

Pendoggat hit his horse, and the animal cantered away, and the spectre troubled him no longer. He wiped his chin again and felt satisfied. He had made a poor creature suffer. There was a certain amount of crude pleasure in that thought. But why had that face and voice suggested death, the death of a man who has used his power to deprive a poor wretch of his vineyard? Pendoggat flung the rabbit-skins into the gaping pit of a mine-shaft and cantered on. He was a free man; he was a commoner; the rivers and the rocks were his.

Brightly stumbled back to the hedge to reclaim his empty basket. He talked to Ju for a little, and tried to understand things, but couldn't. He would have to start all over again. He discovered a turnip, which had probably rolled out of a cart and was therefore any one's property, and he filled his stomach with that. Ju raked a bone bearing a few sinews out of a rubbish-heap. So they might have done worse.

At the top of the village was an old cow-barn. Above was a loft containing a little dry fern. Brightly and Ju lodged there. It was quite away from other buildings, standing well out upon the moor, therefore nobody heard a queer piping voice, singing and feasting on the quaint doggerel

far into the night—

"Jerusalem the golden,
Wi' milk and honey blest...

CHAPTER III

ABOUT PASTOR AND MASTER

Unpleasant creatures are so plentiful in the world that they cannot be overlooked. Were there only a few they might be ignored; but they throng, they thrust themselves forward, they shout to attract attention, they push the decent-looking out of the way. The ugliest women make the most noise; the ugliest men shove to the front in a crowd; the ugliest insects make their way into bed-chambers. Why Nature made so much ugliness, side by side with so much that is beautiful, only Nature knows. Some countries are made detestable to live in by the presence of hideous creatures. There is the fire-ant of the Amazon valley, which will put human beings to flight. There is the *Mygale* spider, covered with poisonous red hair, its body the size of a duck's egg, the spread of its legs covering eight inches, which scuttles into a room by moonlight and casts a horrible shadow upon the bed. There is the wolf-spider which, if a man passes near its lair, will leap out and pursue him, and bite him if it can. There are so many of these repulsive things that they cannot be disregarded. Some things can be kept out of the way: abattoirs, operating-theatres, vivisection-hells. People ignore and forget these, because they are not seen; but the man wolf-spider cannot be forgotten, because he leaps out and pursues those that come near his lurking-place.

Nothing in the entire system of creation can be more inexplicable than the persistent cruelty of Nature. Death there must be, but Nature resents a painless death. Animals not only kill but torture those which are inferior to them. Mason-wasps deliberately vivisect spiders, which are insects extremely tenacious of life. It is the same all the way along the scale up to and including man. Nature does her work with bloody hands; birth, life, death, become a miserable dabble of blood and passion. Some people shut their eyes to it all; others cannot; others add to it; churches with their tolling bells and black masses revel in the mystic side of it.

There is not a person living who has not done an act of cruelty. It is impossible to refrain from it. However kindly the soul may be Nature will whisper bloody messages; and some day there is sure to be a temporary breakdown. In a town the wretched business is not much seen. It lurks in the dark corners, like the *Mygale* spider, and comes out perhaps at moonlight to cast its shadow upon the bed. On the sparsely inhabited moor it is visible, for it cannot hide away so easily, and it tries less because it is fiercer. It is like the wolf-spider which dashes out in a mad fury. Upon a wild upland passions are fiercer, just as physical strength is greater. Everything seems to suggest the dark end of the scale; the rain is more furious, the clouds are blacker, the wind is mightier, the rivers are colder; Nature is at full strength. She is wild and lawless, and men are often wild and lawless too. Tender lilies would not live upon the moor, and it is no use looking for them. They are down in the valleys. Upon the moor there is the granite, the spiny gorse, the rugged heather. It is no use looking for the qualities of the lily in those men who are made of the granite, and gorse, and heather.

Pendoggat was the sort of man who might have melted into tears at hearing a violin played, and then have kicked the performer down a wheel if he asked for a copper. Nature turns out a lot of contradictory work like that. She never troubles to fit the joints together. Had any one told Pendoggat he was a cruel man, he would first of all have stunned the speaker into silence, and then have wondered whatever the man had been driving at. It is a peculiarity of cruelty that it does not comprehend cruelty. No argument will persuade a rabbit-trapper that the wretched animals suffer in the iron jaws of his traps. The man who skins an eel alive, and curses it because it won't keep still, cannot be brought to understand that he is doing anything inhuman. Perhaps he will admit he had never given the subject a thought; more probably he will regard the apostle of mercy as a madman. The only way to enlighten such men is to skin them alive, or compel them to tear themselves to death in an iron trap; and there are, unfortunately, laws to prevent that. The only just law ever made was the *lex talionis*, and Nature recognises that frequently. Pendoggat trapped rabbits in his fields, and if they were not dead when he found them he left them as a rule. The traps were supposed to kill them in time, and the longer they were in dying the longer their flesh would keep. That was the way he looked at it. Quite a practical way.

Very likely Pendoggat was of Spanish extraction in spite of his Cornish name. The average Cornishman has a thoroughly good heart, and is, if he be of the true stock, invariably fair. The Cornish man or maid who is dark owes something to foreign blood. There are in Cornwall many men and women so strikingly dark as to attract attention at once; and if their ancestry could be traced back a couple of hundred years it might be found that a Spanish name occurred. While the stout men of Devon were chasing the Armada up channel and plucking the Admiral's feathers one by one, and the patriotic Manacles were doing Cornwall's share by giving the big galleons a hearty welcome, many a shipwrecked sailor found his way into the cottages of fishermen and wreckers, and with the aid of a pocketful of gold pieces made themselves at home. Some possibly were able to return to Spain; others probably seduced their protectors' young women; others

were lawfully wedded; others settled down in their new land and took a Cornish name. It is a difficult piece of history to trace, and much must remain pure hypothesis; but it is fairly certain that had there been no Spanish Armada to invade England, and to send Queen Elizabeth to her writing-tablets to reel off a lot of badly-rhymed doggerel in imitation of Master Spenser, there would also have been no Farmer Pendoggat dwelling at Helmen Barton in the parish of Lydford and sub-parish of St. Mary Tavy, as a commoner of Dartmoor and a tenant in name of Elizabeth's descendant the Duke of Cornwall.

There was nothing of a sinister nature about the Barton. Even its name meant simply in its original Celtic the place of the high stone; *hel* being a corruption of *huhel*, and *men* one of the various later forms of *maen*; just as *huhel twr*, the high tor, has now become Hel Tor. Wherever people have been given a chance of dragging in the devil and his dwelling-place they have taken it; actuated, perhaps, by the same motive which impelled the old dame to make a profound reverence whenever the name of the ghostly enemy was mentioned, as she didn't know what would be her fate in a future state, so thought it wise to try and propitiate both sides. The Barton was a long low house of granite, damp and ugly. No architect could make a house built of granite look pleasant; no art could prevent the tough stone from sweating. It was tiled, which made it look colder still. Creepers would not crawl up its walls on account of the winds. One half of the Barton was crowded with windows, the other half appeared to be a blank wall. A good many farm-houses are built upon that plan, the stable and loft being a continuation of the dwelling-house, and to all outward appearance a part of it. There was not a tree near the place. The farm was in a fuzzy hollow; above was a fuzzy down. It ought to have been called Furzeland, a name which is borne by a tiny hamlet in mid-Devon, which nobody has ever heard of, where the furze does not grow. The high stone which had named the place—probably a menhir—had disappeared long ago. Some former tenant would have broken it up and built it into a wall. The commoners' creed is a simple one, and runs thus: "Sometimes I believe in God who made Dartmoor. I cling to my privileges of mining, turbary, and quarrying. I take whatever I can find on the moor, and give no man pay or thanks. I reverence my landlord, and straighten his boundary walls when he, isn't looking. The granite is mine, and the peat, and the rivers, and the fish in them, and so are the cattle upon the hills, if no other man can put forward a better claim. No foreign devil shall share my privileges. If any man offers to scratch my back he must pay vor't. Amen."

It was fitting that a man like Pendoggat should live among the furze, farm in the furze, fight with the furze. He resembled it in its fierceness, its spitefulness, its tenacity of life; but not in its beauty and fragrance. He brought forth no golden blossoms. There was no thorn-protected fragrance in him. He was always struggling with the furze, without realising that it must defeat him in the end. He burnt it, but up it came in the spring. He grubbed it up, but portions of the root escaped and sent forth new growth. He would reclaim a patch, but directly he turned his back upon it to attack a fresh piece the furze returned. To eradicate furze upon a moor was not one of the labours allotted to Hercules. He would have found it worse than cutting off the heads of the water-snake. Pendoggat had fought for twenty years, and the enemy was still undefeated; he would die, and the gorse would go on; for he was only a hardy annual, and the gorse is a perennial, as eternal as the rivers and the granite. It bristled upon every side of the Barton, the greater gorse as well as the lesser, and it was in flower all the year round, as though boasting of its indomitable strength and vitality. On the west side, where the moorland dipped and made an opening for the winds from Tavy Cleave, a long narrow brake remained untouched to make a shelter for the house. The gorse there was high and thick, and its ropy stems were as big round as a man's wrist. Pendoggat would have grievously assaulted any man who dared to fire that brake.

People who talked scandal in the twin villages, namely, the entire population, wondered whether Mrs. Pendoggat was really as respectable as she looked. They decided against her, as they were not the sort of people to give any one the benefit of a doubt. They were right, however, for Annie Pendoggat had no claim to the latter part of her name. She was really Annie Crocker, a degraded member of one of those three famous families—Cruwys and Copplestone being the other two—who reached their zenith before the Norman invasion. She had come to Pendoggat as housekeeper, and could not get away from him; neither could he dismiss her. She was a little woman, with a sharp face and a soft voice; much too soft, people said. She could insult any one in a manner which suggested that she loved them. She had been fond of her master in her snake-like way. She still admired his brute strength, and what she thought was his courage. He had never lifted up his hand against her; and when he threatened to, she would remark in her soft way that the long brake of gorse darkened the kitchen dreadfully, and she thought she would go and set a match to it. That always brought Pendoggat to his senses.

It was a quiet life at the Barton. Pendoggat had no society, except that of some minister whom he might bring back to dinner on Sundays. On that day he attended chapel twice. He also went on Wednesday, when he sometimes preached. His sermons were about a cruel God ruling the world by cruelty, and preparing a state of cruelty for every one who didn't attend chapel twice on Sundays and once during the week. He believed in what he said. He also believed he was himself secure from such a punishment; just as certain ignorant Catholics sincerely rely on the power of a priest to forgive their sins. Pendoggat thought that he was free to act as he pleased, so long as he didn't miss his attendances at chapel. If he cheated a man, and missed chapel, his soul would be in danger; but if he attended chapel the sin was automatically forgiven. It was a strange form of theology, but not an uncommon one. Many excellent people tend towards it. Pious old ladies will do all they can to induce young men to attend church. It does not appear to trouble them much if the young men read comic papers, wink at the girls, or slumber audibly, while they are

there. The great point has been gained. The young men are in church; therefore they are religious. The young man who goes for a walk to the top of the highest tor to watch the sunset is a vile creature who will be damned some day.

The Barton had its parlour, and Pendoggat practised the entire ritual connected with that mysterious apartment. No Dartmoor farm-house would have the slightest pretensions to be regarded as a civilised home without the parlour. Its rites and ceremonies remain unwritten, and yet every farmer knows them, and practises them with the precision of a Catholic priest obeying his rubrics, or with the zeal of an Anglican parson defying his. It must be the best room in the house, and it must be kept locked and regarded as holy ground. The windows must not be opened lest fresh air should enter, and equally dangerous sunlight must be excluded by blinds and curtains and a high bank of moribund plants. The furniture is permitted to vary, with the exception of a few ornaments which must be found in every house as a mark of stability and respectability. There must be a piano which cannot be used for purposes of music, and a lamp which is not to be lighted. Whatever books the house contains must be arranged in a manner pleasing to the householder, and they must never be opened. There is a central table, and upon it recline albums containing photographs of the family at different stages of their careers, together with those of ancestors; and these photographs have little value if they are not yellow and faded to denote their antiquity. In the centre of the table must appear a strange device; a stuffed bird in a glass case, a piece of coral on a mat, or some recognised family heirloom. The pictures must be strongly coloured and should have a religious accent. As Germany has achieved surprising results in the matter of colour, the pictures are usually from that fatherland. Ruined temples on the Nile are a favourite subject; only the temples should resemble dilapidated barns, and the Nile bear a distinct likeness to a duck pond. Upon the mantel must stand a clock which has not gone within living memory, and some assorted crockery which if viewed continuously in a strong light will bring on neuralgia. A copy of a penny novelette, and a sheet of music-hall songs lying about, denote literary and musical tastes; but these are unusual. There is generally a family Bible, used to support a large shell, or a framed photograph of the master in his prime of life; and this is opened from time to time to record a birth, marriage, or death. The pattern of the wall-paper must be decided and easily discernible; scarlet flowers on a yellow background are always satisfactory.

The ceremony of entering the parlour takes place usually on Sunday. There is a Greater Entry and a Lesser Entry. The lesser takes place after tea. The master in his best clothes, his face and hands washed, although that point is not always insisted upon, carefully shaven, or with well-groomed beard, as the case may be, his boots removed after the manner of a Mussulman, enters the holy place, sits stiffly upon a chair without daring to lean back lest he should disturb the antimacassar, lights his pipe, and revels in the odour of respectability. He does not really enjoy himself, but after a time he grows more confident and ventures to cross his legs. From time to time he rises, goes out, walks along the passage, and spits out of the front door. The greater entry takes place after chapel. The entire family assemble by the light of the kitchen lamp and say wicked things about their neighbours. Sometimes guests are introduced, and these display independence in various ways, chiefly by leaning back in their chairs and shuffling their boots on the carpet. The ceremonies come to a close at an early hour; the members of the family file out; father, leaving last, locks the door. The parlour is closed for another week.

Pendoggat's parlour was orthodox; only more cold and severe than most. The wall-paper was stained with moisture, and the big open fire-place always smoked. The master thought himself better than the neighbouring commoners, and none of them were ever invited to enter his sanctuary. In a way he was their superior. He could write a good hand, and read anything, and he spoke better than his neighbours. It is curious that of two commoners, educated and brought up in exactly the same way, one will speak broad dialect and the other good English. There was naturally very little society for Pendoggat. He lived in his own atmosphere as a philosopher might have done. He encouraged his minister to visit him, but he had a good reason for that. Weak-minded ministers are valuable assets and good advertising agents; for, if their congregations do not exactly trust them, they will at least follow them, which is more than they will do for any one else.

The sanctity of the parlour may be violated on weekdays; either upon the occasion of some chapel festival, or when a visitor of higher rank than a farmer calls. When Pendoggat reached the Barton he knew at once that the place was haunted by a visiting body, because the blinds were up. Annie Crocker met him in the yard, which in local parlance was known as the court, and said: "The Maggot's waiting for ye in the parlour. Been there nigh upon an hour. He'm singing Lighten our Darkness by now, I reckon, vor't be getting whist in there, and he'm alone where I set 'en, and told 'en to bide till you come along."

"Given him no tea?" said Pendoggat, appearing to address the stones at his feet rather than the woman. That was his usual way; nobody ever saw Pendoggat's eyes. They saw only a black moustache, a scowl, and a moving jaw.

"No, nothing," said Annie. "No meat for maggots here. Let 'en go and eat dirt. Bad enough to have 'en in the house. He'm as slimy as a slug."

"Shut your noise, woman," said Pendoggat. "Take the horse in, and slip his bridle off."

"Tak' 'en in yourself, man," she snapped, turning towards the house.

Pendoggat repeated his command in a gentler voice; and this time he was obeyed. Annie led the

horse away, and the master went in.

The Reverend Eli Pezzack was the Maggot, so called because of his singularly unhealthy complexion. Dartmoor folk have rich red or brown faces—the hard weather sees to that—but Eli was not a son of the moor. It was believed that he had originated in London of West-country parents. He had none of the moorman's native sharpness. He was a tall, clammy individual, with flabby hands dun and cold like mid-Devon clay; and he was so clumsy that if he had entered a room containing only a single article of furniture he would have been certain to fall against it. He was no humbug, and tried to practise what he taught. He was lamentably ignorant, but didn't know it, and he never employed a word of one syllable when he could find anything longer. He admired and respected Pendoggat, making the common mistake with ignorant men of believing physical strength to be the same thing as moral strength. He agreed with those grammarians who have maintained that the eighth letter of the alphabet is superfluous.

"Sorry to have kept ye sitting in the dark," said Pendoggat as he entered the parlour.

"The darkness has not been superlative, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli, as he stumbled over the best chair while trying to shake hands. "The lunar radiance has trespassed pleasantly into the apartment and beguiled the time of lingering with pleasant fancies." He had composed that sentence during "the time of lingering," but knew he would not be able to maintain that high standard when he was called on to speak extempore.

"The darkness is no darkness at all, but the night is as clear as the day," quoted Pendoggat with considerable fervour, as he drew aside the curtains to admit more moonlight.

"True, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli. "We know who uttered that sublime contemplation."

This was a rash statement, but was made with conviction, and accepted apparently in the same spirit.

"You know why I asked you to come along here. I'm going to build up your fortune and mine," said Pendoggat. "Let us seek a blessing."

Eli tumbled zealously over a leg of the table, gathered himself into a kneeling posture, clasped his clay-like hands, and prayed aloud with fervour and without aspirates for several minutes. When Pendoggat considered that the blessing had been obtained he dammed up the flow of words with a stertorous "Amen." Then they stood upon their feet and got to business.

"Seems there's no oil in this lamp," said the master, referring not to the pastor, but to the lamp of state which was never used.

"We do not require it, Mr. Pendoggat," came the answer. "We stand in God's light, the moonlight. That is sufficient for two honest men to see each other's faces by."

Pendoggat ought to have winced, but did not, merely because he had so little knowledge of himself. He didn't know he was a brute, just as Peter and Mary did not know they were savages. Grandfather the clock knew nearly as much about his internal organism as they did about theirs.

"I want money," said Pendoggat sharply. "The chapel wants money. You want money. You're thinking of getting married?"

Eli replied that celibacy was not one of those virtues which he felt called upon to practise; and admitted that he had discovered a young woman who was prepared to blend her soul indissolubly with his. The expression was his own. He did not mention what he imagined would be the result of that mixture. "More maggots," Annie Crocker would have said. Annie had been brought up in the atmosphere of the Church, and for that reason hated all pastors and people known as chapel-volk. Pendoggat was the one exception with her; but then he was not an ordinary being. He was a piece of brute strength, to be regarded, not so much as a man, but as part of the moor, beaten by wind, and producing nothing but gorse, which could only be burnt and stamped down; and still would live and rise again with all its former strength and fierceness. Pastor Eli Pezzack was the poor weed which the gorse smothers out of being.

"Come outside," said Pendoggat.

Eli picked up his hat, stumbled, and wondered. He did not venture to disobey the master, because weak-minded creatures must always dance to the tune piped by the strong. Pendoggat was already outside, tramping heavily in the cold hall. Unwillingly Eli left the parlour, with its half-visible memorials, its photographs, worthless curios, hair-stuffed furniture and glaring pictures; blundering like a bee against a window he followed; he heard Pendoggat clearing his throat and coughing in the court.

"Got a stick?" muttered the master. "Take this, then." He gave the minister a long ash-pole. "We're going down Dartmoor. It's not far. Best follow me, or you'll fall."

Eli knew he was certain to fall in any case, so he protested mildly. "It is dangerous among the rocks, Mr. Pendoggat."

The other made no answer. He went into the stable, and came out with a lantern, unlighted; then, with a curt "Come on," he began to skirt the furze-brake, and Eli followed more like a patient sheep than a foolish shepherd.

There is nothing more romantic than a wide undulating region of high moorland lighted by a full

moon and beaten by strong wind. The light is enough to show the hills and rock-piles. The wind creates an atmosphere of perfect solitude. The two men came out of the dip; and the scene about them was the high moor covered with moonlight and swept by wind. Pendoggat's face looked almost black, and that of the Maggot was whiter than ever by contrast.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked gently. "Need we proceed at this present 'igh velocity, Mr. Pendoggat? I am not used to it. I cannot be certain of my equilibrium."

The other stopped. Eli was deep in heather, floundering like a man learning to swim.

"You're an awkward walker, man. Lift your feet and plant 'em down firm. You shuffle. Catch hold of my arm if you can't see. We're not going far. Down the cleave—a matter of half-a-mile, but it's bad walking near the river."

Eli did not take the master's arm. He was too nervous. He struggled on, tumbling about like a drunken man; but Pendoggat was walking slowly now that they were well away from the Barton.

"Sorry to bring you out so late," he said. "I meant to be home earlier, and then we'd have got down the cleave by daylight."

"But what are we going to inspect?" cried Eli.

"Something that may make our fortunes. Something better than scratching the back of the moor for a living. I'll make a big man of you, Pezzack, if you do as I tell ye."

"You are a wonderful man, and a generous man, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli. Then he plunged heavily into a gorse-bush.

Pendoggat dragged him out grimly, almost crying with pain, with a hundred little white bristles in his face and hands. He mentioned this fact with suitable lamentations.

"They'll work out. What's a few furze-prickles?" Pendoggat muttered. "Get your hands hard, and you won't feel 'em. Mind, now! there's bog here. Best keep close to me."

Eli obeyed, but for all that he managed to step into the bog, and made the ends of his clerical trousers objectionable. They reached the edge of the cleave, and stopped while Pendoggat lighted his lantern. They had to make their way across a wilderness of clatters. The moonlight was deceptive and crossed with black shadows. The wind seemed to make the boulders quiver. Eli looked upon the wild scene, heard the rushing of the river, saw the rugged range of tors, and felt excited. He too felt himself an inheritor of the kingdom of Tavy and a son of Dartmoor. He was going to be wealthy perhaps; marry and rebuild his chapel; do many things for the glory of God. He was quite in earnest, though he was a simple soul.

"I lift up mine eyes to the 'ills, Mr. Pendoggat," he said reverently.

"Best keep 'em on your feet. If you fall here you'll smash your head."

"When I contemplate this scene," went on Eli, with religious zeal undiminished, "so full of wonder and mystery, Mr. Pendoggat, I repeat to myself the inspired words of Scripture, 'Why 'op ye so, ye 'igh 'ills?'"

Pendoggat agreed gruffly that the quotation was full of mystery, and it was not for them to inquire into its meaning.

Somehow they reached the bottom of the cleave, Eli shambling and sliding down the rocks, tumbling continually. Pendoggat observed his inartistic scramblings with as much amusement as he was capable of feeling, muttering to himself, "He'd trip over a blade o' grass."

They came to an old wall overgrown with fern and brambles; just below it was the mossy ruin of a cot, the fire-place still showing, the remains of the wall a yard in width. They were among works concerning which history is hazy. They were in a place where the old miners wrought the tin, and among the ruins of their industry. Perhaps a rich mine was there once. Possibly it was the secret of that place which was guarded so well by the Carthaginian captain, who sacrificed his tin-laden galley to avoid capture by Roman coastguards. The history of the search for "white metal" upon Dartmoor has yet to be learnt. They went cautiously round the ruin, and upon the other side Eli dived across the bleached skeleton of a pony and became mixed up in dry bones.

A deep cleft appeared overhung with gorse and willows. Eli would have dived again had not Pendoggat been holding him. They clambered across, then made their way along a shelf of rock between the cliff and the river. Beyond, Pendoggat parted the bushes, and directed the light of his lantern towards what appeared to be a narrow gully, black and unpleasant, and musical with dripping water.

"Go on," he said curtly.

The minister held back. He was not a brave man, and that black hole in the side of the moor conjured up horrors.

"Take my hand, and let yourself down. There's water, but not more than a foot," said Pendoggat.

He pushed Eli forward, then caught his collar, and lowered him like a sack. The minister shuddered when he felt the icy water round his legs and the clammy ferns closing about his head. Pendoggat followed. They were in a narrow channel leading towards a low cave. Frogs splashed

in front of them. Small streams trickled down a hundred tiny clefts.

"This is a very disagreeable situation, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli meekly.

"Come on," said the other gruffly. "I'll show you something to open your eyes. Step low."

They splashed on, bent under the arch of the cave, and entered the womb of the moor. Hundreds of feet of solid granite roofed them in. They were out of the wind and moonlight. Pendoggat guided the minister in front of him, keeping him close to the wall of rock to avoid the deep water in the centre. About twenty paces from the entry was a shaft cut at right angles. They went along it until they had to stoop again.

"Be'old, Mr. Pendoggat!" cried Eli, with amazed admiration. "Be'old the colours! I have never seen anything so beautiful in my life. What is it? Jewels, Mr. Pendoggat? You don't say they are jewels?"

"Pretty, ain't they? More than pretty too. Now you know what I've brought you for," said Pendoggat, as he turned up the light to increase the splendour of the wall.

It was a pretty sight for a child, or any other simple creature. The side wall at the end of the shaft was streaked and veined with a brilliant purple and green pattern. These colours were caused by the iron in the rocks acting upon the slate, which was there abundant. Pendoggat knew that well enough. He knew also that the sight would impress the minister. He lifted the lantern, pointed to a streak of pale blue which ran down the rock from the roof to the water, and said gruffly: "You can see for yourself. That's the stuff."

"What is it?" whispered the excited pastor.

"Nickel. The rock's full of it."

"But don't they know? Does anybody know of it?"

"Only you and me," said Pendoggat.

"Why have you told me? You are a very generous man, but why do you let me into the secret?"

"Come outside," said Pendoggat.

They went out. Not a word was spoken until they reached the side of the cleave. Then Pendoggat turned upon the minister, holding his arm and shaking it violently as he said: "I've chosen you as my partner. I can trust you. Will you stand in with me, share the risks, and share the profits? Answer now, and let's have done with it."

"I must go home and pray over it, Mr. Pendoggat," cried the excited and shivering Eli. "I must seek for guidance. I do not know if it is right for me to seek after wealth. But for the chapel's sake, for my future wife's sake, for the sake of my unborn infants—"

"Yes or no," broke in Pendoggat. "We'll finish it before we move."

"What can I do?" said Eli, clasping his clay-like hands. "I know nothing of these things. I don't know anything about nickel, except that I have some spoons and forks—"

"Don't you see we must get money to work it? You can manage that. You have several congregations. You can persuade them to invest. My name must be kept out of it. The commoners don't like me. I'll do everything else. You can leave the business in my hands. Your part will be to get the money—and you take half profits."

"I will think over it, Mr. Pendoggat. I will think and pray."

"Make up your mind now, or I get another partner."

Pendoggat lifted the glass of the lantern and blew out the light.

"Have we the right to work a mine upon the moor?"

"Leave all that to me. You get the money. Tell 'em we will guarantee ten per cent. Likely it will be more. It's as safe a thing as was ever known, and it is the chance of your lifetime. Here's my hand."

Eli took the hand, and had the gorse-prickles forced well into his.

"I'll do my best, Mr. Pendoggat. I know you are an honest and a generous man," he said.

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT BEETLES

There was a whitewashed cottage called Lewside beside the moorland road, and at a window which commanded a view of that road sat a girl with what appeared to be a glory round her face—it was nothing but soft red hair—a girl of seventeen, called Boodles, or anything else

sufficiently idiotic; and this girl was learning doggerel and singing—

"The West wind always brings wet weather,
The East wind wet and cold together;
The South wind surely brings us rain,
The North wind blows it back again.'

"And that means it's always raining, which is a lie. And as I'm saying it I'm a liar," laughed Boodles.

It was raining then. Only a Dartmoor shower; the sort of downright rain which makes holes in granite and plays Wagner-like music upon roofs of corrugated iron.

"There's a bunny. Let me see. That's two buns, one man and a boy, a cart and two horses, three wild ponies, and two jolly little sheep with horns and black faces—all been along the road this afternoon," said Boodles. "Now the next verse—

'If the sun in red should set.
The next day surely will be wet;
If the sun should set in grey.
The next will be a rainy day.'

"That's all. We can't go on lying for ever. I wish," said Boodles, "I wish I hadn't got so many freckles on my nose, and I wish my hair wasn't red, and thirdly and lastly, I wish—I wish my teeth weren't going to ache next week. I know they will, because I've been eating jam pudding, and they always ache after jam pudding; three days after, always three days—the beasts! Now what shall I sing about? Why can't people invent something for small girls to do upon a rainy day? I wish a battle was being fought on the moor. It would be fun. I could sit here and watch all day; and I would cut off bits of my hair and throw them to the victorious generals. What a sell for me if they wouldn't pick them up! I expect they would, though, for father says I'm a boodle girl, and that means beautiful, though it's not true, and I wish it was. Another lie and another wish! And when I'm dressed nicely I am boodle-oodle, and that means more beautiful. And when the sun is shining on my hair I am boodle-oodliest, and that means very beautiful. I suppose it's rather nonsense, but it's the way we live here. We may be silly so long as we are good. The next song shall be patriotic. We will bang a drum and wave a flag; and sing with a good courage—

'It was the way of good Queen Bess,
Who ruled as well as mortal can,
When she was stugged, and the country in a mess,
She would send for a Devon man.'

"Well now, that's the truth. Miss Boodles. The principal county in England is Devonshire, and the principal town is Tavistock, and the principal river is the Tavy, and the principal rain is upon Dartmoor, and the principal girl has red hair and freckles on her nose, and she's only seventeen. And the dearest old man in Devon is just coming along the passage, and now he's at the door, and here he is. Father," she laughed, "why do people ask idiotic questions, like I'm doing now?"

"Because they are the easiest," said Abel Cain Weevil, in his gentle manner and bleat-like voice.

"I was sitting here one day, and Mary Tavy came along," went on Boodles. "She said: 'Aw, my dear, be ye sot by the window?' And I said: 'No, Mary, I'm standing on my head.' She looked so frightened. The poor thing thought I was mad."

"Boodles, you're a wicked maid," said Weevil fondly. "You make fun of everything. Some day you will get your ears pulled."

The two were not related, except by affection, although they passed as father and daughter. Boodles had come from the pixies. She had been left one night in the porch of Lewside Cottage, wrapped up in a wisp of fern, without clothing of any kind, and round her neck was a label inscribed: "Take me in, or I shall be drowned to-morrow." Weevil had taken her in, and when the baby smiled at him his eccentric old soul laughed back. He entered into partnership at once with the baby-girl, and she had been a blessing to him. He knew that she had been left in his porch as a last resource; if he had not taken her in she would have been drowned the next day. It was all very pretty to imagine that Boodles had come from the pixies. The truth was nobody wanted her; the unmarried mother could not keep the child, Weevil was believed to be a tender-hearted old fool, so the baby was wrapped in fern and left in his porch; and the tenant of Lewside Cottage lived up to his reputation. Boodles knew her history. She sat at the cottage window every day, watching every one who passed; and sometimes she would murmur: "I wonder if my mother went by to-day." She had once or twice inserted an unpleasant adjective, but then she had no cause to love her unknown parents. Much of her love was given to Abel Cain Weevil; and all of it went out to some one else.

The old man was one of those mysteries who crop up in desolate places. Nobody knew where he came from, what he had been, or what he was doing in the region watered by the Tavy. He was poor and harmless. He kept out of every one's way. "Quite mad," said St. Peter. "An honest madman," answered St. Mary. "He had at least the decency to recognise that child, for of course she is his daughter." St. Peter had his doubts. He did not like to think too highly of old Weevil. That was against his principles. He suggested that Weevil intended to make some base use of the girl, and St. Mary agreed. They could generally agree upon such matters.

Weevil was quite right to keep out of the world. He was handicapped in every way. There was his name to begin with. He had no objection to Abel, but he saw no necessity in the redundant Cain. It had been given him, however, and he could not escape from it. Every one called him Abel Cain Weevil. The children shouted it after him. As for the name Weevil, it was objectionable, but no worse than many another. It was not improper like some surnames.

"An insect, my dear," he explained to Boodles. "A dirty little beetle which lives upon grain."

"I'm a weevil too," said she. "So I'm a dirty little beetle."

The old man wouldn't allow that. Boodles belonged to the angels, and he told her so with foolish expressions; but she shook her glorious red head at him and declared that beetles and angels had nothing in common. She admitted, however, that she belonged to a delightful order of beetles, and that on the whole she preferred chocolates to grain. The silly old man reminded her that she belonged to the boodle-oodle order of beetles, and so far she was the only specimen of that choice family which had been discovered.

A man is eccentric in this world if he does anything which his neighbours cannot understand. He may go out in the garden and cut a cabbage-leaf. That is a sane action. But if he spreads jam on the cabbage-leaf, and eats the same publicly, he is called a madman. Nothing is easier than to be thought eccentric. You have only to behave unlike other people. Stand in the middle of a crowded street and gaze vacantly into the air. Every one will call you eccentric at once, just because you are gazing in the air and they are not. Weevil was mad because he was unlike his neighbours. The adoption of Boodles was not a sane action; even if she were his daughter it was equally insane to acknowledge her with such shameless publicity. A sane person would have allowed Boodles to share the fate of many illegitimate children.

They were happy these two, papa Weevil and his Boodles. They had no servant. The girl kept house and cooked. The old man washed up and scrubbed. Boodles knew how to make, not only a shilling, but even the necessary penny go all the way. She was a treasure, good enough for any man; there were no dark spots upon her heart. If she had been made away with one of the best little souls created would have gone back into limbo.

No storm disturbed Lewside Cottage, except Dartmoor gales, and as for religion they were sun-worshippers; like most people who come out in fine raiment and glory in the sun, and when it is wet hide indoors, talk of the sun, think of the sun, long for the sun, until he appears and they can hurry out to worship. The savage calls the sun his god in so many words; and the human nature which is in the savage is in the primitive folk of open and desolate places also; it is present in the most civilised of beings, but only those who live on a high moor through the winter know what a day of sunshine means. The sun has places dedicated to him upon Dartmoor. There is Bel Tor and there is Belstone. A tradition of the Phoenician occupation still exists, handed down from the remote time when the sun was directly worshipped. The commoners still believe that good luck will attend the man who shall see the rising sun reflected on the rock-basin of Bellivor. An altar to the sun stood once upon that lonely tor. Weevil worshipped the sun quietly. Boodles offered incense with enthusiasm. She deserved her name when the sun shone upon her radiant head and made a glory round it. When the greater gorse was in flower, and Boodles walked through it hatless, wearing her green frock, she might have been the spirit of the prickly shrub; and like it her head was in bloom all the year round.

"Have we got anything for supper, Boodle-oodle?" asked the silly old male beetle.

"Ees, lots," said the small golden one.

It was not unpleasant to hear Boodles say "ees." She split the word up and made a kind of anthem out of it. The first sound was very soft, a mere whisper, and spoken with closed lips. The rest she sang, getting higher as the final syllable was reached—there were more syllables in the word than letters—then descending at the drawn-out sibilant, and finishing in a whisper with closed lips.

"Oh, I forgot," she cried. "No eggs!"

They looked at each other with serious faces. In that simple household small things were tragedies. There were no eggs. It was a matter for serious reflection.

"Butter?" queried the old man nervously. "Milk? Cheese? Bread?"

"Heaps, piles, gallons. The kitchen is full of cheese, and you can't move for bread, and the milk is running over and dripping upon everything like a milky day," said penitent Boodles. "I have been saying to myself: 'Eggs, eggs! Yolks, shells, whites—eggs!' I made puns that I shouldn't forget. I egged myself on. I walked delicately, and said: 'I'm treading on eggs.' I kept on scolding myself, and saying: 'Teach your grandmother to suck eggs.' I reminded myself I mustn't put all my eggs in one basket. Then I went and sat in the window, forgot all about them, and now I'm a bad egg."

"Boodles, what shall we do?" said the chief beetle.

"I think you ought to torture me in some way," suggested the forgetful one. "Drag me through the furze. Beat me with nettles. Torture would do me a lot of good, I expect, only not too much, because I'm only a baby."

That was her usual defence. Whatever happened she was only a baby. She was never likely to

grow up.

"Don't jest. It is too serious. If I don't have two eggs for my supper I shall have no sleep. I shall be ill to-morrow."

"I'll give you two poached kisses," promised Boodles.

"I cannot exist on spiritual food alone. I must have my eggs. Custom has made it necessary."

"I'll make you all sorts of nice things," she declared.

But the eccentric old beetle could not be pacified. He had eggs upon the mind. The produce of the domestic fowl had become an obsession. He explained that if the house had been well stocked with eggs he might have gone without. He would have known they were there to fall back upon if desire should seize him during the silent watches of the night. But the knowledge that the larder was destitute of eggs increased his desire. He would have no peace until the deficiency was made good.

"Well," said Boodles resignedly, "it's my fault, so I'll suffer for it. I don't want to hear you screaming for eggs all night. I'll go and get wet for your salvation. I expect Mary can let me have some."

Weevil was himself again. He trotted off for the child's boots. He always put her boots on, and took them off when she came in. Boodles was a little sun-goddess, and as such she accepted adoration. It was part of the tribute due to the sun-like head. When the boots were on—each ankle having previously been worshipped as a part of the tribute—she assumed a jacket, packed her hair under a fluffy green hat, stabbed it on four times with long pins, picked up her walking-stick; and was off, Weevil gazing after her adoringly until she passed out of sight. "There goes the pride o' Devon," murmured the silly old man as the green hat vanished.

The sight of Boodles took the weather's breath away. It forgot to go on raining; and the sun was so anxious to shine upon her hair that he pushed the clouds off him, as a late slumberer tosses away his blankets, and came out to work a little before evening. It became quite pleasant as Boodles went beside Tavy Cleave.

Peter was not visible, but Mary was. She was plodding about in her huge boots with an eye upon her geese, especially upon the chief of the flock. Old Sal, who, as usual, was anxious to seek pastures new. When Boodles came up Mary smiled. She was very fond of the child. Boodles seemed to have been made out of such entirely different materials from the odds and ends which had gone towards her own construction. The little girl's soft flesh was as unlike Mary's tough leather as the white bark of the birch is unlike the rugged bark of the oak.

"Well, Mary, how are you?" said Boodles.

"I be purty fine, my dear, purty middling fine. Peter be purty fine tu. And how be yew, my dear, and how be the old gentleman? Purty fine yew be, I reckon."

"We are splendid," said Boodles. "How is the old goose, Mary?"

"Du'ye mean Old Sal, my dear? There he be tramping 'bout Dartmoor as though 'twas his'n. Aw, he be purty fine, sure 'nuff."

"She must be very old," said Boodles.

"Aw ees, he be old. He be a cruel old artful toad, my dear," said Mary.

"How old is she?"

"Well, my dear, he be older than yew. He be twenty-two come next Michaelmas, I'm thinking."

"You will never kill her?" said Boodles. "You couldn't, after having her for so long. You won't kill her, will you, Mary?"

"Goosies was made to kill. Us keeps 'en whiles they be useful, and then us kills 'em," said Mary.

"But twenty-two years old!" cried Boodles. "She would be much too tough to eat."

"Aw, my dear life," chuckled Mary. "He wouldn't be tough. I would kill 'em, and draw 'em, and rub a little salt in his belly, and hang 'em up for a fortnight, and he would et butiful, my dear."

Boodles laughed delightfully, and said she thought no amount of salt or hanging, to say nothing of sage and onions, could ever make the venerable Sal palatable.

"Peter wun't let 'em be killed. Peter loves Old Sal," Mary went on. "He laid sixteen eggs last year, and he'm the best mother on Dartmoor. Aw ees, my dear. He be a cruel fine mother, and Peter ses he shan't die till he've a mind to."

Then Boodles got to business and asked Mary for eggs, not those of Old Sal, but the produce of the hen-house. Mary said she would go and search. As it was dirty in that region Boodles declined to go with her. "Please to go inside. There be only Gran'vaither. Go and have a look at 'em, my dear," said Mary, who always referred to Grandfather as if he had been a living soul. "Hit 'em in the belly, and make 'em strike at ye."

Boodles went into Hut Circle Number One, which was Peter's residence, and stood in the

presence of Grandfather. Obeying Mary's instructions, she hit him "in the belly." The old sinner made weird noises when thus disturbed. He appeared to resent the treatment, as most old gentlemen would have done. He refused to strike, but he rattled himself, and wheezed, and made sounds suggestive of expectoration. Grandfather was a savage like Peter. He was a rough uneducated sort of clock, and he had no passion for Boodles. Pendoggat would have been the man for him. Grandfather would have shaken hands with Pendoggat had it been possible. His own quivering hands were stretched across his lying face, announcing quarter-past nine when it was really five o'clock. Grandfather was a true man of Devon. He had no sense of time.

Boodles had nothing but contempt for the old fellow. Having assaulted him she opened his case. Evidently Grandfather had been drinking. His interior smelt strongly of cider. There were splashes of it everywhere; rank cider distilled from the lees; in one spot moisture was pronounced, suggesting that Grandfather had recently been indulging. Apparently he liked his liquor strong. Grandfather was a picker-up of unconsidered trifles also. He was full of pins; all kinds of pins, bent and straight. Item, Grandfather had a little money of his own; several battered coppers, some green coins which had no doubt been dug up outside, or discovered upon the "deads" beside one of the neighbouring wheals, and there was a real fourpenny-bit with a hole through it. Fastened to the back of the case behind the pendulum was a scrap of sheepskin as hard as wood, and upon it some hand had painfully drawn what appeared to be an elementary exercise in geometry. Boodles frowned and wondered what it all meant.

"Here be the eggs, my dear. Twenty for a shillun to yew, and ten to a foreigner," said Mary, standing in the door, making an apron out of her ragged skirt, and blissfully unconscious that she was exposing the sack-like bloomers which were her only underwear.

"Twenty-one, Mary. There's always one thrown in for luck and me," pleaded Boodles.

"Aw ees. One for yew, my dear," Mary assented.

That was the way Boodles got full value for her money.

"My dear life! What have yew been a-doing of?" cried Mary with alarm, when she noticed Grandfather's open case. "Aw, my dear, yew didn't ought to meddle wi' he. Grandfather gets cruel tedious if he be meddled with."

"I was only looking at his insides," said Boodles. "He's a regular old rag-bag. What are all these things for—pins, coins, coppers? And he's splashed all over with cider. No wonder he won't keep time."

"Shet 'en up, my dear. Shet 'en up," said superstitious Mary. "Aw, my dear, don't ye ever meddle wi' religion. If Peter was to see ye he'd be took wi' shivers. Let Gran'vaither bide, du'ye. Ain't ye got a pin to give 'en? My dear life, I'll fetch ye one. Gran'vaither got tedious wi' volks wance, Peter ses, and killed mun; ees, my dear, killed mun dead as door nails; ees, fie 'a did, killed mun stark."

Boodles only laughed, like the wicked maid that she was. She couldn't be bothered with the niceties of religion.

Peter and Mary were only savages. According to their creed pixies dwelt in Grandfather's bosom; and it was necessary to retain the good-will of the little people, and render the sting of their possible malevolence harmless, by presenting votive offerings and inscribing spells. The rank cider had been provided for midnight orgies, and, lest the pixies should become troublesome when under the influence of liquor, the charm upon the sheepskin had been introduced, like a stringent police-notice, compelling them to keep the peace.

"It's all nonsense, you know," said Boodles, as she took the eggs, with the sun flaming across her hair. "The pixies are all dead. I went to the funeral of the last one."

Mary shook her head. She did not jest on serious matters. The friendship of the pixies was as much to her as the lack of eggs had been to Weevil.

"Anyhow," went on wicked Boodles, "I should put rat-poison in there if they worried me."

"Us have been bit and scratched by 'em in bed," Mary declared. "Peter and me have been bit cruel. Us could see the marks of their teeth."

"Did you ever catch one?" asked Boodles tragically.

"Catch mun! Aw, my dear life! Us can't catch mun."

"You could, if you were quick—before they hopped," laughed Boodles.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT THOMASINE

Thomasine sat in the kitchen of Town Rising, sewing. It was a dreary place, and she was alone and surrounded with stone. The kitchen walls were stone; so was the floor. The window looked

out upon the court, and that was paved with stone. Beyond was the barn wall, made of blocks of cold granite. Above peeped the top of a tor, and that was granite too. Damp stone everywhere. It was the Stone Age back again. And Thomasine, buried among it all, was making herself a frivolous petticoat for Tavistock Goose Fair.

Among undistinguished young persons Thomasine was pre-eminent. She was only Farmer Chegwidden's "help"; that is to say, general servant. Undistinguished young persons will do anything that is menial under the title of "help," which as a servant they would shrink from. To the lower classes there is much in a name. Thomasine knew nothing. She was just a work-a-day girl, eating her meals, sleeping; knowing there was something called a character which for some inexplicable reason it was necessary to keep; dreaming of a home of her own some day, but not having the sense to realise that it would mean a probably drunken husband on a few shillings a week, and a new gift from the gods to feed each year; comprehending the delights of fairs, general holidays, and evenings out; perceiving that it was pleasant to have her waist squeezed and her mouth kissed; understanding also the charm in being courted in a ditch with the temperature below freezing-point. That was nearly all Thomasine knew. Plenty of animals know more. Her conversation consisted chiefly in "ees" and "no."

It is not pleasant to see a pretty face, glorious complexion, well-made body, without mind, intellect, or soul worth mentioning; but it is a common sight. It is not pleasant to speak to that face, and watch its vacancy increase. A dog would understand at once; but that human face remains dull. A good many strange thoughts suggest themselves on fair-days and holidays in and about the Stannary Towns. There are plenty of pretty faces, glorious complexions, and well-made bodies surrounded with clothing which the old Puritans would have denounced as immoral; but not a mind, not an intellect above potato-peeling, in the lot. They come into the towns like so many birds of passage; at nightfall they go out, shrieking, many of them, for lack of intelligent speech, and return to potato-peeling. The warmth of the next holiday brings them out again, in the same clothes, knowing just as much as they did before—how to shriek—then the pots and potatoes claim them again. All those girls have undeveloped minds. They don't know it, not having been told, so their minds remain unformed all their lives. The flower-like faces fade quickly, because there is nothing to keep the bloom on. The mind does not get beyond the budding stage. It is never attended to, so it rots off without ever opening. Sometimes one of these girls discovers she has something besides her body and her complexion; or somebody superior to herself impresses the fact upon her; and she uses her knowledge, cultivates her mind, and with luck rises out of the rut. She discovers that her horizon is not limited by pots and potato-peel. Beyond it all, for her, there is something called intelligence. Such girls are few. Most of them have their eyes opened, not their minds, and then they discover they are naked, and want to go away and hide themselves.

Thomasine's soul was about the size and weight of a grain of mustard seed. She was a good maid, and her parents had no cause to be sorry she had been born. She had come into the world by way of lawful wedlock, which was something to be proud of in her part of the country, and was living a decent life in respectable employment. She sat in the stone kitchen, and built up her flimsy petticoat, with as much expression on her face as one might reasonably expect to find upon the face of a cow. She could not think. She knew that she was warm and comfortable; but knowledge is not thought. She knew all about her last evening's courting; but she could not have constructed any little romance which differed from that courting. In a manner she had something to think about; namely, what had actually happened. She could not think about what had not happened, or what under different circumstances might have happened. That would have meant using her mind; and she didn't know she had one. Yet Thomasine came of a fairly clever family. Her grandfather had used his mind largely, and had succeeded in building up, not a large, but a very comfortable, business. He had emigrated, however; and it is well known that there is nothing like a change of scene for teaching a man to know himself. He had gone to Birmingham and started an idol-factory. It was a quaint sort of business, but a profitable one. He made idols for the Burmese market. He had stocked a large number of Buddhist temples, and the business was an increasing one. Orders for idols reached him from many remote places, and his goods always gave satisfaction. The placid features of many a squatting Gautama in dim Eastern temples had been moulded from the vacant faces of Devonshire farm-maids. He was a most religious man, attending chapel twice each Sunday, besides teaching in the Sunday-school. He didn't believe in allowing religion to interfere with business, which was no doubt quite discreet of him. He always said that a man should keep his business perfectly distinct from everything else. He had long ago dropped his Devonshire relations. Respectable idol-makers cannot mingle with common country-folk. Thomasine's parents possessed a framed photograph of one of the earlier idols, which they exhibited in their living-room as a family heirloom, although their minister had asked them as a personal favour to destroy it, because it seemed to him to savour of superstition. The minister thought it was intended for the Virgin Mary, but the good people denied it with some warmth, explaining that they were good Christians, and would never disgrace their cottage in that Popish fashion.

Innocent of idols, Thomasine went on sewing in her stone kitchen amid the granite. She had finished putting a frill along the hem of her petticoat; now she put one higher up in regions which would be invisible however much the wind might blow, though she did not know why, because she could not think. It was a waste of material; nobody would see it; but she felt that a fair petticoat ought to be adorned as lavishly as possible. She did not often glance up. There was nothing to be seen in the court except the usual fowls. It was rarely an incident occurred worth remembering. Sometimes one stag attacked another, and Thomasine would be attracted to the

window to watch the contest. That made a little excitement in her life, but the fight would soon be over. It was all show and bluster; very much like the sparring of two farm hands. "You'm a liar." "So be yew." "Aw well, so be yew." And so on, with ever-increasing accent upon the "yew." Not many people crossed the court. There was no right of way there, but Farmer Chegwidden had no objection to neighbours passing through.

Whether Thomasine was pretty could hardly be stated definitely. It must remain a matter of opinion whether any face can be beautiful which is entirely lacking in expression, has no mind behind the tongue, and no speaking brain at the back of the eyes. Many, no doubt, would have thought her perfection. She was plump and full of blood; it seemed ready to burst through her skin. She was somewhat grossly built; too wide at the thighs, big-handed, and large-footed, with not much waist, and a clumsy stoop from the shoulders. She waddled in her walk like most Devonshire farm-maids. Her complexion was perfect; so was her health. She had a lust-provoking face; big sleepy eyes; cheeks absolutely scarlet; pouting lips swollen with blood, almost the colour of an over-ripe peach. It was more like paint than natural colouring. It was too strong. She had too much blood. She was part of the exaggeration of Dartmoor, which exaggerates everything; adding fierceness to fierceness, colour to colour, strength to strength; just as its rain is fiercer than that of the valleys, and its wind mightier. Thomasine was of the Tavy family, but not of the romantic branch. Not of the folklore side like Boodles, but of the Ger Tor family, the strong mountain branch which knows nothing and cannot think for itself, and only feels the river wearing it away, and the frost rotting it, and the wind beating it. The pity was that Thomasine did not know she had a mind, which was already fading for want of use. She knew only how to peel potatoes and make herself wanton underwear. Although twenty-two years of age she was still a maid.

There were steps upon the stones, and Thomasine looked up. She saw nobody, but sounds came through the open window, a shuffling against the wall of the house, and the stumbling of clumsy boots. Then there was a knock.

There was nothing outside, except miserable objects such as Brightly with an empty and battered basket and starving Ju with her empty and battered stomach and her tongue hanging out. They were still trying to do business, instead of going away to some lonely part of the moor and dying decently. It was extraordinary how Brightly and Ju clung to life, which wasn't of much use to them, and how steadfastly they applied themselves to a sordid business which was very far less remunerative than sound and honest occupations such as idol-making. Brightly looked smaller than ever. He had forgotten all about his last meal. His face was pinched; it was about the size of a two-year-old baby's. He looked like an eel in man's clothing.

"Any rabbit-skins, miss?" he asked.

"No," said Thomasine.

Brightly crept a little nearer. "Will ye give us a bite o' bread? Us be cruel hungry, and times be hard. Tramped all day yesterday, and got my cloam tored, and lost my rabbit-skins and duppence. Give me and little dog a bite, miss. Du'ye, miss."

"If master was to know I'd catch it," said Thomasine.

"Varmer Chegwidden would give I a bite. I knows he would," said Brightly.

Chegwidden would certainly have given him a bite had he been present, or rather his sheep-dog would. Chegwidden was a member of the Board of Guardians in his sober moments, and it was his duty to suppress such creatures as Brightly.

"I mun go on," said the weary little wretch, when he saw that Thomasine was about to shut the door. "I mun tramp on. I wish yew could ha' given us a bite, miss, for us be going to Tavistock, and I don't know if us can. Me and little dog be cruel mazed."

"Bide there a bit," said Thomasine.

There was nobody in the house, except Mrs. Chegwidden, who was among her pickle jars and had never to be taken into consideration. Chegwidden had gone to Lydford. The girl had a good heart, and she didn't like to see things starving. Even the fowls had to be fed when they were hungry, and probably Brightly was nearly as good as the fowls. She returned to the door with bread and meat, and a lump of cheese wrapped in a piece of newspaper. She flung Ju a bone as big as herself and with more meat upon it, and before the fit of charity had exhausted itself she brought out a jug of cider, which Brightly consumed on the premises and increased in girth perceptibly.

"Get off," said Thomasine. "If I'm caught they'll give me the door."

Brightly was not well skilled in expressing gratitude because he had so little practice. He was generally apologising for his existence. He tried to be effusive, but was only grotesque. Thomasine almost thought he was trying to make love to her, and she drew back with her strained sensual smile.

"I wun't forget. Not if I lives to be two hundred and one, I wun't," cried Brightly. "Ju ses her wun't forget neither. Us will get to Tavistock now, and us can start in business again to-morrow. Ye've been cruel kind to me, miss. God love ye and bless ye vor't, is what I ses. God send ye a good husband vor't, is what I ses tu."

"You'm welcome," said Thomasine.

Brightly beamed in a fantastic manner through his spectacles. Ju wagged what Nature had intended to be a tail, and staggered out of the court with her load of savoury meat. Then the door was closed, and Thomasine went back to her petticoat.

The girl could not exactly think about Brightly, but she was able to remember what had happened. A starving creature supposed to be a man, accompanied by a famished beast that tried to be a dog—both shocking examples of bad work, for Nature jerry-builds worse than the most dishonest of men—had presented themselves at the door of her kitchen, and she had fed them. She had obeyed the primitive instinct which compels the one who has food to give to those who have none. There was nothing splendid about it, because she did not want the food. Yet her master would not have fed Brightly. He would have flung the food into the pig-sty rather than have given it to the Seal. So it was possible after all that she had performed a generous action which was worthy of reward.

It must not be supposed that Thomasine thought all that out for herself. She knew nothing about generous actions. She had listened to plenty of sermons in the chapel, but without understanding anything except that it would be her duty some time to enter hell, which, according to the preacher's account, was a place rather like the top of Dartmoor, only hotter, and there was never any frost or snow. Will Pugsley, with whom she was walking out just then, had summed up the whole matter in one phrase of gloomy philosophy: "Us has a cruel hard time on't here, and then us goes down under." That seemed to be the answer to the riddle of the soul's existence: "having a cruel hard time, and then going down under."

Thomasine had never read a book in her life. They did not come her way. Town Rising had none, except the big Bible—which for half-a-century had performed its duty of supporting a china shepherdess wreathing with earthenware daisies the neck of a red and white cow—a manual upon manure, and a ready reckoner. No penny novelette, dealing with such matters of everyday occurrence as the wooing of servant-girls by earls, had ever found its way into her hands, and such fictions would not have interested her, simply because they would have conveyed no meaning. A pretty petticoat and a fair-day; these were matters she could appreciate, because they touched her sympathies and she could understand them. They were some of the things which made up the joy of life. There was so much that was "cruel hard"; but there were pleasures, such as fine raiment and fair-days, to be enjoyed before she went "down under."

Thomasine was able to form mental pictures of scenes that were familiar. She could see the tor above the barn. It was easy to see also the long village on the side of the moor. She knew it all so well. She could see Ebenezer, the chapel where she heard sermons about hell. Pendoggat was sometimes the preacher, and he always insisted strongly upon the extremely high temperature of "down under." Thomasine very nearly thought. She almost associated the preacher with the place which was the subject of his discourse. That would have been a very considerable mental flight had she succeeded. It came to nothing, however. She went on remembering, not thinking. Pendoggat had tried to look at her in chapel. He could not look at any one with his eyes, but he had set his face towards her as though he believed she was in greater need than others of his warnings. He had walked close beside her out of chapel, and had remarked that it was a fine evening. Thomasine remembered she had been pleased, because he had drawn her attention towards a fact which she had not previously observed, namely, that it was a fine evening. Pendoggat was a man, not a creeping thing like Brightly, not a lump of animated whisky-moistened clay like Farmer Chegwidden. No one could make people uncomfortable like him. Eli Pezzack was a poor creature in comparison, although Thomasine didn't make the comparison because she couldn't. Pezzack could not make people feel they were already in torment. The minister frequently referred to another place which was called "up over." He reminded his listeners that they might attain to a place of milk and honey where the temperature was normal; and that was the reason why he was not much of a success as a minister. He seemed indeed to desire to deprive his congregations of their legitimate place of torment. What was the use of talking about "up over," which could not concern his listeners, when they might so easily be stimulated with details concerning the inevitable "down under"? Pezzack was a weak man. He refused to face his destiny, and he tried to prevent his congregations from facing theirs.

Thomasine looked at the clock. It was time to lift the peat from the hearth and put on the coal. Chegwidden would soon be back from Lydford and want his supper. She admired the petticoat, rolled it up, and put it away in her work-basket.

"Dear life!" she murmured. "Here be master, and nothing done."

A horseman was in the court, and crossing it. The window was open. The rider was not Chegwidden. It was the master of Helmen Barton, his head down as usual, his eyes apparently fixed between his horse's ears; his head was inclined a little towards the house. Thomasine stood back and watched.

A piece of gorse in full bloom came through the window, fell upon the stone floor, and bounded like a small beast. It jumped about on the smooth cement, and glided on its spines until it reached the dresser, and there remained motionless, with its stem, which had been bared of prickles, directed upwards towards the girl like a pointing finger. Pendoggat had gone on. His horse had not stopped, nor had the rider appeared to glance into the kitchen. Obviously there was some connection between Pendoggat, that piece of gorse, and herself, only Thomasine could not work it out. She picked it up. She could not have such a thing littering her tidy kitchen. The

sprig was a smother of blossom, and she could see its tiny spears among the blooms, their points so keen that they were as invisible as the edge of a razor. She brought the blooms suddenly to her nose, and immediately one of the tiny spears pierced the skin and her strong blood burst through.

"Scat the vuzz," said Thomasine.

Iron-shod hoofs rattled again upon the stones, and the light of the window became darkened. Pendoggat had changed his mind and was back again. He tumbled from the saddle and stood there wagging his head as if deep in thought. Supposing she was wanted for something, the girl came forward. Pendoggat was close to the window, which was a low one. She did not know what he was looking at; not at her certainly; but he seemed to be searching for her, desiring her, sniffing at her like an animal.

"Du'ye want master, sir? He'm to Lydford," said Thomasine.

A drop of blood fell from her nose and splashed on the stone floor between them. She searched for a handkerchief and found she had not got one. There was nothing for it but to use the back of her hand, smearing the blood across her lips and chin. Pendoggat saw it all. He noticed everything, although he had his eyes on the window-sill.

"You're a fine maid," he said.

"Be I, sir?" said Thomasine, beginning to tremble. Pendoggat was her superior. He was the tenant of Helmen Barton, a commoner, the owner of sheep and bullocks, and married, or at least she supposed he was. She felt somehow it was not right he should say such a thing to her.

"Going to chapel Sunday night?" he went on, with his head on one side, and his face as immobile as a mask.

"Ees," murmured Thomasine, forgetting the "sir" somehow. The question was such a familiar one that she did not remember for the moment the standing of the speaker. This was the man who had drenched her with hell-fire from the pulpit.

"How do ye come home? By the road or moor?"

"The moor, if 'tis fine, sir. I walks with Willum."

"Young Pugsley?"

"Ees, sir."

"You're too good for him. You're too fine a maid for that hind. You won't walk with him Sunday night. I'll see you home."

"Ees, sir," was all Thomasine could say. She was only a farm-maid. She had to do as she was told.

"Going to the fair?" he asked.

The answer was as usual.

"I'll meet you there. Take you for rides, and into the shows. Got your clothes ready?"

The same soft word, which Thomasine made a dissyllable, and Boodles sang as an anthem, followed. Goose Fair was the greatest day in the girl's year, and to be treated there by a man with money was to glide along one of the four rivers of Paradise, only that was not the expression which occurred to Thomasine.

Pendoggat reached in and took her hand. It was large with labour, and red with blood, but quite clean. He pulled her towards him. There was nobody in the court; only the unobservant chickens, pecking diligently. A cloud had settled upon the top of the tor, which was just visible above the barn, an angry cloud purple like a wound, as if the granite had pierced and wounded it. Thomasine wondered if it would be fine for Goose Fair.

Her sleeve was loose. Pendoggat pressed his fingers under it, and paddled the soft flesh like a cat up to her elbow.

"Don't ye, sir," pleaded Thomasine, feeling somehow this was not right.

"You're a fine, lusty maid," he muttered.

"'Tis time master was back from Lydford, I reckon," she murmured.

"You're bloody."

"'Twas that bit o' vuzz."

He drew her closer, threw his arm clumsily round her neck, dragged her half through the window, kissing her savagely on the neck, lips, and chin, until his own lips were smeared with her blood, and he could taste it. She began to struggle. Then she cried out, and he let her go.

"Good blood," he muttered, passing his tongue over his lips. "The strongest and best blood on Dartmoor."

Then, he flung himself across his horse, as if he had been drunk, and rode out of the court.

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

There was a concert in Brentor village in aid of that hungry creature the Church, which resembles so many tin- and copper-mines, inasmuch as much more money goes into it than ever comes out. Brentor is overdone with churches. There is one in the village, and the little one on the tor outside. Maids like to be married on the tor. They think it gives them a good start in life, but that idea is owing to tradition, which connects Brentor with the worship of Baal. The transition from Paganism to Christianity was gradual, and in many cases the old gods were merely painted up and made to look like new. The statue of Jove was bereft of its thunderbolt, given a bunch of keys, and called Peter; the goddess of love became a madonna; the sun-temple was turned into a church. Where the original idea was lost sight of a legend was invented; such as that of the merchant who, overtaken by a storm when beating for shore, vowed to build a church upon the first point of land which should appear in sight. There is no getting away from sun-worship upon Dartmoor, and no easy way of escape from tradition either. That is why maids like to be sacrificed upon Brentor, even when the wind is threatening to sweep them down its cliffs.

Local talent was not represented at the concert. People from Tavistock came to perform; all sorts and conditions of amateurs in evening dress and muddy boots. The room was crowded, as it was a fine evening, and therefore there was nothing to prevent the inhabitants of the two holy Tavys from walking across the moor, and a jabbering cartload had come from Lydford also. There was no chattering in the room. The entire audience became appalled by respectability as represented by gentlemen with bulging shirt-fronts and ladies with visible bosoms. They stared, they muttered hoarsely, they turned to and fro like mechanical figures; but they did not chatter. They felt as if they were taking part in a religious ceremony.

The young lady who opened proceedings, after the inevitable duet on the piano—which, to increase the sense of mystery, was called on the practically illegible programme a pianoforte—with a sentimental song, made an error. She merely increased the atmosphere of despondency. When she had finished some of the audience became restless. They were wondering whether the time had come for them to kneel.

"Bain't him a cruel noisy thing?" exclaimed Mary, with a certain amount of enthusiasm. "What du'ye call 'en?" she asked a small, dried-up ancient man who sat beside her, while indicating the instrument of music with an outstretched arm.

The old man tried to explain, which was a thing he was famous for doing. He was a superannuated school-master of the nearly extinct type, the kind that knew nothing and taught as much, but a brave learned man according to some of the old folk.

Peter sat by his sister, trying to look at his ease; and he too listened intently for what school-master had to say. Peter and Mary were blossoming out, and becoming social and gregarious beings.

This was the first grand entertainment they had ever attended. Tickets had been given them, or they would certainly not have been there. As Peter had failed in his efforts to sell the tickets they had decided to use them, although dressing for the event was something of an ordeal. Mary had a black hat and a silk dress, both of early Victorian construction, and beneath, her huge nailed boots innocent of blacking. Peter wore a tie under his chin, and a wondrous collar some three inches lower down. The rest of his costume was also early nineteenth century in make, but effectual. He was very much excited by the music, but dreadfully afraid of showing it.

"That there box," said Master, with an air of diving deep in the well of wisdom "he'm full o' wires and hammers."

"My dear life!" gasped Mary. "Full o' wires and hammers! Du'ye hear, Peter?"

Her brother replied in the affirmative, although in a manner which suggested that the information was superfluous.

"Volks hit them bones, and the bones dra' on the hammers, and the hammers hit the wires," proceeded Master.

"Bain't that artful now?" cried Mary.

"Sure 'nuff," agreed Peter, unable to restrain his admiration.

"Couldn't ye mak' one o' they? You'm main cruel larned wi' your hands," Mary went on.

Peter admitted that was so. Given the material, he had no doubt of his ability to turn out a piano capable of producing that music which his sister described as cruel noisy.

"It taketh a scholar to understand how to mak' they things," said Master, with some severity. "See all that carved wood on the front of him? You couldn't du that, and the piano wouldn't mak' no music if 'twasn't for the carved wood. 'Twould mak' a noise, you see, Peter, but not music. 'Tis

the noise coming out through the carving what makes the music. Taketh a scholar to du that."

"Look at she!" cried Mary violently, as another lady rose to warble. This songster had a good bust, and desired to convince her audience of the fact. "Her ha' grown out of her clothes sure 'nuff. Her can't hardly cover her paps."

"Shet thee noise, woman," muttered Peter.

"Her be in full evening dress," explained Master.

Mary subsided in deep reflection. She knew perfectly well what "full" meant. There were plenty of full days upon Tavy Cleave. It meant a heavy wet mist which filled everything so that nothing was visible. For Mary every word had only one meaning. She could not understand how the word "full" could bear two exactly opposite meanings.

The back seats were overflowing. Only threepence was charged there, but seats were not guaranteed. The majority stood, partly to show their independence, chiefly to look as if they had just dropped in, not with any idea of being entertained, but that they might satisfy themselves there was nothing objectionable in the programme. Several men stood huddled together as near the door as possible, showing their disapproval of such frivolity in the usual manner, by standing in antagonistic attitudes and frowning at the performers. Chegwidden was there, containing sufficient liquor to make him grateful for the support of the wall. He had tried to get in for nothing, by explaining that he was a member of the Board of Guardians, and had been from his youth a steadfast opponent of the Church as by law established. These excuses having failed, he had paid the threepence under protest, explaining at the same time that if he heard anything to shock his innocent mind he should demand his money back, visit his solicitor when next in Tavistock with a view to taking action against those who had dared to pervert the public mind, and indite letters to all the local papers. The entertainment committee had a troublesome threepennyworth in Farmer Chegwidden. He had already spent a couple of shillings in liquor, and would spend another couple when the concert was over. That was money spent upon a laudable object. But the threepence demanded for admission was, as he loudly proclaimed, money given to the devil.

Near him stood Pendoggat, his head down as usual, and breathing heavily as if he had gone to sleep. He looked as much at home there as a bat flitting in the sunlight among butterflies. Every one was surprised to see Pendoggat. Members of his own sect decided he was there to collect material for a scathing denunciation of such methods from the pulpit of Ebenezer. Chegwidden pushed closer, and asked hoarsely, "What do 'ye think of it, varmer?"

"Taking money in God's name to square the devil," answered Pendoggat.

"Just what I says," muttered Chegwidden, greatly envying the other's powers of expression. "Immortality! That's what it be, varmer. 'Tis a hard word, but there ain't no other. Dirty immortality!" He meant immorality, but was confused by righteous indignation, the music, and other things.

"Can't us do nought?" Chegwidden went on. "Us lets their religion bide. They'm mocking us, varmer. That there last song was blasphemy, and immortality, and a-mocking us all through."

Pendoggat muttered something about a demonstration outside later on, to mark their disapproval of such infamous attempts to seduce young people from the paths of rectitude. Then he relapsed into taciturnity, while Chegwidden went on babbling of people's sins.

Most of the ill-feeling was due to the fact that the room had been used several years back as a meeting-house, where the pure Gospel had flowed regularly. Chegwidden's father had carried his Bible into a front seat there. Souls had been saved in that room; anniversary teas had been held there; services of song had been given; young couples, whose Nonconformity was unimpeachable, had conducted their amours there; and upon the outside of the door had been scrawled shockingly crude statements concerning such love-affairs, accompanied by anatomical caricatures of the parties in question. It was holy ground, and representatives of a hostile sect were defiling it.

Greater evils followed. An eccentric gentleman rose and recited a story about a lady trying to mount an overcrowded street-car, and being dragged along the entire length of a street, chatting to the conductor the while; quite a harmless story, but it made Brentor to grin. Church-people laughed noisily, and even Methodists tittered. Nonconformist maids of established reputations giggled, and their young men cackled like geese. It was in short a laughing audience. The threepenny-bits shivered. Fire from heaven was already overdue. Complete destruction might be looked for at any moment. One nervous old woman crept out. She had heard the doctrine of eternal punishment expounded in that place, and she explained she could remain there no longer and listen to profanity. The performer again obliged; this time with a comic song which set the seal of blasphemy upon the whole performance. Chegwidden turned his face to the wall, moaned, and demanded of a neighbour what he thought of it all.

"Brave fine singing," came the unscrupulous answer, which seemed to denote that the speaker had also been carried away by enthusiasm.

This was the last straw. Even the lights of Ebenezer were flickering and going out. Chegwidden and Pendoggat appeared to be the only godly men left. The farmer turned upon the irreligious speaker, and crushed him with weighty words.

"'Twas here father prayed," he said, in a voice unsteady with grief and alcohol. "Twice every Sunday, and me with 'en, and he've a-shook me in this chapel, and punched my ear many a time when I was cracking nuts in sermon time. Father led in prayer here, and he've a-told me how he once prayed twenty minutes by the clock. Some said 'twas nineteen, but father knew 'twas twenty, 'cause he had his watch in his hand, and never took his eyes off 'en. Never thought he'd do the last minute, but he did. They was religious volks in them days. Father prayed here, I tells ye, and I learnt Sunday-school here, and 'twas here us all learnt the blessed truths of immorality."—again he blundered in his meaning—"and now it be a place for dancing, and singing, and play-acting, and us will be judged for it, and weighed in the balances and found wanting."

"Us can repent," suggested the neighbour.

Chegwidden would not admit this. "Them what have laughed here to-night won't die natural, not in their beds," he declared. "They'll die sudden. They'll be cut off. They've committed blasphemy, which is the sin what ain't forgiven."

Then Chegwidden turned upon the doorkeeper and demanded his money back. He was not going to remain among the wicked. He was going to spend the rest of the evening respectably at the inn.

After that the programme continued for a little without interruption. Then a young lady, who had been especially imported for the occasion, obliged with a violin solo. She played well, but made the common mistake of amateurs before a rural audience; preferring to exhibit her command over the instrument by rendering classical music, instead of playing something which the young men could whistle to. It was a very soft piece. The performer bent to obtain the least possible amount of sound from a string; and at that critical moment a loud weary voice startled the religious silence of the room—

"Aw, my dear life! Bain't it a shocking waste o' time?"

It was Mary, who was feeling bored. The novelty of the performance had worn off. She was prepared to sit there and hear a good noise. She liked the piano when it was giving forth plenty of crashing chords; but that whining scraping sound was intolerable. It was worse than any old cat.

There was some commotion in the front seats, and shocked faces were turned upon Mary, while the performer almost broke down. She made another effort, but it was no use, for Mary continued at the top of her voice—

"Ole Will Chanter had a fiddle like thikky one. Du'ye mind, Peter?"

Indignant voices called for silence, but Mary only looked about in some amazement. She couldn't think what the people were driving at. As she was not being entertained there was nothing to prevent her from talking, and it was only natural that she should speak to Peter; and if the folks in front did not approve of her remarks they need not listen. The violinist had dropped her arms in despair; but when she perceived silence was restored she tried again.

"Used to play 'en in Peter Tavy church," continued Mary, with much relish. "Used to sot up in the loft and fiddle cruel. Didn't 'en, Master? Don't ye mind ole Will Chanter what had a fiddle like thikky one? His brother Abe sot up wi' 'en, and blowed into a long pipe. Made a cruel fine noise, them two."

Mary was becoming anecdotal, and threatening to address the audience at some length, so the violinist had to give up and make way for a vocalist with sufficient voice to drown these reminiscences of a former generation.

After the concert there were disturbances outside. One faction cheered the performers; another hooted them. Then a light of Ebenezer kindled into religious fire and hit an Anglican postman in the eye. The response of the Church Militant loosened two Nonconformist teeth. Chegwidden reappeared on horseback, swaying from side to side, holding on by the reins, and raising the cry of down with everything except Ebenezer and liquor-shops.

Pendoggat stood aloof, looking on, hoping there would be a fight. He did not mix in such things himself. It was his custom to stand in the background and work the machinery from outside. He liked to see men attacking one another, to watch pain inflicted, and to see the blood flow. Turning to the man whose mouth had been damaged he muttered: "Go at him again."

"I'm satisfied," came the answer.

"He called you a dirty monkey," lied Pendoggat.

The insult was sufficient. The Anglican postman was walking away, having fought a good fight for the faith that was in him, by virtue of two shillings a week for various duties, and his Opponent seizing the opportunity attacked him vigorously from the rear. Peter and Mary watched the conflict, and their savage souls rejoiced. This was better than all the pianos and fiddles in the world. They felt at last they were getting value for their free tickets.

Sport was terminated by the sudden appearance of the Maggot. He had been drafting a prospectus of the "Tavy Nickel Mining Company, Limited," and had issued forth to look for the managing director. He stopped the fight and lectured the combatants in spiritual language. He

comprehended how the ex-chapel had been desecrated that night by godless people, and he appreciated the zeal which had prompted a member of his congregation to defend its sanctity; but he explained that it was not lawful for Christians to brawl upon the streets. To take out a summons for assault was far holier. The man with the loosened teeth explained that he should do so. It was true he had incited the postman to fight by striking him first; but then he had struck him with Christian charity in the eye, which entailed only a slight temporary discomfort and no permanent loss; whereas the postman had struck him with brutal ferocity on the mouth, depriving him of the services of two teeth; and had moreover added obscene language, as could be proved by impartial witnesses. Pezzack assured him that the teeth Bad fallen in a good cause; men and women had been tortured and burnt at the stake for their religion; and he quoted the acts of Bloody Mary, that bigoted lady who has become the hardy perennial of Nonconformist sermons, with a strong emphasis upon the qualifying, adjective. The champion went away delighted. He had won his martyr's crown, and his teeth were not so very loose after all. A little beer would soon tighten them.

The crowd was dwindling away with its grievances. The folks would chatter furiously for a few days; then the affair would drop and be forgotten, and a fresh scandal would fill the vacancy. They would never bite so long as they had liberty to bark. Chegwiddden had galloped off across the moor in his usual wild way. Every week he would visit some inn, upon what might have been called his home circuit, and at closing time would commit his senseless body to his horse with the certain hope of being carried home. To gallop wildly over Dartmoor at night might be ranked as an almost heroic action. The horse had brains fortunately. Chegwiddden was only the clinging monkey upon its back. The farmer had fallen on several occasions, but had escaped with bruises. One night he would break his neck, or crack his head upon a boulder, and die as he had lived—drunk. Drunkenness is not a vice upon Dartmoor; nor a fault even. It is a custom.

The Maggot found Pendoggat. They greeted one another in a fraternal way, then began to walk down from the village. The night was clear ahead of them, but above Brentor, with its church, which looked rather like an exaggerated locomotive in that light, the sky, or "widdicote," as Mary might have called it, was red and lowering.

"Well, what about business?" said Pendoggat.

"I am not finding it easy, Mr. Pendoggat," said the minister. "Folks are nervous, and, as you know, there is not much money about. But they trust me, Mr. Pendoggat. They trust me," he repeated fervently.

"Got any promises?"

"A few half-promises. I could do better if I was able to show them the mine. If you would come forward, with your wisdom and experience, I think we should do well. I mentioned that you were interested."

"I told you to keep my name out of it," said Pendoggat.

"But that is impossible. I cannot tell a lie, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli, with the utmost deference.

"You're suspicious," said the other sharply. "You don't trust me. Say it out, Pezzack."

"I do trust you, Mr. Pendoggat. I have given you this 'and," said Eli, extending a clay-like slab. "I have seen with my own eyes the sides of that cave gleaming with precious metal like the walls of the New Jerusalem. I can take your 'and now, and look you in the heye, and say 'ow I trust you. We 'ave prayed side by side, and you 'ave always prayed fair. Now that we are working side by side I know you'll work fair. But I 'ave thought, Mr. Pendoggat, 'ow you seem to be putting too much upon me."

"I'll tell you how it is. I'm pushed," Pendoggat muttered. "Nobody knows it, but I'm deep in debt. Do you think I'd be such a fool as to give this find of mine away for nothing, as you might say, unless I'd got to?" he went on sullenly. "I've known of it for years. I've spent days planting willows and fern about the entrance to that old shaft, to close it up and make folk forget it's there. I meant to bide my time till I could get mining folk in London to take it up and make a big thing out of it. I'm a disappointed man, Pezzack. I'm in debt, and I've got to suffer for it."

He paused, scowling sullenly at his companion.

"My 'eart bleeds for you, Mr. Pendoggat," said simple Eli. He thought that was a good and sympathetic phrase, although he somewhat exaggerated the actual state of his feelings.

"I've kept 'em quiet so far," said Pendoggat. "I've paid what I can, and they know they can't get more. But if 'twas known about this mine, and known I was running it, they'd be down on me like flies on a carcase, and would ruin the thing at once. The only chance for me was to look out for a straight man who could float the scheme in his name while I did the work. I knew only one man I could really trust, and that man is you."

"It is very generous of you, Mr. Pendoggat," said the buttered Eli.

They had reached the railway bridge, and there stopped, being upon the edge of the moor. Beneath them was Brentor station gone to sleep; beyond, in its cutting, that of Mary Tavy. The lines of two rival companies ran needlessly side by side, silently proclaiming to the still Dartmoor night the fact that railway companies are quite human and hate each other like individuals.

Pendoggat was looking down as usual, therefore his eyes were fixed upon the rival lines. Possibly he found something there to interest him.

"I'll get you some samples. You can take them about with you," he went on. "We'll have a meeting too."

"At the Barton?" suggested Eli.

"The chapel," said Pendoggat.

"Commencing with a prayer-meeting," said Eli. "That is a noble thought, Mr. Pendoggat. We will seek a blessing on the work."

"The chapel must be rebuilt," said Pendoggat.

"The Lord's work first. Yes, that is right. That is like you, Mr. Pendoggat. I will communicate with some friends in London. I 'ave an uncle who is a retired grocer. He lives at Bromley, Mr. Pendoggat. He will invest part of his savings, I am convinced. He has confidence in me. He had me educated for the ministry. He will persuade others to invest, perhaps."

Pendoggat moved forward, and set his face towards the moor. "I must get on," he said. "I'll see you on Sunday. Have something to tell me by then."

"Let us seek a blessing before we part," said Pezzack.

Pendoggat turned back. He was always ready to obtain absolution. They stood upon the bridge, removed their hats, while Eli prayed with vigour and sincerity. He did not stop until the rumble of the night mail sounded along the lines and the metals began to hum excitedly. The "widdicote" above St. Michael's was still red and lowering. The church might have been a furnace, emitting a strong glow from fires within its tower.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT FAIRYLAND

By the time Boodles was sixteen she was shaped and polished. Weevil had done what he could; not much, for the poor old thing was neither learned nor rich; and she had gone to Tavistock, where various arts had been crammed into her brain, all mixed up together like the ingredients of a patent pill. Boodles knew a good deal for seventeen; but Nature and Dartmoor had taught her more than the school-mistress. She was a fresh and fragrant child, with no unhealthy fancies; loving everything that was clean and pretty; loathing spiders, and creeping things, and filth in general; and longing ardently already to win for herself a name and a soul a little higher than the beetles. They were presumptuous longings for a child of passion, who did not know her parents, or anything about her origin beyond the fact that she had been thrown out in a bundle of fern, and taken in and cared for by Abel Cain Weevil.

At the tender age of fourteen Boodles received her love-wound. It was down by the Tavy, where the water swirls round pebbles and rattles them against its rocks below Sandypark. Her love-affair was idyllic, and therefore dangerous, because the idyllic state bears the same resemblance to rough and brutal life as the fairy-tale bears to the true story of that life. The tales begin with "once upon a time," and end with "they lived happily ever after." The idyllic state begins in the same way, but ends, either with "they parted with tears and kisses and never saw each other again," or "they married and were miserable ever afterwards." Only children can blow idyll-bubbles which will float for a time. Elderly people try, but they only make themselves ridiculous, and the bubbles will not form. People of thirty or over cannot play at fairy-tales. When they try they become as fantastic a sight as an old gentleman wearing a paper hat and blowing a penny trumpet. Shakespeare, who knew everything about human nature that men can know, made his Romeo and Juliet children, and ended their idyll as such things must end. Customs have changed since; even children are beginning to understand that life cannot be made a fairy-tale; and Romeo prefers the football field to sighing beneath a school-girl's balcony; and Juliet twists up her hair precociously and runs amok with a hockey-stick.

Still fairy-tales lift their mystic blooms to the moon beside the Tavy, and Boodles had seen those flowers, and wandered among them very delicately. The boy was Aubrey Bellamie, destined for the Navy, and his home was in Tavistock. He had come into the world, amid an odour of respectability, two years before Boodles had crept shamefully up the terrestrial back stairs. All he knew about Boodles was the fact that she was a girl; that one all-sufficient fact that makes youths mad. He knew, also, that her head was glorious, and that her lips were better than wine. He was a clean, pretty boy; like most of the youths in the Navy, who are the good fresh salt of Devon and England everywhere. Boodles came into Tavistock twice a week to be educated, and he would wait at the door of the school until she came out, because he wanted to educate her too; and then they would wander beside the Tavy, and kiss new knowledge into each other's young souls. The fairy-tale was real enough, because real life had not begun. They were still in "once upon a time" stage, and they believed in the happy ending. It was the age of delusion; glorious folklore days. There was enough fire in them both to make the story sufficiently life-like to be mistaken for the

real thing. Aubrey's parents did not know of the love-affair then; neither did Weevil. In fairy-tales relations are usually wicked creatures who have to be avoided. So for months they wandered beside the river of fairyland, and plucked the flowers of that pleasant country which were gleaming with idyllic dew.

"I can't think why you love my head so," Boodles had protested, when a thunderstorm of affection had partially subsided. "It's like a big tangle of red seaweed. The girls at the school call me Carrots."

"I should like to hear them," said Aubrey fiercely; "Darling, it's the loveliest head in the world."

And then he went on to talk a lot of shocking nonsense about flowers and sunsets, and all other wondrous flaming things, which had derived their colour and splendour from the light of his sweetheart's head, and from none other source or inspiration whatsoever.

"If I was a boy I shouldn't love a girl with red hair. There are such a lot of girls you might love. Girls with silky flaxen hair, and girls with lovely brown hair—"

"They are only girls," said Aubrey disdainfully. "Not angels."

"Do angels have red hair?" asked Boodles.

"Only a very few," said the boy. "Boodles—and one or two others whose names I can't remember just now. It's not red hair, sweetheart. It's golden, and your beautiful skin is golden too, and there is a lot of gold-dust scattered all over your nose."

"Freckles," laughed Boodles. "Aubrey, you silly! Calling my ugly freckles gold-dust! Why, I hate them. When I look in the glass I say to myself: 'Boodles, you're a nasty little spotted toad.'"

"They are just lovely," declared the boy. "They are little bits of sunshine that have dropped on you and stuck there."

"I'm not sticky."

"You are. Sticky with sweetness."

"What a dear stupid thing!" sighed Boodles. "Let me kiss your lovely pink and white girl's face—there—and there—and there."

"Boodles, dear, I haven't got a girl's face," protested Aubrey.

"Oh, but you have, my boy. It's just like a girl's—only prettier. If I was you, and you was me—that sounds rather shocking grammar, but it don't matter—every one would say: 'Look at that ugly boy with that boodle-oodle, lovely, *butiful* girl.' There! I've squeezed every bit of breath out of him," cried Boodles.

There was a certain amount left, as she soon discovered; enough to smother her.

"If you hadn't got golden hair, and freckles, I should never have fallen in love with you," declared the boy. "If you were to lose your freckles, if you lost only one, the tiniest of them all, I shouldn't love you any more."

"And if you lose that dear girl's face I won't love you," promised Boodles. "If you had a horrid moustache to tickle me and make me sneeze, I wouldn't give you the smallest, teeniest, wee bit of a kiss. Well, you can't anyhow, because you've got to be an admiral. How nice it will be when you are grown up and have a lot of ships of your own."

"We shall be married long before then. Boodles, darling," cried the eager boy. "Directly I am twenty-one we will be married. Only five more years."

"Such a lot happens in a year," sighed Boodles. "You may meet five more girls far more sunshiny than me, with redder hair and more freckles, since you are so fond of them—"

"I shan't. You are the only girl who ever was or shall be."

That is how boys talk when they are sixteen, and when they are twenty-six, and sometimes when they are very old boys of sixty; and girls generally believe them.

"I wonder if it is right of you to love me," said Boodles doubtfully.

The answer was what might have been looked for, and ended with the usual question: "Why not?"

"Because I'm only a baby."

"You are fourteen, darling. You will be nineteen by the time we are married."

Although they were only at the beginning of the story they were already slapping over the pages, anxious to reach the "lived happily ever after" conclusion. Young people are always wanting to hurry on; middle-aged to marktime; old to look back. The freshness of life is contained in the first chapter. Youth is a time of unnatural strength, of insanity, a dancing-round-the-may-pole sort of time. Common-sense begins to come when one has grandchildren. Boodles and Aubrey wandered a thousand times in love's fairyland on the romantic banks of the rattling Tavy, and knew as much during their last walk as upon the first; knew they were in love cleanly and honestly; knew that the joy of life was no myth; but knowing nothing, either of them, concerning Giant Despair, who

has his mantle trimmed with lovers' hearts, or the history of the fair maid of Astolat, or the existence of Castle Dolorous. Love is largely a pleasure of the imagination, thus a fairy-tale, and sound practical knowledge sweeps the romance of it all away.

The whole of that folly—if the only real ecstatic bliss of life which is called first love be folly—seemed gone for ever. Aubrey was packed off to do his part in upholding the honour of Boodlesland, as his country named itself in his thoughts; and the years that intervened discovered him probably kissing girls of all complexions, girls with every shade of hair conceivable, girls with freckles and without; and being kissed by them. Boys must have their natural food, and if the best quality be not obtainable they must take what offers. In the interval Boodles remained entirely unloved, and received no letters. She wasn't surprised. His love had been too fierce. It had blazed up, burnt her, and gone out. Aubrey had forgotten her; forgotten those wonderful walks in Tavyland; forgotten her radiant head and golden freckles. It was all over, that romance of two babies. It was Boodles who did not forget; Boodles who had the wet pillow sometimes; Boodles who was constant like the gorse, which is in flower all the year round.

No one would call the ordinary Dartmoor postman an angel—his appearance is too much against him—but he does an angel's work. Perhaps there is nothing which quickens the heart of any lonely dweller on the moor so perceptibly as the heavy tread of that red-faced and beer-tainted companion of the goddess of dawn. He leaves curses as well as blessings. He pushes love-letters and bills into the box together. Sometimes he is an hour late, and the miserable watcher frets about the house. Sometimes the wind holds him back. He can be seen struggling against it, and the watcher longs to yoke him to wild horses. There are six precious post-times each week, and the lonely inhabitant of the wilds would not yield one of them to save his soul alive.

There was an angel's visit to Lewside Cottage, and a letter for Boodles fell from heaven. The child pounced upon it, rushed up to her room like a dog with a piece of meat, locked the door lest any one should enter with the idea of stealing her prize, gloated upon it, almost rolled upon it. She did not open it for some time. She turned it over, smelt it, pinched it, loved it. Tavistock was blurred across the stamp. There was no doubt about that letter. It was a tangible thing. It did not fade away like morning dew. She opened it at last, but did not dare to read it through. She took bites at it, tasting it here and there; and had every sentence by heart before she settled down to read it properly. So she was still dearest Boodles, and he was the same devoted Aubrey. The child jumped upon her bed, and bit the pillow in sheer animal joy.

He had just come home, and was writing to her at once. She wouldn't recognise him because he had become a tough brown sailor, and the girl's face was his no longer. He was coming to see her at once; and they would walk again by the Tavy and be just the same as ever; and swear the same vows; and kiss the same kisses; and be each other's sun and moon, and all the rest of the idyllic patter, which was as sweet and fresh as ever to poor Boodles. For he had been all the world over and discovered there was only one girl in it; and that was the girl with the radiant head, and the golden skin, and the gold-dust upon her nose. He was as true as he always had been, and as he always would be for ever and evermore.

Boodles saw nothing mad or presumptuous in that closing sentence. It was just what she would have said. There is no hereafter for young people in their teens; there is an ever and evermore for them. They are like a kitten playing with its own tail, without ever realising that it is its tail.

Boodles became at once very light and airy. She seemed to have escaped from the body somehow. She felt as if she had been transformed into a bit of sunshine. She floated down-stairs, lighted up the living-room, wrapped herself round Abel Cain, floated into the kitchen to finish preparations for breakfast, discovered the material nature of her hands by breaking a milk-jug, and then humanity asserted itself and she began to shriek.

"Boodle-oodle!" cried old Weevil; "you have been sleeping in the moonshine."

"I've broken the milk-jug," screamed Boodles.

Weevil came shuffling along the passage. Small things were greatly accounted of in Lewside Cottage. There were most of the ingredients of tragedy in a broken milk-jug.

"How did you do it?" he wailed.

"It was all because the butter is so round," laughed Boodles.

Weevil was frightened. He thought the child's mind had broken too; and that was even more serious than the milk-jug. He stood and stared, and made disjointed remarks about bright Dartmoor moons, and girls who would sleep with their blinds up, and insanity which was sure to follow such rashness. But Boodles only laughed the more.

"I'll tell you," she said. "The butter is very round, and I had it on a plate. I must have tilted the plate, and it was roll, butter, roll. First on the table, where it knocked the milk-jug off its legs. Then it rolled on the floor, and out of the door. It's still rolling. I expect it is nearly at Mary Tavy station by now, and it ought to reach Tavistock about ten o'clock at the rate it was going. It's sure to roll on to Plymouth, right through the Three Towns, and then across the Hoe, and about the time we go to bed there will be a little splash in the sea, and that will be the end of the butter, which rolled off the plate, and broke the milk-jug, and started from the top of Dartmoor at half-past eight by the clock in Lewside Cottage, which is ten minutes fast—and that's all I can think of now," gasped Boodles.

"My poor little girl," quavered Weevil. "The butter is on the plate in front of you."

"Well, it must have rolled back again. It wanted to see its dear old home once more."

Weevil began to pick up the fragments of the milk-jug. "There is something wrong with you, Boodle-oodle," he said tenderly. "I don't want you to have any secrets, my dear. You are too young. There was a letter for you just now?"

At that the whole story came out with a rush. Boodles could hold nothing back that morning. She told Weevil about the fairy-tale, from the "once upon a time" up to the contents of that letter; and she begged him to play the part of good genie, and with his enchantments cause blissfulness to happen.

Weevil was very troubled. He had feared that the radiant head would do mischief, but he had not expected trouble to come so soon. The thing was impossible, of course. Even radiant growths must have a name of some sort. Aubrey's parents could not permit weeds to grow in their garden. There were plenty of girls "true to name," like the well-bred roses of a florist's catalogue, wanting smart young husbands. There was practically no limit to the supply of these sturdy young plants. Boodles might be a Gloire de Devon, but she was most distinctly not in the catalogue. She was only a way-side growth; a beautiful fragrant weed certainly, like the sweet honeysuckle which trails about all the lanes, and is in itself a lovely thing, but is not wanted in the garden because it is too common; or like the gorse, which as a flowering shrub is the glory of the moor, but not of the garden, because it is a rank wild growth. Were it a rare shrub it would be grown upon the lawns of the wealthy; but because it is common it must stay outside.

"Boodles, darling, I am so sorry," the old man murmured.

"But you mustn't be," she laughed. "Sorry because I'm so happy! You must be a *butif* old daddy-man, and say you are glad. I can't help being in love. It's like the measles. We have to catch it, and it is so much better to go through it when you're young. Now say something nice and let me go. I want to run to the top of Ger Tor, and scream, and run back again."

"Oh, dear heaven!" muttered Weevil, playing with the bits of milk-jug. "I can't tell the poor baby, I can't tell it."

"Don't be weepy, daddy-dear-heart," murmured Boodles, coming and loving him. "I know I'm only a baby, but then I'm growing fast. I'll soon be eighteen. Such a grown-up woman then, old man! I'll never leave him—that's the trouble, I know. I'll always boil him's eggs, and break him's milk-jugs. Only he must be pretty to Boodles when she's happy, and say he's glad she's got a lovely boy with the beautifullest girl's face that ever was."

Weevil unmeshed himself and shuffled away, pelting imaginary foes with bits of milk-jug, blinking his eyes like a cat in the sunshine. He could not destroy the child's happiness. As well expect the painter who has expended the best years of his life on a picture to cut and slash the canvas. Boodles was his own. He had made and fashioned her. He could not extinguish his own little sun. He must let her linger in fairyland, and allow destiny, or human nature, or something else equally brutal, to finish the story. Elementary forces of nature, like Pendoggat, might be cruel, but Weevil was not a force, neither was he cruel. He was only an eccentric old man, and he wanted it to be well with the child. She would have her eyes opened soon enough. She would discover that innocents thrust out on the moor to perish cannot by the great law of propriety take that place in life which beauty and goodness deserve. They must go back; like Undine, coming out with brave love to seek a soul, succeeding at first, but failing in the end, and going back at last to the state that was hers. Poor little bastard Boodles! How mad she was that morning! Weevil hardly noticed that his eggs were hard-boiled.

"Darling," he said tenderly, anxious to divert her mind—as if it could be diverted!—"go and see Peter, and tell him we must have that clock. You had better bring it back with you."

That clock was a favourite subject of conversation. It had amused Boodles for two years, and it amused her then. It was only a common little clock, or Peter would never have been entrusted with it. Peter, who knew nothing, was among other things a mechanic. He professed his ability to mend and clean clocks. Possibly Grandfather had taught him something. He had studied the old gentleman's internal arrangements all his life, and had, he considered, mastered the entire principle of a clock's construction and well-being. Therefore when Boodles met him one day, and informed him that a little clock in Lewside Cottage was choked with dust and refused to perform its duty, Peter promised he would attend at his earliest convenience, to lay his hand upon it, and restore it to activity. "When will you come?" asked Boodles.

"To-morrow," answered Peter.

The day came, but not Peter. He was hardly expected, because promises are meaningless phrases in the mouths of Dartmoor folk. In the matter of an eternal "to-morrow" they are like the Spanish peasantry. They always promise upon their honour, but, as they haven't got any, the oath might as well be omitted. When reminded of their solemn undertaking they have a ready explanation. Their conscience would not permit them to come. It is the same when they agree to charge an unsuspecting person so much for duties performed, and then send in a bill for twice the amount. Conscience would not allow them to charge less. The Dartmoor conscience is a beautiful thing. It urges a man to act precisely as he wants to.

A month or so passed—the exact period is of no account in such a place—and Boodles saw Peter

approaching her. When within sight of her he put out his arm and began to cry aloud. She hurried towards him, afraid that something was wrong; the arm was still extended, and the cry continued. Peter was like an owl crying in the wilderness. Drawing near, he became at last intelligible. "I be coming," he cried. "I be coming to mend the clock."

"Now?" asked Boodles.

"To-morrow," said Peter.

This sort of thing happened constantly. Whenever they came within sight of each other, and Peter called often at the village to purchase pints of beer, the little man would hurry towards Boodles, with his outstretched arm and monotonous cry: "To-morrow." He was always on his way to Lewside Cottage, but something always hindered him from getting there. He did not despair, however. He felt confident that the day would arrive when he would attend in person and restore the clock. It was merely a matter of time. Thus a year went by and the pledge remained unfulfilled.

One Sunday evening Boodles went to church, and it so happened that Peter was there also. Peter had just then reasons of his own for wishing to ingratiate himself with the church authorities, and he considered that the appearance of his vile body in a devotional attitude somewhere in the neighbourhood of the pulpit would be of material assistance to his ambition. Peter entered with a huge lantern, the time being winter, and the evening dark—the night rather, for the Dartmoor day in winter is well over by five o'clock—flapped up the aisle with goose-like steps, tumbled into a seat breathing heavily, and making as much noise with his boots as a horse upon cobblestones, banged the lantern down, and gazed about the building with an air of proprietorship. The next thing was to blow out the candle in his lantern. He opened it, and made windy noises which were not attended with success. "Scat 'en," cried Peter boisterously. "When her's wanted to go out her never will, and when her bain't wanted to go out her always du."

At that moment Boodles entered. Peter was delighted to see her friendly face. The lantern clattered to the floor, and its master stretched out his arm, and exclaimed in a whisper which would have carried from one side of Tavy Cleave to the other: "I was a-coming yesterday, but I never got as far. Had the tweezers in my trousers, and here they be." He brought out the implement and brandished it in the faces of the congregation. "I'm a-coming to-morrow sure 'nuff." Then he went to work again at the lantern. Peter had not developed the spirit of reverence; and the service was unable to commence until he had finished blowing.

When the proceedings were over he followed Boodles out of church and along the road, all the time asserting that the tweezers and his trousers had been inseparable for the last six months, that he had started for Lewside Cottage every day, and something had always cropped up to prevent him from reaching his destination, but that the next day would bring him, wet or fine, upon his word of honour it would. He had been remiss in the past, he owned, but if he failed to attend on Monday morning at half-past eleven punctual, with the tweezers in his trousers, he hoped the young lady and the old gentleman would never trust him again.

A few more weeks went by, and then Boodles put the clock into a basket, and came out to the hut-circles.

Peter was grievously dismayed. "Why didn't ye tell me?" he said. "I'd ha' come for 'en. I wouldn't ha' troubled yew to ha' brought 'en. If yew had told I there was a clock to mend, I'd ha' come for him all to wance, and fetched him home, and mended him same day."

It would have been useless to remind Peter of his promises and his eternal procrastination. He would only have pleaded that he had forgotten all about it. People such as Peter cannot be argued with.

Boodles left the clock, and Peter promised it should be cleaned at once, and brought back in a day or two.

During the next few months the couple at Lewside Cottage made merry over that clock. Left to himself Peter would have said no more about it, but would simply have added it to his stock of earthly possessions. However, Boodles gave him no peace. Peter could hardly enter the village for the necessity of his existence without being accosted upon the subject; and at last the slumbering fires of mechanism within him kindled into flame. He declared he had never seen such a clock; it was made all wrong; it was not in the least like Grandfather. He explained that it would be necessary to take it entirely to pieces, alter the works considerably, and reconstruct it in accordance with the recognised model, adding such things as weights and pendulum; and that would be a matter of a year's skilled labour. He pointed out, moreover, that the clock was painted green, and that in itself would be sufficient to clog the works, as it was well known that clocks would not keep proper time unless they were painted brown. That was a trade secret. Boodles replied that there was nothing whatever wrong with the works of the clock. It only required cleaning, and she believed she could do it herself. Peter wagged his head in amazement. The folly and ignorance of young maids eclipsed his understanding.

The second year came to an end, and the clock was in precisely the same condition as at first. Peter was glad to have it because it made a nice ornament for his section of Ger Cottage. He had only touched it once, and then Mary, who happened to be present, exclaimed: "Dear life, Peter, put 'en down, or you'll be tearing 'en."

The tenants of Lewside Cottage had become tired of the endless comedy. So, on that morning when Boodles had her letter, it was the most natural thing in the world for Weevil to suggest that she should go and reclaim their property; and as the girl was longing for the open moor and the sight of Tavy Cleave, which was on the way to fairyland, she went, running part of the way for sheer joy, singing and laughing all the time.

The hut-circles were deserted. Mary was out on the "farm," which was a ridiculous scrap of reclaimed moor about the same size as an Italian mountaineer's vineyard; and Peter had gone to the village inn on business. Boodles looked inside. There was Grandfather, ticking in his usual misanthropic way; and there was the uncleaned clock in the centre of the long shelf which ran above the big fire-place. Boodles took it, and ran off, laughing to think of Peter's dismay when he returned and discovered that his mantelshelf lacked its principal ornament. He would think some one had stolen it, and the fright would be a punishment for him. Boodles raced home, put the clock on the kitchen table, opened it, and placing the nozzle of the bellows among the works cleaned them vigorously. When old Weevil came shuffling in the clock was going merrily.

"I've done in two minutes what Peter couldn't do in two years," laughed the happy child.

Weevil shuffled out. He was in a restless mood. He knew he ought to tell Boodles that she mustn't be happy, only he could not. Somebody or something would have to use her as she had used the clock; blow wildly into her poor little soul, and do for her in two minutes what Weevil would never have done in two years.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOUT ATMOSPHERE

There are secret places among the rocks of Tavy Cleave. The river has many moods; one time in the barren lands, another time in bogland, and then in hanging gardens and woodland. No other river displays such startling Protean changes. The artist always fails to catch the Tavy. He paints it winding between low banks of peat, with blossoms of pink heather dripping into the water; but that is not the Tavy. He presents it as a broiling milk-white torrent, thundering over rocks, with Ger Tor wrapped in cloud, and bronzed bracken springing out of the clefts; but that is not the Tavy. He represents it shaded with rowan and ferns, its banks a fairy carpet of wind-flowers, and suggests a gentle river by removing the lace-like pattern of foam and the big boulders, and painting the water a wonderful green, with here and there a streak of purple; but still he has not caught the Tavy. He goes down from the moor and shows a stately stream, descending slowly a low valley between hills, partly wooded, partly cultivated; shows the smoke of scattered Bartons mixing lazily with the clouds and going with them sea-ward; shows cattle feeding and bluebells nodding; a general atmosphere that of Amaryllis and her piping shepherd, though the lad is only a dull clod and his pipe is of clay, and Amaryllis has dirty finger-nails; but again the elusive Tavy has escaped somehow. Once more he tries. There is the Tavy, like an ocean flood, coming across mud-flats, mingled with brother Tamar of the border; a dull unromantic Tavy then. The magic mist of bluebells has given way to the blue steel of the railroad, and wooden battleships, their task over, float upon its waters instead of fern-fronds. Not a fairy-tale is to be told, nor any pretty fancy to be weaved there. The pictures go into galleries, and win fame, perhaps; but the river of Tavy chuckles over his rocks, and knows he is not there.

It is a river of atmosphere. Only a dream can produce the Tavy; not the written word, nor the painted picture. Unpleasant dreams some of them, like nightmares, but human thought produces them; and human thought is the dirtiest, as well as the noblest, thing created.

In one of the secret places among the rocks Pendoggat waited, and Thomasine came to meet him there. She came because she had been told to, and about the only thing that her mind was capable of realising was that she must be obedient. Country girls have to do as they are told. They are nearly as defenceless as the rabbits, and any commoner may trap them as one of his rights. So Thomasine came down among the rocks. She had not been out with Will Pugsley lately, because it was not allowed. She wanted to, but Pendoggat had refused permission. He had indeed gone further, and had threatened to murder her if she went with any other man. Thomasine accepted the inevitable, and told her Will she could not go out with him any more. Pugsley, having saved a little money, desired to spend it upon matrimony, and as he could not have Thomasine he was going about looking for another maid. One would serve his purpose as well as another, so long as she had plenty of blood in her.

Such a thing as love without lust was unknown to Pendoggat. His only idea of the great passion was to catch hold of a woman, maul her, enjoy her flesh, and her warmth, and the texture of her clothes; the coarse, crude passion which makes a man ruin himself, and destroy the life of another, for the pleasure of a moment's madness; that same anarchy of mind which has dethroned princes, lost kingdoms, and converted houses of religion into houses of ill-fame. Pendoggat would not have gone mad over Thomasine had she been merely pretty. It was that face of hers, the blood in her, something in the shape of her figure, which had kindled his fire. All men burn, more or less, and must submit; and when they do not it is because Nature is not striving very hard in them. Much is heard of the morality of Joseph; nothing concerning the age

or ugliness of Potiphar's wife. These conventional old tales are wiped out by one touch of desire, and nothing remains except the overmastering thing. The trees cannot help budding in spring. Nature compels it, as she compels the desire of the human body also.

They were out of the wind. The heavy fragrance of gorse was in the hot air. It was a well-hidden spot, and somewhat weird, a haunted kind of place. The ruins of a miner's cot were close by, and what had been its floor was then a mass of bracken. The stones were covered with flowering saxifrage. There was a scrubby brake here and there, composed of a few dwarf trees, rowan and oaks, only a few feet high, ancient enough but small, because their roots obtained little nutriment from the rock-bedded peat. Their branches twisted in a fantastic manner, reaching across the sky like human limbs contorted with strange agony. They were the sort of trees which force themselves into dreams. Some of them were half dead, green on one side and black upon the other; while the dwarfed trunks were covered with ivy and masses of polypodies; overgrown so thickly with these parasites that the bark was nowhere visible. Such a thickness of moss coated some of the boulders that the hardness of the granite was not perceptible. Beneath the river tumbled; a rough and wild Tavy; the river of rocks, the open, sun-parched region of the high moor; the water clear and cold from Cranmere; and there was a long way to go yet before it reached cover, the hanging trees, and the mossy bogs pink with red-rattles, and the woods white with wind-flowers, and the stretch of bluebell-land, the ferns, bracken, asphodel, and the pleasant winding pathways where fairy-tales and decent love abide, and the little folk laugh at moonlight.

"It be a whist old place," Thomasine said; the words, but not the thought, frightened out of her by Pendoggat's rude embrace. Like most girls of her class she was no talker, because she did not know how to put words together. She could laugh without ceasing when the occasion justified it, laughter being with her what tail-wagging is to a dog, the natural expression of pleasure or goodwill; but there was not much to laugh at just then.

"You haven't told any one about our meetings? They don't know at Town Rising?" said Pendoggat.

"No, sir," answered Thomasine.

"It wouldn't do for them to know. They'd talk themselves sick. You don't wear much, my maid. Nothing under your blouse. If it wasn't for your fat you'd take cold." He had thrust his hand into the front of her dress, and clutched a handful of yielding flesh.

"Don't ye, sir. It ain't proper," entreated Thomasine.

She hardly dared to struggle because she was afraid. Instinct told her certain behaviour was not proper, although it had not prevented her from coming to that "whist old place." It was fear which had brought her there.

"How would you like to come to the Barton, and be my married wife? I want a fine maid to look after me, and you're a fine lusty sweetheart if ever there was one. 'Tis a job that would suit you, Thomasine. Better than working for those Chegwidens. I'd find you something better to do than sitting in a cold kitchen, keeping the fire warm. There's a good home and a sober master waiting for you. Better than young Pugsley and twelve shillings a week. Say the word, and I'll have you there, and Nell Crocker can go to the devil."

Thomasine did not say the word. She had no conversation at all. She did not know that Pendoggat was giving her the usual fair speech, making her the usual offer, which meant nothing although it sounded so much. She had heard Nell Crocker referred to as Mrs. Pendoggat, never before by her actual name. She had come to meet him, supposing him to be a married man, not because she wanted his company, but because she had to accept it. She could only conclude that he really did love her. Thomasine's ideas of love were simple enough; just to meet a man, and walk with him in quiet places, and sit about with him, and be mauled by him. That was the beginning and end of love according to Thomasine, for after marriage it was all hard work. If a man made a girl meet him in secret places among the rocks, it could only be because he loved her. There could be no other reason. And if a man loved a girl he naturally suggested marriage. The matter was entirely simple. Even she could understand it, because it was elementary knowledge; the sort of knowledge which causes many a quiet moorland nook, and many an innocent-looking back garden, to become some smothered infant's grave.

"You'd like to come to the Barton, wouldn't you, my maid?" said Pendoggat in a wheedling tone.

"Iss," murmured Thomasine at last. She didn't dare say anything else. She was afraid he would strike her if she struggled. She was staring without much expression at the little dwarfed oaks, and the blood was working vigorously up and down her exposed neck and bosom as though a pump was forcing it. She had a thought just then; or, if not quite a thought, a wish. She wished she had taken a situation which had been offered her at Sourton, and had never come to Town Rising. She felt somehow it might have been better for her if she had gone to Sourton. She might have escaped something, though she hardly knew what. She could not have got into a town, as she was too ignorant and dull for anything better than a moorland Barton.

"You've done with young Pugsley?" Pendoggat muttered.

He pulled her hair down roughly, hurting her. Thomasine had good brown hair in abundance. He wanted to see it lying on her skin. Anything to add fuel to the fire!

"Iss, sir."

"That's well. If you and he are seen together there'll be hell," he cried savagely. "You're mine, blood and flesh, and all that's in you, and I'll have you or die for it, and I'd kill the man who tried to get you away from me, as I'd kill you if you played me false and ran off to any one else. You young devil, you—you're as full of blood as a whort is full of juice."

While speaking he was half dragging her towards the ruined miner's cot, and there flung her savagely on the fern.

Much lower down, where the Tavy fretted less, being freer from rocks; where there were trees, and a shelter from the wind, and flowers also in their season, honeysuckles and rose-bays, with fern in great abundance—there could be no fairyland without ferns—and green water oozing from the banks, and a fragrant kind of mist over it all; there, where the river slanted perceptibly towards the lowland, "more down under like," as Peter would have expressed it, two little people were trying to strangle one another with pure affection. They were not pixy-folk. They were only Boodles and her boy going on with the story. They would have been out of place upon the high Tavy, on the rock-strewn side of the cleave, among the ruins of the mines. There was nothing hard or fierce about them. They were children, to be treated with tenderness; kept out of the strong wind; put among the flowers where they could roll and tumble without hurting themselves; wrapped in the clinging mist full of that odour of sweet water and fresh foliage which cannot quickly be forgotten when it has been enjoyed.

"I thought I was not going to see you any more," said Boodles with a fine indifference.

"Should you have cared very much, sweetheart?"

"Not a bit, really. A girl mustn't expect too much from a sailor boy. They are fickle, and keep a sweetheart at every place they stop at. Girls at every port. Red, white, and yellow girls. A whole heap of them!"

"But only one all the time," said Aubrey. "One best beautiful girl who makes all the others seem nothing, and that's always the girl he leaves at home and comes back to. You were always in my thoughts, darling."

"But you never wrote," murmured she.

"I promised mother I wouldn't," he said, with a little hesitation.

"Then she does know," cried Boodles quickly. "Well, I think she ought to, because we can't go on being so chummy—"

"Lovers," he amended.

"No, we can't," she said decidedly. "Your people must know all about it, and like me, and tell me I'm nice enough, if we are going on in the same old way. You see, boy, I had got used to the idea of doing without you, and I don't want to start again, and then your people to say I'm not nice enough. We are growing up now. I'm in long frocks, and—and at our age things begin to get serious," went on the seventeen-year-old girl of the radiant head somewhat dolefully, as if she was rather afraid she was past her prime.

"I'm going to take you to see mother. I promised her I would," said Aubrey. "Before going away I told her I was awfully in love with you, and she made me promise not to write, but to see what my feelings were when I came back. And now I've come back, and I love you more than ever, because I love you in a different way. I was only a boy then, and now I am a man, and it is as a man that I love you, and that sweet golden head and your lovely golden face; and if my people behave properly, I shall get a ring, and put it on this little finger—"

"You silly boy. That's my right hand," she laughed.

"Then there will be only two more years to wait."

"I shall be only a baby," sighed Boodles.

"Darling, you will be as old as I am now; and I'm nineteen," said Aubrey, with all the dignity and assurance of such longevity.

"Fancy such a child with an engagement-ring! It would be absurd!" said Boodles.

"I shan't be well off, darling," he said, making the confession with a boy's usual awkwardness.

"Then I won't have you," she declared. "I must have a boy with heaps of money, who will give me all the luxuries I have been used to. You know we live very expensively at Lewside. We have a joint of meat every week, and father has two eggs for breakfast, and I have two new frocks every year—I get the stuff and make them myself. If I had a hungry boy to keep, I should want a lot of housekeeping money, though I can make a penny do the work of three halfpence."

"Dear Boodles!"

"Does that 'dear' mean expensive? Well, I am. Some of the stuff for my frocks costs I don't know how much a yard, and it's no use trying to be pretty to a draper, for you can't smile them down a

single penny."

"You are very silly, darling. As if I should let you make your own frocks!"

"You are much sillier. So silly that you are hardly fit to live. Telling me you won't be well off! I think if it was all over between us now I shouldn't care a bit."

They came out upon an open space beside the river. It was clear of trees, and the sun was able to shine upon the girl's head, so Aubrey stopped and took off her hat with reverent hands. She looked up with a pretty smile. He drew her close and they kissed fondly. It was a clean healthy kiss, with less folly in it than most, as sweet as the water, and fresh as the mist; the sort of kiss that makes the soul bud and bring forth blossoms. They had changed a good deal since those days when they had first entered fairyland. There was womanhood in Boodles, and a good deal of the man in Aubrey. They felt the change. It added responsibility, as well as pleasure, to that kiss. In much the same way their appearance had altered. Boodles was rather thinner; she had not quite the same soft, dumpling-like, school-girl cheeks. Aubrey had still the girl's face, but it had become a little hardened and had lost its down. Training and discipline had added self-reliance and determination to his character. They were a pretty pair, little housewife Boodles and her healthy boy. It was a pity they were transgressing the great unwritten law of respectability by loving one another.

"The hair hasn't altered much," murmured the radiant child.

"Only to become more lovely. It is a deeper gold now, sweetheart—real gold; and before it was trying to be gold but couldn't quite manage it."

"This face is just the same to me, except for the nutmeg-graters on the chin and lips. You have been shaving in a hurry, Aubrey."

"You know why. I had to come and meet some one."

"I think you are such a nice boy, Aubrey," faltered Boodles.

Her eyes were so soft just then that he could not say anything. He took the glowing head and placed it on his shoulder, and warmed his lips and his heart with the radiant hair. What a life it would have been if they could have gone on "happy ever after," just as they were then. The first stage of love is so much the best, just as the bud is often more beautiful than the flower.

They walked on between the sun and the fragrant mist, having by this time got quite away from the dull, old place called earth. Boodles carried her hat, swinging it by the strings, and placed her other hand naturally on his arm. Aubrey had quite made up his mind by that time about many important matters. He would marry Boodles whatever happened. He was fond of his parents, but he could not permit them to come between him and his happiness. As there was only one girl in the singularly sparsely-populated world a big price must be paid for her. Even nineteen can be determined upon matters of the heart.

"You know Mr. Weevil is not my father," she said timidly, hardly knowing why she thought it necessary to make the admission; and then, rather hurriedly, "I am only his adopted daughter."

She had to say that. She did not want him to have unpleasant thoughts concerning her origin. She wanted to be perfectly honest, and yet at the same time she dreaded his learning the truth about herself. She did not realise how ill-suited they were from the ordinary social and respectable point of view, although she wanted to justify her existence and to convince him how unwilling she was to deceive.

"I am coming to see him soon," said Aubrey at once. He did not give the matter a serious thought either. He was much too young to bother his head about such things, and besides, he supposed that his sweetheart was the daughter of some relation or connection of Weevil's, and that she had been left an orphan in her childhood, and had been adopted as a duty, not as an act of charity, by the eccentric old man. He had very kindly thoughts of Weevil, because he knew that Boodles had been well taken care of, and always worshipped in a devout and proper manner by the tenant of Lewside Cottage.

"I have told him all about you," the girl went on. "I am sure he thinks you quite a suitable person to take perpetual charge of his little maid, only he is funny when I talk to him about you. It must be because he doesn't like the idea of getting rid of me."

Aubrey supposed that was reasonable enough. He judged Weevil by his own feelings. The idea of losing Boodles would have made him feel "funny" too.

"It does seem selfish and ungrateful," the child went on. "To be brought up and petted, and given everything by a dear old man, and then one day to run off with a nice young boy. It's very fickle. I must try and feel ashamed of myself. Still I'm not so wicked as you. If you would leave me alone I should abide with him always—but then you won't! You come and put selfish thoughts into my head. I think you are rather a bad boy, Aubrey."

The young sailor would not admit that. He declared he was quite a natural creature; and he reminded Boodles that if she hadn't been so delightful he would not have fallen in love with her. So it was her own fault after all. She said she was very sorry, but she couldn't help it. She too had only behaved naturally. She was not responsible for so much glowing hair and golden skin. Others had done that for her. And that brought her back to the starting-point, and she felt

vaguely there was something she ought to say about those unknown persons, only she didn't know what. So she said nothing at all, and they went on wandering beside the river where it was wooded and pleasant, and thought only of the present, and themselves, and how very nice it was to be together; until a jarring note was struck by that disagreeable thing called Nature, who never changes her mood, but works seven long days of spitefulness every week.

Aubrey had brought his dog with him, and the little beast had put aside his social instincts in that glorious hunting-ground, and had gone to seek his own pleasures, leaving his master to the enjoyment of his. Just then he returned, somewhat sheepishly, as if afraid he ought to expect a beating, and slunk along at Aubrey's heels. Boodles at once set up a lamentable cry: "Oh, Aubrey! he's got a bun, a poor little halfpenny bun!"

The dog had caught a young rabbit about the size of a rat. He dropped it with wicked delight, touched it up with his nose, made the poor little wretch run, then scampered after it, caught and rolled upon it with much satisfaction, shook it, tossed it in the air, made it run again, and captured it as before. He was as happy as a child with a clockwork toy.

"Take it away," pleaded Boodles. "It's so horrid. Look at the poor little thing's eyes! It's panting so! If he would kill it at once I wouldn't mind, but I hate to see him torture it."

The boy called his dog, who refused to obey, thinking it all a part of the glorious game. He would let Aubrey come near, then make the victim run, and scamper after it. The clockwork was getting out of order. The rabbit was nearly run down. Aubrey caught the dog, took the little creature away, struck it smartly upon the back of its neck, and the rabbit gave a little shriek, some small shivers, and died. Boodles turned away, and felt miserable.

"Shall I beat him?" said Aubrey, who was very fond of his dog.

"No—please! I don't care now the poor bun is dead. That tiny scream! Oh, you nasty little dog! You are not a bit like your master. Go away. I hate you."

"He can't help doing what his nature tells him, dear."

"Is it his nature?" wondered Boodles. "I suppose it is, but it seems so funny. He's so gentle and affectionate to us, and so very cruel to another animal. If it is his nature to be gentle and affectionate, why should he be cruel too?"

That was too deep for Aubrey, although in his confident boy's fashion he tried to explain it. He said that every animal respects those stronger than itself, and is cruel to those that are weaker. Boodles was not satisfied. She said that was the same thing as saying that affection is due to fear, and that a dog only loves his master because he is afraid of him. She was sure that wasn't true.

They did not pursue the subject, however, for at that moment Nature again intervened in her malicious way. The dog was trotting on ahead, his stump of tail erect, quite happy with himself. Suddenly he yelped, and rushed off into the wood.

"Now he's been and trodden on an ants' nest," said Aubrey, with some satisfaction.

"Or perhaps he saw a pixy under the bracken," said Boodles.

As she spoke Aubrey caught her, swung her back to a sound of furious hissing, and Boodles saw a viper upon a patch of bleached grass, head erect, swaying to and fro, and exceedingly angry at being disturbed. It was a beautiful, as well as a malevolent, creature. Its black zig-zag markings were vivid in the sunlight, and its open mouth was as red as a poppy-leaf.

"You were just going to tread upon it," cried the boy.

"The poor dog!" lamented Boodles, all her sympathies naturally with the suffering animal.

Then she had to be sorry for the reptile, for Aubrey declared it must die, not so much because it had bitten the dog, as because it might have bitten her ankle, and he went and destroyed it with his stick.

By that time Boodles was wretched. She felt that most of the pleasure had gone out of their walk. They had been so happy, in a serene atmosphere, and then the weather had changed, as it were, and the cruelty and malevolence of Nature had come along to remind them they had no business to be so happy, and that the place was not an ideal fairyland after all. There was an atmosphere of suffering all around, though they could not always see it, and cruelty in every living thing. Even the sun was cruel, for it was beginning to make the radiant head ache.

They went after the dog, and found him much distressed, because he had been bitten in the neck, and swelling had commenced. Living upon Dartmoor, Boodles knew all about viper-bites, and she ordered Aubrey to take the dog back and attend to the wound at once. Then she had to gulp down a lump in her throat and rub her eyes. The weather had changed badly, and things had gone quite wrong. When they had walked in the wood as little children nothing unpleasant had ever happened, or at least they had never noticed anything disagreeable. Now they were grown up, as she thought, all sorts of troubles came to spoil their ramble. The dog had tortured the rabbit; the viper had bitten the dog; Aubrey had killed the viper. The tale of suffering seemed to be running up the scale towards herself. Was there any creature, stronger than themselves, who could be so brutal as to take pleasure in biting or torturing such harmless beings as Aubrey and herself?

CHAPTER IX

ABOUT A KNAVE AND A FOOL

Clever men are either philosophers or knaves; and as the world is crawling with fools the clever men who are philosophers spend their time making laws which will protect the fools from the clever men who are knaves. Sharp practice can only be punished, not stopped, so long as simpletons are willing to give a florin for a purse which they think contains two half-crowns, which is the sort of folly which gives rise to wonder how many men are really rational beings. The fool will believe anything if the knave talks long enough. No sort of folly is too hopeless when there is a clever man at the head of it. Shouting will establish a patent pill, found a new religion, produce a revolution; do any marvel, except make people decent.

Pendoggat was a clever man in his own way; and Pezzack would have been a fool anywhere. The minister had piped to others, a little jig of mines and speculations, and some of them had danced in a half-hearted way. In his quaint but sincere fashion he had preached of gold and precious jewels; of bdellium and the onyx stone. It was the doctrine of "get rich" that he proclaimed, and his listeners opened their ears to that as they would scarcely have opened them to any more orthodox message of redemption. "Do good to your body, and your soul will do good to itself," was in effect what Pezzack was teaching, although he didn't know it, and would have been grieved had any one suggested it. He desired to place his listeners in comfortable circumstances, from the retired grocer of Bromley to the Dartmoor widow who had five pounds' worth of pence saved up in a teapot; to take unto himself a helpmeet; last and least—although again he did not put it in that way—to rebuild Ebenezer. So he preached of treasures hidden in the earth, and promised his hearers that every sovereign sown therein would germinate without a doubt, and bring forth in due season a healthy crop of some ten per cents, and some twenty per cents.

People did not tumble over one another in any haste to respond. They might not be clever, but they could be suspicious, and they asked at once for particulars, desired to see the good thing for themselves, and some of them wanted the twenty per cent, paid in advance by way of guarantee against loss. There were plenty of wild stories concerning the treasures of the moor. Were there not, upon every side, evidences of the existence of precious minerals in the shape of abandoned mines? There were tales of rich lodes which had been lost, but were sure to be picked up again some day. The mining tradition was strong; but it was notorious that copper and tin could hardly be worked at a profit. Pezzack answered that he had discovered nickel, which was something far better, and his announcement certainly did cause some of the flutter which Pendoggat had looked for. The retired grocer took advantage of an excursion train to Plymouth, ascended upon the moor, and having been sworn to secrecy was conducted by Pendoggat, acting as Pezzack's manager, to the treasure cave, and shown the ripe nickel running down its sides. Pendoggat also knocked off a piece of the wall and appeared to give it to the retired grocer as a sample. What he actually gave him was a fragment of dirty-grey metal, which had not come from that cave or anywhere near it, but had been procured by Pendoggat at some expense, seeing that it really was a sample of nickel. The retired grocer had come down in doubt, but returned converted to Bromley, submitted the sample to an analyst, and subsequently acted foolishly. He was meddling with what he did not understand, which is one of the most attractive things in life. Adulterated groceries he could comprehend, because he had won retirement out of them; but the mining industry was something quite outside his experience. Apparently he thought that nickel could be taken off the sides of a cave in much the same way as blackberries are picked off a hedge. He confided the matter to a few friends, making them swear to say nothing about it; and when they had told all their acquaintances applications for shares in the good thing began to reach the retired grocer, who unfortunately had nothing to occupy his time. He was soon feeling himself a man of some importance, and this naturally assisted him to entertain a very avuncular regard for nephew Pezzack, and a friendly feeling for the "simple countryman Pendoggat" and the precious metal called nickel. He thought of himself as a financial magnate, and subscribed to the *Mining Journal*. He talked no more of prime Dorset, nor did he discuss concerning the most suitable sand to mingle with sugar; but he rehearsed the slang of the money-market instead, remarked that he had struck a gilt-edged security, looked in the paper every morning and observed to his wife that copper was recovering, or that diamonds continued to droop. The head-quarters of the Tavy Cleave Nickel Mining Company were really not upon Dartmoor at all, but at Bromley in a straight little jerry-built street; which was exactly what the "simple countryman Pendoggat" wanted.

A meeting of prospective shareholders was held in the chapel, but it turned out a wet stormy evening and very few attended. Brother Pendoggat led in prayer, which took a pessimistic view of things generally; Pezzack delivered an impressive address on the need of more stability in human affairs; and when the party had been worked into a suitable state of enthusiasm, and were prepared to listen to anything, they got to business.

The minister was destined to be astounded that evening by his brother in religion and partner in business. Eli told the party what it was there for, which it knew already, and then unfolded his prospectus, as it were, before their eyes, telling them he had discovered a rich vein of nickel, and contemplated forming a small company to work the same. It was to be quite a private affair, and operations would be conducted as unobtrusively as possible. The capital suggested was £500, divided into five-shilling shares. While Eli talked Pendoggat sat motionless, his arms folded, and his eyes upon his boots.

"Where's the mine?" asked a voice.

Pezzack replied he was not at liberty to say at that stage of the proceedings; but he had brought a sample to show them, which was produced and handed round solemnly, no one examining it with more interest than Pendoggat, who had provided it. Every one declared that it was nickel sure enough, although they had never seen the metal before, and had scarcely an idea between them as to its value or the uses to which it could be put.

"Us had best talk about it," suggested one of the party, and every one agreed that was a sound idea, but nobody offered to say anything, until an old farmer arose and stated heavily—

"Us knows there be rich trade under Dartmoor. My uncle, he worked on Wheal Betsey, and he worked on Wheal Virtuous Lady tu, and he told I often there was a plenty of rich trade down under, but cruel hard to get at. He told I that many a time. Wouldn't hardly pay to work, 'twas so hard to get at, he said. Such a main cruel lot o' watter, he said. Fast as they gotten it out back it comed again. That's what he said, but he be dead now."

The old fellow sat down with the air of a man who had cleared away difficulties, and the others dragged their boots upon the boards with a melancholy sound. Then some one else rose and asked if water was likely to interfere with the mining of the nickel. Eli replied that there certainly was water, and that announcement brought the old farmer up to say: "It wun't pay to work." He added reasons also, in the same strain as before.

An interval of silence followed. A deadlock had been reached. Those present were inclined to nibble, but they all wanted the nickel for themselves. They did not like the idea of taking shares and sharing profits. They wanted to be told the precise locality of the mine, so that they could go and help themselves. Pezzack had nothing more to say. The old farmer had only his former statements about his uncle to repeat; and he did so several times, using the same words.

At last Pendoggat got up, began to mumble, and every one leaned forward to listen. Most of them did not like Pendoggat because they were afraid of him; but they believed him to be a man of superior knowledge to themselves, and they were inclined on the whole to follow his leadership.

"We all trust the minister," Pendoggat was saying. "He's found nickel, and he thinks there is money to be got out of it. He's right enough. There is nickel. I've found it myself. That sample he had handed round is as good a bit of nickel as ever I saw. But there's not enough of it. We couldn't work it so as to pay expenses. It's on the common too, and we would have to get permission from the Duchy, and pay them a royalty."

"Us could get out of that," a voice interrupted. "Them who cracks granite be supposed to pay the Duchy royalties, but none of 'em du."

"Mining's different," replied Pendoggat. "The Duchy don't worry to collect their granite royalties. 'Twould cost 'em more trouble than the stuff is worth. There's more money in minerals than in granite. They don't let a mine be started without knowing all about it. Minister has told us what he knows, and we believe him. He won't deceive us. He wouldn't tell a lie to save his life. We are proud of our minister, for he's a good one."

"He be," muttered a chorus of approving voices.

"Looks like a bishop, sitting up there," exclaimed one of the admirers.

"So he du. So he be," cried they all.

The meeting was waking up. Eli sat limply, gazing at Pendoggat, very unhappy and white, and looking much more like a large maggot than a bishop.

"There's the trouble about the water," Pendoggat went on. "The whole capital would go in keeping that pumped out, and it would beat us in the end. All the money in the world wouldn't keep Tavy Cleave pumped dry. I'm against the scheme, and I've got up to say I won't have anything to do with it. I'm not going to put a penny of my money into any Dartmoor mine, and if I did I should expect to lose it. That's all I've got to say. The minister's not a commoner, and he don't know Dartmoor. He don't know anything about mining either, except what he's picked up from folks. He's a good man, and he wants to help us. But I tell him, and I tell you, there's not enough nickel on the whole of Dartmoor to pay the expense of working it."

Pendoggat shambled back into his chair, while his listeners looked at one another and admitted he had spoken wisely, and Eli writhed worm-like, wondering if there could be anything wrong with his ears. He had been prepared to hear a certain amount of destructive criticism; but that the whole scheme should be swept aside by Pendoggat as hopeless was inexplicable. The old farmer seized the opportunity to stand upright and repeat his former observations concerning his uncle, and the wheals, and the "cruel lot o' watter" in them. Then the meeting collapsed altogether. Pendoggat had killed it. The only thing left was the mournful conclusion of a suitable prayer; and then to face the rain and a wild ride homewards. There was to be no local support for the Nickel Mining Company, Limited. Pendoggat's opposition had done for it.

The tenant of Helmen Barton had risen several points in the estimation of those present, with the obvious exception of the staggered Pezzack. He had proved himself a bold man and fearless speaker. He had not shrunk from performing the unpleasant duty of opposing his pastor. Eli always looked like a maggot. Now he felt like one. Pendoggat had set his foot upon him and

squashed him utterly. He would not be a wealthy man, there was no immediate prospect of matrimony, nor would there be any new Ebenezer, the presence of which would attract a special blessing upon them, and the architecture of which would be a perpetual reproach to that portion of the moor. It was an exceedingly troubled maggot that wriggled up to Pendoggat, when the others had departed, and the door had been fastened against the wind.

"This is an appalling catastrophe, Mr. Pendoggat." Eli often blundered over long words, never having learnt derivations. "The most excruciating catastrophe I can remember. I am feeling like chaff scattered by the wind."

He was trying to rebuke Pendoggat. He was too much in awe of him to speak more bitterly. Besides, he was a good Christian, and Eli never lost sight of that fact, knowing that as a minister it was his duty not to revile his fellow-creatures more than was necessary.

Pendoggat stood under a cold lamp, which cast a cold light upon his black head, and his eyes were upon his boots. Eli stumbled against a chair, and in trying to regain his balance fell against his companion, causing him to lose control over himself for an instant. He struck out his arm and sent Pezzack sprawling among the chairs like an ash-faggot, a prospect of long black coat and big flat boots. Eli did not mind tumbling, because he was used to it, not having been endowed with much sense of gravity. He went about on a bicycle, and was constantly falling off, and cutting fantastic figures in the air, between Brentor and Bridestowe. But just then he had an idea that brute force had been used against him. Pendoggat had struck him, not like the righteous who smite in friendly reproof, but like the heathen who rage together furiously. "Why did you strike me, Mr. Pendoggat?" he muttered, dragging himself to a sitting posture upon a chair and looking whiter than ever. "You cast me aside like a potter's vessel. Your precious palm might have broke my 'ead."

"Why can't you stand up, man?" said Pendoggat amicably. "You fell against my arm where I pinched it this morning in the linny door. I couldn't help pushing you away, and maybe I pushed harder than I meant, for you hurt me. You tumbled over your own feet. Not hurt, are ye?"

"Yes, Mr. Pendoggat," whispered Eli. It was so silent in that dreary chapel that the least sound was audible. "Not 'ere, not in my body, but in my 'eart; not by the push you gave me, but by the words you 'ave spoken. I stood up to-night, and I spoke like a fool, and I felt like a fool. I was doing the work that you gave me to do, Mr. Pendoggat, and you spoke against me."

Eli was growing bold. He had scraped some skin from his leg, and the smart gave him courage. He was feeling bitter also, and life seemed to be a failure just then. There was nothing for it but to grub along and preach the Gospel in poverty, a very laudable existence, but equally unsatisfying. He was waking from a golden dream to discover himself in the cold, just as Brightly dreamed of mythical Jerusalem and remained upon the dungheap. A little more of such treatment and Eli might have developed a tendency towards chronic misanthropy.

Pendoggat was amused. He realised that the minister was really suffering, both in body and mind. Eli was like some wretched rabbit in the iron jaws of a trap; and Pendoggat was the one who had set the trap, and was standing over it, able to let the creature out, and intending to do so, but not until a fair amount of suffering had been exacted. Pezzack was as much in his power as the rabbit in the hands of the trapper. He was weak and Pendoggat was strong. Eli was a poor stunted thing grown in a London back yard; Pendoggat was a tough moorland growth.

"I reckon you did speak like a fool," he said, while Eli wondered what he was looking at: himself, the floor, or the granite wall with its little beads of moisture glistening in the lamplight. "You put it to them all wrong. If I hadn't stood up they might have got it into their heads you were trying to trick 'em. You spoke all the time as if you didn't know what you were talking about. You're a good preacher, Pezzack, though not outspoken enough, but you're no good at business. You wouldn't make a living outside the pulpit."

Eli was crushed again. His anger had departed, and he was nursing his leg and his sorrows patiently. He believed that Pendoggat, with all his roughness, was a man in whom he could trust. The commoner did not come with a smooth smile, canting to his face, then departing to play him false. He behaved like the honest rugged man he was; giving him a rough grasp of the hand, pushing him off harshly when he hurt him, telling him plainly of his faults, chiding him for his folly, speaking that which was in his mind. Eli thought he knew something about human nature, and that knowledge convinced him that if he should refuse to follow Pendoggat he would lose his best friend. Pendoggat might behave like a bear; but there was nothing of the bear about him except the skin.

"I was doing my best. I said all I could, but I know my words must 'ave sounded poor and foolish," he said mournfully. "Now it's all over, and I must write to Jeconiah, and tell her we can't be married just yet. It is a cruel blow, but the things of this world, Mr. Pendoggat, are but as dross. The moth corrupteth, and the worm nibbleth, and we are shadows which pass away and come not again." Eli shivered and subsided. He was mournful, and the interior of Ebenezer was as cold as an ice-house.

Pendoggat came forward and fastened his hands upon Eli's bony shoulders. He thought it was time to take him out of the trap. The creature was becoming torpid and indifferent to suffering, and there was no more pleasure to be obtained from watching it. Besides, he was hungry, and wanted to get home that his own needs might be satisfied.

"We'll do it yet," he said in his low mumbling voice. "We can get along quite well without these folks. They haven't got much money, and if any of 'em had invested a few pounds they would have been after us all the time and given us no rest. We'll rely on your uncle and his friends. I reckon they can invest enough among them to start the affair. I'll pull you through, Pezzack. I'll make a rich man of you yet."

Pendoggat was proving his title to be ranked among the clever men who are knaves. He had served himself well that evening; by making the neighbourhood think better of him; by exposing himself to Pezzack as a man of rough honesty; by rejecting local support, which would always have been dangerous, and was after all worth little; and by fastening his hopes upon the grocer of Bromley and his friends, who were a day's journey distant, were worthy ignorant souls, and could not drop in casually to ascertain how affairs were progressing. He had also seen the maggot wriggling in his trap.

"Don't write to the maid," Pendoggat went on. "Have her down and marry her. It's safe enough. There will be plenty of money coming your way presently."

Eli looked up. He could not see the speaker because Pendoggat was standing behind the chair. The minister could see nothing except the chilly damps of Ebenezer. But his soul was rejoicing. Pendoggat was making the rough places smooth. "I knew you wouldn't deceive me," he said. "You gave me your 'and that night in Tavy Cleave, and told me I could trust you. When you spoke to-night I did not understand, Mr. Pendoggat. I almost thought you were going to leave me destitute. I will write to Jeconiah. I shall tell her you are a generous man."

"Why not marry?" muttered Pendoggat. "It will be safe enough. The money will come. I'll guarantee it."

"There is no immediate necessity, Mr. Pendoggat," said Eli with ludicrous earnestness. "There has been nothing wrong between us. We are able to wait. But we desire to enter the 'oly estate. We are always talking when we meet of the 'appiness that must be found in that condition. You 'ave always been as good as your word, Mr. Pendoggat. If you can promise me the money will come, I think—I do really think, my dear brother, Jeconiah and me might reasonably be welded together in the bonds of matrimony at a very early date. I might even suggest next month, Mr. Pendoggat."

Eli was becoming somewhat incoherent and extravagant in speech.

"I'll promise you the money. I'll see you through," said Pendoggat.

The minister could hardly put out the lamps, his hands were shaking so. He stumbled out of Ebenezer, shivering with delight, and slobbering with gratitude and benevolence.

Pendoggat went on his way alone. He was walking, and the road took him beside Lewside Cottage. Rain was still falling, but he did not feel it because it was being blown against his back. As he came near the cottage he heard a sound of singing. The blinds had not been drawn down, and the lamplight passed across the road to melt into the darkness of the moor. Boodles was singing merrily. She was happy like Eli, and for much the same reason, only she expressed her happiness in a delightful fashion, just because she was a nice little girl, and he was only a poor weak thing of a man. Pendoggat looked in at the window. The child was standing under the lamp, sewing and singing industriously. The light was full upon the radiant head. Opposite the window were some great gorse-bushes, and the yellow blooms with which they were covered came also within the lamplight. The girl's head and the gorse-flowers were somewhat similar in colour.

Pendoggat suddenly lifted his stout stick at one of the gorse-bushes, and struck a quantity of the golden blossoms off it.

CHAPTER X

ABOUT THE VIGIL OF ST. GOOSE

Mary's greatest possession was her umbrella, which was no ordinary article, and would have been of little service to the orthodox woman, because she would have lacked strength to raise it aloft in a breeze. When unfurled it covered about as much ground as a military tent, and cast a shade like an oak-tree. Not that Mary often unfurled it. The umbrella was far too precious to be used. She carried it about on those rare occasions when she went abroad, as a sort of symbol of the state of civilisation to which she had attained. It was with her very much what the pastoral staff is to a bishop; a thing unused, but exhibited. Umbrellas are useless things upon Dartmoor, because the wind makes wreckage of them at once. The Marian gamp was a monstrous creation, very old and patched, possibly had been used once as a carriage umbrella, and it was more baggy than its mistress's bloomers. Its stock was made of holly, not from a branch, but a good-sized stem, and a yard of twine was fastened about it to keep the ribs from flapping. Mary carried it usually beneath her arm, and found it always terribly in the way.

Grandfather was tacitly admitted to be Peter's property. He had no proprietary interest in the umbrella. Mary never ventured to touch Grandfather, and Peter had not been known to place his

hands upon the umbrella. Primitive people like to take their possessions about with them, that they may show others how well off they are. A little servant girl goes out to the revel smothered with all her wearing apparel, winter things on top of summer things, regardless of season, and with all the cut glass in rolled-gold settings stuck about her that she can lay her hands on. Two sisters are able to present a fine show by going out in turn. Annie ventures forth clad with all the property in common, while Bessie stays at home, not much better draped than a Greek statue. Mary took her umbrella about, not because she wanted it, but to convince strangers that she owned something to be proud of. Nobody was jealous. She could have left the umbrella anywhere, and not a soul would have touched it. Peter would have taken Grandfather about with him had it been possible; but as the clock was twice Peter's size, and could not be attached to a brass chain and slung in his waistcoat pocket, it had to remain in Number One, Hut-Circles, and wheeze away the hours in solitude.

There was suppressed excitement in New Gubbings Land. Peter was more absent-minded than ever, and Mary was quite foolish. She served up before her brother the barley-meal which her geese did eat, after scattering their own dinner to the birds. It was all because they were going on a long journey. Peter had remained quiescent for years; and, like most men who have travelled much, he felt at last the call of the outer world and the desire to be again in motion. Mary had the same feeling, which was the more strange as she had never travelled. It was the fault of the concert. Since that festival Mary had become unsettled. It had taught her there were experiences which she had not enjoyed. Mary thought she had done a good deal, but as a matter of fact she had never been in a train, nor had she slept a night out of the parish. When Peter said he meant to travel again, Mary declared she was coming too. Peter tried to discourage her, explaining that travelling was expensive, and dangerous also. A hardened wanderer like himself was able to face the risks, but she would not be equal to the strain. It was a terrifying experience to be carried swiftly along the railway, and had frightened him badly the first time. He advised Mary to walk, and let him have the money she would otherwise have squandered. Arguments were useless. Comic songs had ruined Mary's contentment. She was sorry she had not travelled before, and declared she was going to take her umbrella and begin. So they decided to venture to Tavistock to keep the festival of St. Goose.

Mary had been to Goose Fair before, walking there and back; and for Peter the experience was nothing. Peter had trodden the streets of Plymouth, and had been long ago to Winkleigh Revel, although he could recall little of that expedition—the morning after the event he remembered nothing—but the certainty that he had made the great journey into the wilds of mid-Devon remained, and there was proof in the presence of a large mug with a tin handle upon the mantelshelf, bearing the touching inscription, "Tak' a drop o' gin, old dear," in quaint lettering, which mug, Peter declared, had come with him from Winkleigh Revel, although any one curious enough to have turned it upside down might have discovered "Manor Hotel, Lydford," stamped underneath.

Peter had always felt superior to his sister, apart from the sublime fact of his manhood. He was not only highly educated, but he had travelled, and he feared that if Mary travelled too her eyes would be opened, and she might consider herself his equal. Therefore he had a distinct motive in begging her to bide at home, although his eloquence was in vain, for Mary was going to travel. She stated her intention of walking across the moor to Lydford and catching the train there, which was needless expense, as she might have gone down to St. Mary Tavy station; but she desired to make a great journey, something to boast of in days to come.

A vigil suggests sleeplessness, a watching through the night which precedes the day of the feast; and Mary observed the vigil more thoroughly than any nun. Plenty of girls were equally devout at the same time; keeping awake, not because they wanted to, but because excitement rendered sleep impossible. Thomasine observed the vigil, and even Boodles watched and wished the dark gone. It was a long night all over Dartmoor. Even Siberian Princetown was aroused; and those who were being punished for their sins had the additional mortification of knowing that they would be behind prison bars on the day when the greatest saint in the calendar according to the use of Dartmoor, the blatant and waddling St. Goose, was to be honoured by a special service of excursion trains and various instruments of music.

Dawn impelled every maid to glance at the chair beside her bed, to be sure that the pixies had not run away with her fair-clothes. Thomasine looked for her completed petticoat, Boodles for her boy's photograph, Mary for her umbrella. There had been no pixy-pranks, and the day came in with a promise of sunshine. There were no lie-a-beds that morning. Even Peter had been restless, and Grandfather possibly noticed that the little man had not snored so regularly as usual.

To the dweller in the wilds there is no getting away from fair-day, the great country holiday of the year. Those who would wish to abolish such festivals should remember that country-folk have few pleasures, and the fair is about the last, and is certainly one of the greatest, inducements to keep them on the land. To a large number it is the single outing of the year; a thing to talk about for months before and afterwards; the day of family reunion, when a girl expects to see her parents, the young man meets his brother, and the old folk keep associations going. The fair is to country-folk very much what Christmas is to the better classes. And as for the pleasures they are nothing like so lurid as have been represented. Individuals are vicious; a pleasure-seeking crowd is not. There is a vast deal of drunkenness, and this is by far the worst feature, and one which cannot be eliminated except by compulsory closing of all houses of refreshment, which would be only possible under a Saturnian régime. As evening approaches there is also much of that unpleasantness which is associated with drunkenness, and is described in police-reports as

obscene language. The fair-ground is not the best place for highly respectable people. It is the dancing-place of the lower classes; and as such the fair is a success and practically harmless. The girls are out for fun, and when they see a good-looking young man are not above making advances; and the stranger who steps up and introduces himself is sure of a welcome on his face value. It is all free and natural. Nearly every one is the better, and very few are the worse, for the holiday. Liquor is the principal cause of what evils there are. Tavistock Goose Fair after dark is far more respectable than Hyde Park at midnight.

Peter and Mary set forth on their walk across the moor to Lydford station, both of them attired in the festive garments which had been last assumed for the concert, Mary's large right hand clutching the umbrella by its ribs, Peter smoking industriously. They made a bee-line for their destination, heedless of mossy bogs, which were fairly firm at that time of the year. There were no rocks to hinder them. It is a bald stretch of moor between St. Mary Tavy and Lydford. Mary was breathing furiously from sheer excitement and nervousness, being dreadfully afraid they would miss the train. There was the station "down under," not more than half-a-mile away, and the train was not due for an hour, but Mary continued on the double. She did not understand mathematics and timetables. Peter trudged behind in a state of phlegmatic calm, natural to an old traveller, who had been to Plymouth by the sea and to Winkleigh on the hill.

For some time they had the platform to themselves. Then the moor began to give forth its living: young men and maidens, old men and wives, all going a-fairing, some treating the matter irreverently with unmusical laughter, others regarding the occasion as meet for an austere countenance. Peter was among those who cackled, while Mary was on the side of the anxious. She had to remind herself continually that she was enjoying life, although she would much rather have been at home chasing Old Sal among the furze-bushes. When the signals fell, and the bell rang, and the station began to rumble as the train approached, she clutched Peter and suggested they should return home. "Don't ye get mazed," said Peter crossly. "Come along wi' I."

Mary endeavoured to do so, but lost her head entirely when the train drew up, and went on to behave very much like a dog at a fair. She lost sight of her brother, scurried up and down the platform looking for him, and became still more confused when the cry, "Take your seats, please," sounded in her ears. The guard, who was used to queer passengers, took her by the arm with the idea of putting her into a carriage, but Mary defended herself against his designs with her umbrella, and breaking loose endeavoured to join the engine-driver. Meeting with no encouragement there she turned back, and was seized by Peter, who told her plainly she was acting foolishly, and again commanded her to come along with him. Mary obeyed, and everything was going favourably, and they were just about to enter a compartment when the umbrella slipped out of her nervous hand, bumped upon the edge of the platform, and slid beneath the train.

Mary resumed her normal condition at once, caring no longer for train, crowd, or fair, while the fear of travelling ceased to trouble when she perceived that the umbrella had departed from her. She stood upon the platform, and declared with an oath that the system of the railway should work no more until the umbrella had been restored to her hands. Time was of no account to Mary. She refused to enter the train without her umbrella; neither should the train proceed, for she would hold on to it. Peter upheld his sister. The umbrella was a family heirloom. The station-master and guard urged and blasphemed in vain. The homely epithets of the porter were received with contempt and the response, "Us bain't a-going. Us be going to bide."

Passengers in the adjoining compartment were perturbed, because it was rumoured among them that the poor woman had dropped a baby beneath the train, and they believed that the officials were contending that there was nothing in the regulations about ordinary humanity, and it was therefore their duty to let the child remain there. The guard and station-master became unpopular. The passengers were in no great hurry to proceed, as they were out for a day's enjoyment; and as for Mary, great was her lamentation for the lost umbrella.

"'Tis a little gal, name of Ella," explained a stout commoner with his head out of the window, for the benefit of others in the carriage.

"Sounded to me like Bella," replied his wife, differing from him merely as a matter of principle.

"There's no telling. They give 'em such fancy names now-a-days," said another excursionist.

"Her be screaming cruel," said the stout commoner.

"I don't hear 'en," declared his wife. They got along very well together, those two, and made conversation easily, one by offering a statement, the other by differing.

"I du," said a young woman in a white frock, which was already showing about the waist some finger-impressions of her young man, who sat beside her. "She'm right underneath the carriage. Don't ye hear she, Ben?"

Ben gave a nervous smile, gulped, arranged his tie, which would keep slipping up to his chin, moistened his lips, then parted them to utter the monosyllable which was required. He heard the child screaming distinctly. Having stated as much, he proceeded to record his fingerprints accurately upon the young woman's waist.

A farmer from Inwardleigh, who had entered the train at Okehampton, and had slept peacefully ever since, woke up at that moment, looked out, saw the bare moor, remarked in a decided voice

that he wouldn't live on Dartmoor for a thousand pounds, and went to sleep again. The stout commoner took up his parable and said—

"There be a little man got out now, and he'm poking about wi' a stick, trying to get the baby out. Did ever hear of trying to get a baby up wi' an ash-stick, woman?"

His wife replied that she had never heard of a baby getting underneath a train before, and she thought people ought to be ashamed of themselves getting drunk so early in the morning.

"Babies oughtn't to be took to the vair," said the young woman in the white frock. "I shan't tak' mine when I has 'em."

This remark caused young man Ben to smile nervously again.

The Inwardleigh farmer opened his eyes and wanted to know why the train was motionless. He was getting so thirsty that he could sleep no more. "Us might sing a hymn," he suggested; and proceeded forthwith to make a noise like a chaff-cutting machine, preparatory to describing himself in song as a pure and spotless being whose sins had been entirely washed away. Had he given his face and hands the attention which, according to his own statement, his soul had received, he would have been a more presentable object. The young woman in the white frock knew the hymn, and joined in vigorously, claiming for her soul a whiteness which her dress could not equal. The farmer was so delighted with her singing that he leaned forward and kissed the damsel rapturously. The unhappy Ben dared not remonstrate with his elders and betters, but merely sat and gulped. By this time Peter had dropped his stick beneath the train, where it reposed side by side with the umbrella.

"They'm going to run the train back," said the stout commoner.

"The baby 'll be dead," remarked his wife cheerfully. She was not going to be depressed upon a holiday.

Peter and Mary stood upon the platform, a statuesque, obstinate pair, determined to give the railway company no mercy. It was nothing to them that the train was being delayed. Their property was underneath it, and all the Gubbings blood in them rebelled.

"I'll bide till I gets my umbrella. Tak' your mucky old train off 'en," said Mary, wagging her big hand at the men in authority; while Peter added that his intention was also to bide until his ash-stick should be returned to him.

Finally the train was backed, the umbrella and stick were recovered, and the savages permitted themselves to be bundled into the first compartment handy, amid laughter from the heads at the windows and profanity from the mouths of the officials. The train drew out of the station, and Mary subsided into a corner and held on tightly, shouting to her brother, "Shet the window, Peter, du'ye. Us may be falling out."

Peter tried to explain that would not be easy, but Mary was unable to listen. Her former fears had returned. She clutched her umbrella, trembled, and prayed to the gods of Brentor and the gods of Ebenezer—Mary's religion was a misty affair—for a safe deliverance from the perils of the railway. She had a feeling as if she was about to part with her breakfast. She had also a distinct admiration just then for all those who went down to the towns in trains, and for her brother, who sat calmly upon the cushions—it was a first-class compartment which they had invaded—and spat contentedly upon the carpet. The speed of the train exceeded thirty miles an hour, and poor Mary's bullet head was rolling upon her shoulders.

"Aw, my dear life!" she moaned. "I feels as if my belly were running back to home again. Where be us, Peter?"

"On the railway," her brother answered, with truth, but without brilliance. The remark was reassuring to Mary, however. She thought the train had got upon the moor somehow and was speeding furiously down a steep place towards destruction upon the rocks. A glance from the window gave no comfort. It was terrible to see the big tors tumbling past like a lot of drunken giants.

"Mind what I told ye," observed Peter. "Yew wun't like travelling, I ses. 'Tis easy when yew begins young, but yew be too old to begin."

"Us ha' got legs, and us was meant to use 'em. Us was never meant to run abroad on wheels," said Mary. "If ever I gets home, I'll bide."

Peter refilled his pipe, and began to boast of his experiences upon sea and land; how he had ventured upon the ocean and penetrated to a far country. Mary had heard it all before, but she had never been so impressed as she was then by her brother's account of his famous crossing of the Hamoaze in a fishing-boat, and his alighting upon the distant shore of Torpoint to stand upon Cornish soil. But while Peter was describing how he had been rocked "cruel and proper" upon the waves of what it pleased him to style the Atlantic, brakes fell heavily upon the wheels, a whistle sounded, and the train dragged itself gradually to a standstill. There was no station in sight. The moor heaved on both sides of the line. Even Peter was at a loss to explain the sudden stoppage for a moment.

"The train be broke," said Mary, who was bold now that she had ceased from travelling. "They've run 'en over a nail, and us mun bide till 'em blows the wheels out again."

Mary comprehended bicycles, and had contemplated tourists, who were so foolish as to bring their machines upon Dartmoor, pumping away at punctured tyres. Peter did not contradict because he was perturbed. He understood that the train had not broken down; but he believed that an accident was impending. Out of his worldly wisdom he spoke: "It be a collusion, I reckon."

Suspiciously Mary demanded an explanation.

"'Tis when two trains hit one into t'other," explained Peter, striking his left fist into his right palm. "That be a collusion. Same as if yew was to run into a wall in the dark," he added.

The meaning of these words did not dawn upon Mary for some moments. When she did grasp them she made for the door, with the intention of abandoning the railway forthwith; but the train gave a sudden jerk, which threw her upon the seat, and then began to glide back. Peter thrust his head out of the window and perceived they were making for a siding. He and his sister had delayed the train so long that an express which was due to follow had almost caught them up, and had made it necessary for the local train, which has to wait for everything, to get off the main line. Peter did not understand that. Even old travellers make mistakes sometimes. He considered that the situation was desperate.

"They'm trying to get away, trying cruel hard," he said drearily.

"What be 'em getting away from?" gasped Mary.

"T'other train," her brother answered.

"Aw, Peter, will 'em du it?"

"Bain't hardly likely," said Peter dolefully.

"Be t'other train going to run into we?"

Peter admitted that it was so, adding: "I told ye to bide to home."

"Will us get hurt?" moaned Mary.

"Smashed to bits. They newspapers will tell us was cut to pieces," said Peter, in his gloomiest fashion. "How much have ye got in the money-box?" he asked.

With prophetic insight Peter perceived that he would be spared. Mary would be destroyed, together with all the other passengers, and Peter naturally was anxious to know the amount of hard cash he was likely to inherit.

But Mary gave no heed to the avaricious question. She groaned and rubbed her eyes with the umbrella. It was the umbrella she was thinking of rather than herself. Somehow she could not imagine her own body mangled upon the line; but a melancholy picture of the wrecked umbrella was clear before her eyes.

In the next compartment the farmer was still singing hymns, accompanied by a chorus. Mary thought they were praying. This was travelling, enjoying life, a day's pleasure, St. Goose's Day! Mary wished with all her heart she had never left her geese and her hut-circle. In the meantime Peter was keeping her well informed.

"They be running the train off on Dartmoor," he explained. "There's a gurt cleave down under, and they be going to run us down that. Us mun get smashed either way."

"Why don't us get out and run away?" suggested frightened Mary.

As she spoke the train stopped. It was safe in the siding, although the savages did not know that. They supposed that the motive power had failed, or the engine-driver had come to realise that escape was hopeless, and had abandoned the train to secure his own safety. Peter saw a man running along the line. He was only a harmless pointsman going about his business, but Peter supposed him to be the base engine-driver flying for his life, and he told Mary as much. Even Peter's nerve was somewhat shaken by this time. Mary said plainly she should follow the example of the engine-driver. "My legs be as good as his," she cried. "I hain't a-going to bide here and be broke up like an old goosie's egg. I be a-going out."

"They'll fine ye," cried Peter. "There be a notice yonder. For tramping on the line a sum not exceeding forty shilluns—"

"Bain't that better than getting smashed to pieces?" shouted Mary.

Peter was not sure. He could not translate the phrase "not exceeding," but he had a clear notion that it meant considerably more than forty shillings.

Mary was struggling with the door. In another moment she would have opened it, but a terrific interruption occurred. There sounded a wild whistling, and a roar which stunned her, and caused her to fall back upon the seat to prepare hurriedly for her doom, to recall various religious memories and family associations, and to mutter fervently such disjointed scraps of sun-worship and Christianity as: "Our Vaither, hollered be the name, kingdom come. Angels and piskies, long-stones and crosses, glory to 'em all. Amen."

Then the express thundered past, shaking everything horribly. The tragedy was soon over, and Peter emerged into the light with worm-like wriggings. For all his courage and experience he

had dived beneath the seat, conscious somehow that any change of position would be better than no change. Everything seemed to have become very quiet all at once. They could hear the wind whistling gently over the moor, and the water splashing below. Mary had no idea what had happened, but she quite believed that Peter's worst fears had been realised, and that the "collusion" had actually occurred. So she groaned, and did not venture to move, and muttered feebly: "I be cut to pieces."

"No, you bain't," said Peter cheerfully. "Us got away after all."

With a little more encouragement Mary stretched herself, discovered that she and the umbrella were both intact, and from that moment the joy of life was hers again. They had escaped somehow. The express had missed them, and Peter assured her it was not likely to return. He admitted they had gone through a terrifying experience, which was as novel to him as to Mary; and his conclusion of the whole matter was that the engine-driver had undoubtedly saved their lives by cool and daring courage in the presence of fearful danger.

"He saw t'other train coming, and got us out o' the way just in time. Yew saw how near t'other train was. Only just missed us," explained Peter.

"He'm a cruel larned man," declared Mary. "He ought to be given something. Ought to be fined forty shilluns." Poor Mary was anxious to learn the English language; but when she made use of strange words she betrayed her ignorance.

"You means rewarded," Peter corrected out of the depths of his education.

"Aw ees," said Mary. "Us will reward 'en wi' a shillun."

Peter did not see the necessity. As they were perfectly safe, and as no further advantage could possibly accrue to them from the engine-driver's heroism, he thought they might as well keep the shilling. The train drew out of the siding, continued its journey, and Mary became quite comfortable, even venturing to lean forward and look out of the window, though the telegraph-poles and bridges frightened her at first. They looked as if they were going to run into her, she said.

Nothing else eventful happened until they reached Tavistock, although there was a good deal of human nature at work in the adjoining compartment, where the Inwardleigh farmer had exchanged hymn-singing for amorous suggestions, and had proceeded to appropriate the unfortunate Ben's white-frocked young woman to himself. It was especially hard upon the poor young clown, as he had paid for the railway tickets; but he had only a couple of shillings for fairing, and the Inwardleigh farmer had gold in his fob, so the girl naturally preferred to spend the day with the man of well-filled pockets. Weak-minded young bumpkins sometimes murder their sweethearts, and it is not very surprising. Even degenerates get weary of playing the singularly uninteresting part of the worm that is trampled on.

"Tavistock! Good Lord!" exclaimed Mary, with great relief, as the train entered the station.

She and Peter tumbled out. Such people always tumble out of railway carriages. They merely bang the door open, fall forward, and find their feet somehow. It is easy to tell whether a person is well-bred or not by the way he or she leaves a railway carriage. A young lady comes forth after the manner of a butterfly settling on a flower. The country maid emerges like a falling sack of wheat. Peter and Mary tumbled out, and were considerably astonished not to find a procession of grateful passengers advancing towards the engine to thank the driver for the courage he had displayed in saving their lives. Every one seemed anxious to quit the platform as soon as possible. Peter was shocked to discover so much ingratitude. It was ignorance perhaps, indifference possibly, but to Peter and Mary it seemed utter callousness. They felt themselves capable of something better. So they pushed through the crowd, reached the engine, and insisted upon shaking hands, not only with the driver, but with the fireman also, and thanked them very much for bringing them safely into Tavistock, and for having; avoided the "collusion," which they, the speakers, confessed had at one time appeared to them as inevitable. Peter invited them to come and have a drop of gin, and Mary asked sympathetically after the "volks to home."

The men enjoyed the joke immensely. They thought that the quaint couple were thanking them for having backed the train at Lydford in order that Mary might recover her umbrella and Peter his ash-stick. They chaffed them in a subtle fashion, and after a minute's complete mutual misunderstanding bade them farewell with the ironical hope they might some day save them again.

Mary was overflowing with generosity. As she and her brother turned away she produced two shillings and instructed Peter to reward the heroes suitably. Peter slipped the shillings unobtrusively into his own pocket. With all his faults he was a strict man of business.

CHAPTER XI

ABOUT THE FEAST OF ST. GOOSE

The cult of the goose, so far as it concerns Tavistock Fair, is gastronomic entirely, and has no

religious significance. At dedication festivals of a church some particular saint is flattered with decorations and services, and his existence upon this world at one time is taken for granted. In certain places a few bones are produced for the edification of the faithful, and advertised as the great toe or the jaw of the patron in question. Goose bones are displayed at the "gurt vair" in lieu of the living creature, and they are unmistakably genuine, for there is plenty of sound meat upon them. St. Goose is honoured with the fun of the fair, while he himself is offered up on a charger. The congregation of countryfolk devour their canonised bird, and wash him down with beer and cider. There is not a living goose to be seen about the town, but the atmosphere of the principal street is thick and fragrant with sage and onions.

Peter and Mary trod the wide roads as delicately as large boots could, feeling far too nervous to enjoy themselves. Peter would not enter into the pleasure of the fair until he had swallowed several stimulating pints, and even Mary was willing to take a little cordial for the sake of her nerves. It was not so much the noises which disconcerted her—there was plenty of howling wind and roaring water down Tavy Cleave—as their unaccustomed nature. She was not used to steam roundabouts, megaphones, and all the drums and shoutings of the showmen. When Peter proposed an aerial trip upon wooden horses, Mary moved an amendment in favour of light refreshment. Peter could not object to a suggestion so full of sense, so they passed beside the statue of Francis Drake, crossed the road, and were getting clear of the crowd, when a familiar laugh reached their ears, and Mary saw a fresh and happy pair of youngsters. Boodles and Aubrey, in high spirits and good health, laughing at everything merely because they were together for a good long day. Boodles had never looked nicer. West-country beauty is nothing but fair hair and tinted skin; but Boodles was all glorious just then. She was a flame rather than a flower. Her hair had never looked so radiant, or her skin more golden. She was as happy as she could be; and when a girl is like that she has to look splendid, whether she likes it or no.

Mary was soon after her, bellowing like a bullock, lunging with the umbrella, shouting! "Aw, Miss Boodles! Aw, my dear! I be come to the vair tu. Me and Peter has come to Goosie Vair. Where be ye going, my dear?"

Boodles turned with a look of amazement. She had her flaming hair up, beneath a big straw hat which was trimmed with poppies, and her dainty frock just touched her ankles. She looked so deliciously clean that Mary hardly liked to come near her, and she smelt, not like a chemist's shop, but like the sweet earth after a shower. Mary drew her right hand swiftly across her big tongue, rubbed the palm upon her buttock, and held it out. She always shook hands with Boodles whenever they met. She felt that the civilising contact lent her some of the womanhood which nature had withheld.

"It's so jolly!" cried the child. "Such a lovely day, and everything perfect. I'm glad you have come—and Peter too! Aubrey, this is Mary who gives us eggs and butter. She and Peter live upon Tavy Cleave. You know!"

Mary cleansed her right hand again.

"Why, Where's Peter?" cried Boodles.

Peter was already across the road, following his little turned-up nose in the direction of a door which suggested pewters.

"He'm thirsty," explained Mary.

"Poor Peter!" laughed Boodles. "You must look after him, Mary. Don't bring him home staggery."

Mary was not listening. Of course Peter would go home staggery. It was the proper thing to do. How could a man be said to enjoy a fair if he went home sober? Mary was regarding the young man. She was able to reason with a good deal of clearness sometimes. It was not easy to believe that the title *man* included beings so far apart as Aubrey and her brother, just as she found it hard to understand how the word *woman* could serve for Boodles and herself.

"Bain't he a proper young gentleman?" she exclaimed. "A main cruel butiful young gentleman. Aw ees, my dear! I'd like to kiss a gentleman like yew."

Mary had not felt so womanly for a long time. She comprehended there was something in life beyond breeding geese, and cleaning turnips, and bringing the furze-reek home; something that was not for her, because she was too much of a man to be a woman.

Their answering laughter did not upset her, although it was in a way expressive of the truth that there could never be any pleasant gilt upon her gingerbread.

"It wouldn't do here. Rather too public," said the boy, with a sly look in his blue eyes, squeezing his sweetheart's fingers as he spoke.

Boodles had flushed with pleasure. She would rather have heard Aubrey praised than be praised herself. She was quite right when she had declared Aubrey was the prettiest boy ever made. It was obvious even to poor old wooden-faced half-man Mary.

Boodles and Aubrey hurried on, representatives of fun and laughter, which were otherwise somewhat wanting. It was too early in the day for excitement. The countryfolk were not yet warmed up; they were reserved, and took the holiday seriously; hanging about the streets with a lost expression, unwilling to change their shillings into pence, oppressed with the idea that it

would be necessary soon to enjoy themselves, studiously avoiding the pleasure-ground in order that they might cling to their cash a little longer, and quite content to look on and listen, and welcome acquaintances with prolonged handshakes. The spending of the first penny was difficult; the rest would be easy. There were some who had not a penny to spend, and even they would be happy when the temperature went up. A poor plain girl from some remote village will stand in a puddle all day, and declare when she gets home she has never enjoyed herself so much in her life. It is a sufficient pleasure, for those who live in lonely places, to stand at a corner and stare at a rollicking crowd for a few hours.

There was the fair within the town, and the fair without. That within was beside the Tavy and among the ruins of the Abbey; that without was also beside the Tavy, but upon the opposite bank. There was also the business-fair, where beasts were bargained for: ponies, bullocks, pigs, sheep, everything except geese. It was a festival which would have delighted the hearts of Abbot Cullyng's gay monks, who, it is recorded, wore secular garments about the town, divided their time between hunting the deer on Dartmoor and holding drunken suppers in their cells, and cared not at all for religious discipline or black-lettered tomes. Part of the fair is held upon the former site of those monastic buildings, and the ruin of Betsey Grimbal's tower looks down upon more honest pleasures from what was once the Abbey garden. The foundation was despoiled of its gold and silver images, and the drones were smoked out of their nest, centuries ago, and what was their refectory is now by the irony of fate a Unitarian chapel; and St. Goose has become a greater saint than St. Rumon, who was claimed as a bishop of renown by his Church, although secular history suggests no such gentleman ever lived.

Certain objects were against the railings of the church, objects neither beautiful nor necessary; Brightly and his mongrel, hungry and business-like as ever. They occupied very little space, and yet they were in the way, principally because they were not pleasant to look upon, being rather like heaps of refuse which the street-cleaners had overlooked. Brightly was not there for the fun of the thing. He did not know the meaning of such words as holiday and pleasure. Had any one given him five shillings, and told him to go and enjoy himself, he would not have known what to do. Both he and Ju were thinner, though that was only interesting as a physiological fact. Brightly held up his ridiculous head and sniffed continually. Ju did the same. The atmosphere was redolent of sage and onions; and they were trying to feed upon it.

"Trade be cruel dull," muttered Brightly.

Ju did not acknowledge the remark. She had heard it so often, or words to the same effect, that she deemed it unnecessary to respond with a tail-wag. Besides, that sort of thing required energy, and Ju had none to spare. She was wondering, if she followed up that wonderful odour, whether she would obtain gratuitous goose at the other end.

"Tie-clips, penny each. Dree for duppence. Butiful pipes, two a penny," sang Brightly; but his miserable voice was drowned by the roundabouts and megaphones.

Brightly was celebrating the general holiday by exchanging one form of labour for another. It would have been useless to follow his usual calling of purveyor of rabbit-skins that day, so he had become for the time being a general merchant. He had obtained a trayful of small goods on credit. Brightly had one fault, a grave one in business; he was honest. So far he had sold nothing. He was merely demonstrating the marvellous purchasing powers of a penny. It never occurred to him that he was opposing his miserable little trayful of rubbish to all the booths and pleasures of the great fair. Tie-clips and clay-pipes were all he had to offer in competition with attractions which had delighted kings and princes, if the honesty of the showmen could be accepted as advertised. Even the fat woman admitted that royal personages had pinched her legs. If Brightly had followed the fat lady's example, and declared in a loud enough voice that autocrats smoked nothing but his clay-pipes, and kept their decorations in place with his tie-clips, he might have acquired many pennies.

Above the town, where the cattle-fair was in full swing, various hawkers had established themselves; men who looked as if they had been made out of metal, with faces of copper and tongues of brass. One man was giving away gold rings, and if a recipient was not satisfied he threw in a silver watch as well. He couldn't explain why he did such things. It was his evil fate to have been born a philanthropist. He owned he had come to the fair with the idea of selling his goods; but when he found himself among so many happy, smiling people, fine young men, beautiful girls, dear old folks who reminded him of his own parents, all making holiday and enjoying themselves, with the sun shining and Nature at her best, he felt totally unable to restrain his benevolence. He couldn't take their money. It was weak and foolish of him, he knew, but he had to give them the rings and watches, which, as they could see for themselves, had cost him pounds, shillings, and pence, because he wanted to send them home happy. His only idea was to give them a little present so that they would remember him, and tell their friends what a simple and generous creature they had encountered at the fair. So he flowed on, with an eloquence which any missionary would have envied. And then he produced a black bag, and said he wished to draw their attention to something which he must really ask them to buy, not because he wanted their money, but because he knew that people never really valued a thing unless they gave something for it. It was a fatal thing, this philanthropy, but it made him happy to be kind to others. Out of the bag came some more rubbish, and the rascal was soon doing a roaring trade. What chance had Brightly against a metallic creature like that?

Higher up the road another gentleman established himself. He was well dressed, his mottled hands were gleaming with immense rings, and his clean-shaven face was as red as rhubarb. He

assumed an academic cap and gown, casually informing those who gathered around that he was entitled to do so, as he was not only a man of gentle birth, but a graduate of "one of our oldest universities," and a duly qualified physician also. He stated with emphasis, and a slight touch of cynicism, that he was no philanthropist. He belonged to an overcrowded profession; he had no settled practice; and knowing how unwilling country-people were to come to a medical man until they had to, when it was usually too late, and knowing also how grievously afflicted many of them were with divers diseases, he had decided to come out by the wayside and heal them. It was entirely a matter of business. He was going to cure them of a number of ailments which they were harbouring unawares, and they would pay him a trifling sum in return. He wasn't going to give anything away. He couldn't afford to be generous. He begged the people not to crowd about him so closely, as there was plenty of time, and he would undertake to attend to every one.

This man ought to have been a genius, if he hadn't been a rogue. He went on to warn his listeners against quack doctors and patent medicines. They were all frauds, he assured them, and he described in homely language how he had often restored some poor sufferer whose health had been undermined by the mischievous attentions of unqualified impostors. He took a small boy, set him in the midst, and in flowing phrase explained his internal structure. It was the liver which was the origin of disease among men; liver, which caused women to faint, and men to feel run down. Heart disease, consumption, eczema, cold feet, red nose, and a craving for liquor were all caused by an unhealthy liver, and were so many different names for the same disease. So far nobody but himself had discovered any safe cure for the liver. There were a thousand remedies mentioned in the *British Encyclopædia*—possibly he meant pharmacopoeia—but not a genuine medicine among them. He had devoted his life and fortune to discovering a remedy, and he had discovered it; and his listeners should be allowed to benefit by it; for it needed but a glance at their faces to convince him that the liver of every man and woman in that circle was grievously out of order.

At that moment Peter and Mary came up, considerably elevated, and gazed with immense satisfaction at the figure in cap and gown, Mary exclaiming in her noisy way: "Aw, Peter! 'Tis a preacher."

The quack wiped his hands and face with a silk handkerchief, opened a bag, and producing a small green bottle half full of grimy pellets, continued solemnly; "The result of a life devoted to medical studies, my friends. The one and only liver cure. The triumph of the human intellect; more wonderful than the Pyramids of America; long life and happiness in a small bottle; and the price only one shilling."

There was not much demand at first for long life and happiness in bottle form. The listeners had come to Goose Fair to enjoy themselves, not to buy pills. They were all obviously as healthy as wayside weeds. But the artful rogue had only been playing with them so far. He made his living by the gift of a tongue, and so far he had not used it. The time had come for him to terrify them. He removed his cap, threw his shoulders back and his arms out, and lectured them furiously; telling them they were dying, not merely ill, but hovering every one of them on the brink of the grave; that tan of health upon their faces was a deception; it was actually a fatal symptom, a sign of physical degeneracy, a herald of bodily impotence. They were all suffering from liver in some shape or form, and with the majority, he feared, the disease was already too far advanced to be arrested by any treatment, except one only—the little green bottle of pills, which might be theirs for one shilling. He choked them with eloquence for ten minutes, frightening, converting, and making them feel horribly ill. He was irresistible, especially when he spoke with pathos of his devotion for his fellow-creatures, and his pain when he saw them suffering. That man would have made an ideal preacher, if he had known how to speak the truth.

Mary listened open-mouthed. A bee flew in, and she spat it out and gasped. For the first time in her life she realised she was in a state of delicate health.

The quack advanced to Peter, who was looking particularly despondent, being fully persuaded he had not long to live, and with a grave shake of the head punched him in the body. "Does that hurt?" he asked.

"Cruel," said Peter.

"Enlarged liver, my friend," said the rogue. "It is not too late to save the patient if he takes the remedy at once. Let me tell you how you feel," and he went on to describe a condition of ill-health, which most of his other hearers felt coming upon themselves also under the potent influence of mere suggestion.

"Du'ye feel like that, Peter?" demanded Mary with great anxiety.

"I du," said Peter miserably.

"So du I," declared Mary. "I feels tired when I goes to bed, just like he ses."

"Better have three bottles each," said the friend of mankind. "One arrests the disease, three remove it."

That would have meant six shillings, which of course was not to be thought of. Even ill-health was to be preferred to such an expenditure. As Peter reminded his sister, he could almost bury her for that sum. Finally they bought one bottle of pellets. Not even the quack's conviction that Mary was suffering from an undue secretion of bile could persuade them to purchase more. The rogue

collected a pound's worth of silver from the circle, and went on his way to capture a fresh lot of gulls; and so the dishonesty and fun of the fair went on side by side; while there was half-blind Brightly, squeezing against the railings of the church, with his ridiculous honesty, and his trayful of pipes and tie-clips which never grew less. Honesty is a money-making policy in the land of Utopia, but not elsewhere; and Utopia means nowhere. Christianity has been preached for nearly two thousand years, and still the man is a fool who leaves his silver-mounted stick outside the door.

The next thing was luncheon, as elegant folk have it; or a proper old guzzle, according to Peter. The savages had made up their minds to do the fair properly, and eating was certainly a chief item of the programme. Savoury goose, with plenty of sage and onions, was the dish of the day. Peter put the pills in his pocket, and forgot that his liver was out of order, as Mary ignored the untruth that she suffered from "too much oil." It was useless to try strange words upon her. While she was eating that portion of goose appointed for the day she tried to make her brother explain how the oil had got into her system, but Peter was much too busy to answer. He was guzzling like a monkey, with his face in the plate, half choking in his hurry, gulping, perspiring, gasping with sheer greediness, and splashing in the rich gravy very much as the goose he was feeding on had once flopped through some moorland bog.

Boodles and Aubrey went to the Queen's Hotel for their goose dinner; a place where good English fare may still be seen and eaten. Boodles had witnessed the pleasure-fair only, the gay and noisy side of things, and though the debased faces of some of the booth proprietors had alarmed her at first, she had seen nothing actually nasty. Cruelty was not there, or at least it had been out of sight. She did not go upon the other side, where the rogues foregathered, and where beasts were bought and sold; where sheep were penned in a mass of filth, with their mouths open, tasting nothing but heat and dust; where ponies were driven from side to side, half mad with fright, while drovers with faces like a nightmare yelled and waved their hats at them, and brought their cudgels down like hammers upon their sweating flanks; where calves, with big patient eyes protruding with pain and terror, were driven through the crowd by a process of tail-twisting; where fowls were stuffed in crates and placed in the full heat of the sun; and stupid little pigs were kicked on their heads to make them sensible. Boodles saw nothing of that, and it was just as well, for it might have spoilt her day, and have reminded her that, for some cause unexplained, the dominant note of all things is cruelty; from the height of the unknown God, who gives His beings a short life and scourges them through it, to the depth of the invisible mite who rends a still smaller mite in pieces. Living creatures were placed in the world, it is said, to perform the duty of reproducing their species. It seems as reasonable to suggest that their duty is to stamp out some other species; for the instinct of destruction is at least as strong as the instinct of reproduction, making the world a cold place often for the tender-hearted.

It was not a cold place for Boodles that day, because she was in a happy state of love and ignorance. She was not worrying herself about Nature, who vivisects most people under the base old plea of physiological research. She and Aubrey went up a sage-and-onion-scented street, into the similarly perfumed hotel, up a flight of stairs fragrant with stuffing, and into a long room, to find themselves in a temple of feasting, with incense to St. Goose streaming upward, and two score famished and rather ill-bred folk licking their lips ostentatiously and casting savage glances at the knives and forks.

Everything was on the grand scale. It was just such a meal as the eighteenth-century post-houses gave passengers on the road before railways had come to ruin appetites. It was a true Hogarthian dinner; not a meal to approach with a pingling stomach; not a matter of "a ragout of fatted snails and a chicken not two hours from the shell"; but mighty geese, and a piece of beef as big as a Dartmoor tor—the lusty cook's knees bowed as he staggered in with it—mounds of vegetables, pyramids of dumplings, gravy enough to float a fishing-smack, and beer and cider sufficient to bathe in. The diners were in complete sympathy with the vastness of the feast, being mostly from ravenous Dartmoor. A beefy farmer was voted to the chair, and carved until perspiration trickled down his nose. A gentleman of severe appearance insisted upon saying grace, but nobody took any notice. They were too busy sniffing, and one who had been already helped was making strange noises with his lips and throat. Boodles was laughing at his manners, and pinching Aubrey's hand. "Such fun," she whispered.

"Ladies first," cried the carver.

"Quite right," gasped the man who had been served first, having snatched the plate from the waiter as he was about to pass him. Then he gaped and admitted an entire dumpling, nearly as big as a cricket-ball, and had nothing else to say, except "Bit more o' that stuffing," for ten minutes.

"What am I to do with it?" sighed Boodles, when the heaped plate was set in front of her.

"Eat 'en, my dear!" said a commoner, who was wolfing bread until his time came. "'Tis Goosie Vair," he added encouragingly.

"Take it, Aubrey," she said, with a slight titter.

"Go ahead," he replied. "Eat what you can, and leave the rest."

"I wish we were alone," she whispered. "These people are pigs."

Had they been alone they would probably have fed off the same plate, and given each other

kisses between every mouthful. As it was they could do nothing, except play with each other's feet beneath the table. Everybody else was hard at work. Faces were swollen on every side, and the sounds were more suggestive of a farmyard at feeding time than a party of immortal beings taking a little refreshment. There was no conversation. All that had been done during the time of waiting. "'Tis a butiful day, sure enough," and "A proper fine vair," had exhausted the topics. Boodles was rather too severe when she called the feasters pigs, but they were not pleasant to watch, and they seemed to have lost the divine spark somehow. Philosophers might have wondered whether the species was worth reproducing.

The young people soon left the table, and a couple very differently constituted pressed themselves into the vacant places. The others were not half satisfied. Some of them would stuff to the verge of apoplexy, then roll down-stairs, and swill whisky-and-water by the tumblerful. It was holiday; a time of over-eating and over-drinking. They had little self-control. They unbuttoned their clothes at table, and wiped their streaming faces with the cloth.

"I'm glad we went to goose dinner, but I shouldn't go again. It was gorging, not eating," said Boodles, as they went along the street.

"Let's go and see the living pictures," said Aubrey.

"But we've seen them."

"We'll go again. Perhaps they will turn on a fresh lot."

They liked the living pictures, because the lights were turned down, and they could snuggle together like two kittens and bite each other's fingers.

"Then we'll go for a walk—our walk. But no," sighed Boodles; "we can't. It will be time for the ordeal."

The fairy-tale was getting on. Ogre time had come. Boodles was to go and drink tea with her boy's parents.

"Perhaps we can go our walk later on."

"It won't be a real day if we don't," said she.

"Our walk" was beside the Tavy, where they had kissed as babies, and loved to wander now that they were children. They thought they were grown up, but that was absurd. People who are in love remain as they were, and never grow up until some one opens the window and lets the cold wind in. "Our walk" was fairyland; a strange and pleasant place after goose dinner and Goose Fair.

Brightly was against the railings, and had done no business, although the day was far spent. There was no demand for tie-clips or clay-pipes. Somebody was playing the organ in the church, and Brightly had that music for his dinner. Everybody seemed to be doing well, and he was the one miserable exception. He put up his sharp face, and chirped pathetically: "Wun't ye buy 'em, gentlemen? Tie-clips, penny each. Dree for duppence. Butiful pipes, brave and shiny, two a penny."

The roundabout over the way was taking pennies by the bushel; but the roundabout supplied a demand, and Brightly did not. A fat be-ribboned dog passed and snapped at Ju. She took it patiently, having learnt the lesson from her master. Then two young people swept round, and one of them collided with Brightly, and almost knocked his thin figure through the railings.

"I beg your pardon," said a bright young voice. "I hope I didn't hurt you."

"You'm welcome, sir," said Brightly, wondering what on earth the young gentleman was apologising for.

"Why, it's the man with the rabbit-skins. What does he do with them? Now he's selling pipes. Aubrey, I'm going to buy some. Oh, look at the poor little dog! How it shivers! What is the matter with it?"

"She'm hungry," explained Brightly.

"You look as if you were hungry too," said Aubrey with boyish candour.

"I be a bit mazed like, sir," admitted Brightly.

"I want some pipes, please—a lot. Don't laugh, Aubrey," said Boodles, looking down on the tray, with moisture in each eye and a frown on her forehead. She had no money to spare, poor child, only a threepenny-bit and four coppers; but she would have parted with the lot to feed the hungry had not Aubrey taken and restrained her charitable little hand.

"Give him this," he whispered.

"Feed the little dog," said Boodles, as she gave Brightly the coin, which was half-a-crown, as white and big, it seemed to Brightly, as the moon itself. Then they went on, while Brightly was left to see visions and to dream. He called out to tell them they had taken neither pipes nor tie-clips, but his asthmatic voice was drowned as usual by the noises of the fair, and it was quite a different set of faces and figures that went before him. He picked Ju up, tucked her under his arm, and shuffled away to buy food. He had seen the girl's face with pity on it through his big

glasses, only dimly, but it was enough to show him what she was; something out of the church window, or out of the big black book they read from, the book that rested upon the wings of a golden goose, or perhaps she had come from the wonderful restaurant called Jerusalem just to show him and Ju there was somewhere or other, either in Palestine or above Dartmoor, some very superior Duke of Cornwall who took a kindly interest in worms, himself, and other creeping things. Brightly stopped, oblivious to holiday-makers, and tried to think of Boodles' name. He found it just as he reached the place where he could obtain a royal meal of scraps for threepence. "Her's a reverent angel, Ju," he whispered.

Beyond the bridge, which crossed the Tavy near the entrance to the field where the main pleasure-fair was making noises curiously suggestive of a savage war-dance, Thomasine walked slowly to and fro. She had been doing that ever since eleven o'clock, varying the occupation by standing still for an hour or so gazing with patient cow's eyes along the road. Pendoggat had promised to meet her there, and treat her to all the fun of the fair. He had told her not to move from that spot until he arrived, and she had to be obedient. She had been waiting four hours in her best clothes, sometimes shaking the dust from her new petticoat, or wiping her eyes with her Sunday handkerchief, but never going beyond the bridge or venturing into the fair-field. One or two young men had accosted her, but she had told them in a frightened way she was waiting for a gentleman. She had seen her former young man. Will Pugsley, pass with a new sweetheart upon his arm; and although Thomasine was unable to reason she was able to feel miserable. Pendoggat was upon the other side, kicking a calf he had purchased along the road, enjoying himself after his own manner. He had forgotten all about Thomasine, and all that his promise and the holiday meant to her. Besides, Annie Crocker was with him like a sort of burr, clinging wherever he went, and not to be easily shaken off; and she too wanted to be in the fair-field; only, as she kept on reminding him, it was no place for a decent woman alone, and she couldn't go unless he took her. To which Pendoggat replied that she wasn't a decent woman, and if she had been nobody would want to speak to her. They swore at each other in a subdued fashion whenever they found themselves in a quiet corner.

"Come on, my love! Come along wi' I, and have a ride on the whirligig," shouted a drunken soldier with a big wart on his nose, staggering up to Thomasine, and grabbing at her arm. The girl trembled, but allowed the soldier to catch hold of her, because she did not know she had a legal right to resist. After all this was a form of courtship, though it was rather rough and sudden. Like many girls of her class Thomasine did not see anything strange in being embraced by a man before she knew what his name was. The soldier dragged her to the parapet of the bridge and kissed her savagely, heedless of the passers-by. Then he began to take her to the fair-ground, swearing at her when she hung back.

"I've got to bide here," she pleaded. "I'm waiting for a gentleman."

The drunken soldier declared he would smash the gentleman, or any one else, who tried to take his prize from him; but he proved to be a man whose words were mightier than his deeds, for when he saw a big policeman approaching with a question in his eye he abandoned Thomasine and fled. The girl dusted her clothes in a patient fashion and went on waiting.

The next local excitement was the arrival of Peter and Mary in a kind of whirlwind, both of them well warmed with excitement and Plymouth gin. Thomasine nodded to them, but they did not see her. Mary had been buying flower-seeds for her garden, a whole packet of sweet-peas and some mignonette. Peter had objected to such folly when he discovered that the produce would not be edible. Their garden was small, and they could not waste good soil for the purpose of growing useless flowers. But Mary was always insisting upon being as civilised as she could. "Miss Boodles du grow a brave lot o' flowers in her garden, and she'm a proper young lady," she said. Mary knew she could not become a proper lady, but she might do her best by trying to grow "a brave lot o' flowers" in her garden.

Later Thomasine saw Boodles and Aubrey pass over the bridge, walking solemnly for the first time that day. The little girl was about to be tried by ordeal, and she was getting anxious about her personal appearance. Her shoes were so dusty, and there was a tiny hole in her stocking right over her ankle, and her face was hot, and her hat was crooked. "You did it, Aubrey," she said. She wasn't looking at all nice, and her hair was tumbling, and threatening to be down her back any moment. "And I'm only seventeen, Aubrey. I know they'll hate me."

They went up the hill among the green trees; and beneath the wall, where nobody could see them, Aubrey dusted his sweetheart's shoes, and put her hat straight, and guided her hands to where hairpins were breaking loose from the radiant head, and told her she was sweetness itself down to the smallest freckle. "Well, if they are not nice I shall say I'm only a baby and can't help it. And then you must say it was all your fault, because you came and kissed me with your pretty girl's face and made me love it."

Thomasine watched Boodles as she went out of sight, trying to think, but not succeeding. She regarded Boodles as a young lady, a being made like herself, and belonging to her species, and yet as different from her as Pendoggat was different from old Weevil. Boodles could talk, and Thomasine could not; Boodles could walk prettily, while she could only slouch; Boodles adorned her clothes, while she could only hang them upon her in a misfitting kind of way. The life of the soul was in the eyes of Boodles; the life of the body in Thomasine's. It was all the difference

between the rare bird which is costly, and the common one which any one may capture, had Thomasine known it. She knew nothing except that she was totally unlike the little girl of the radiant head. She did not know how debased she was, how utterly ignorant, and how vilely cheap. She had been accustomed to put a low price upon herself, because the market was overstocked with girls as debased, ignorant, and cheap, as herself; girls who might have been feminine, but had missed it somehow; girls whose bodies cost twopence, and whose souls a brass ring.

The Bellamies had a pretty home on the hill above Tavistock overlooking the moor. There was a verandah in front where every fine evening the mistress sat to watch the tords melting in the sunset. She and her husband were both artistic. Aubrey might have been said to be a proof of it. Tea was set out upon the verandah, where Mr. Bellamie was frowning at the crude noises of the fair, while his wife observed the old fashion of "mothering" the cups. They were a fragile couple, and everything about them seemed to suggest egg-shell porcelain—their faces, their furniture, and even the flowers in their garden. It was useless to look for passion there. It would have broken them as boiling water breaks a glass. They never lost their self-control. When they were angry they spoke and acted very much as they did when they were pleased.

"Here is the little girl," said Mr. Bellamie in his gentle way. "The red poppies in her hat go well with her hair. Did you see her turn then? A good deal of natural grace there. She does not offend at present. It is a pretty picture, I think."

"Beauty and love—like his name. He is always a pretty picture," murmured the lady, looking at her son. "I wish he would not wear that red tie."

"It suits on this occasion, with her strong colour. She is quite artistic. The only fault is that she knocks her ankles together while walking. That is said, though I know not why, to be a sign of innocence. She is Titianesque, a combination of rich surface with splendid tints. Not at all unfinished. Not in the least crude."

"Mother, here she is!" cried Aubrey, "I had to drag her up the hill. She is so shy."

"It's not true," said Boodles. She advanced to Mrs. Bellamie, her golden lashes drooping. Then she put up her mouth quite naturally, her eyes asking to be kissed; and it was done so tastefully that the lady complied, and said: "I have wanted to see you for a long time."

"A soft voice," murmured Mr. Bellamie. "I was afraid with that colour it might be loud."

"They are very young. It will not last," said the lady to herself. "But she will not do Aubrey any harm."

Boodles was soon talking in her pretty sing-song voice, describing all their fun, and saying what a jolly day it had been, and how nice it was to have Aubrey at home, and she hoped he would never be away for so long again, until Mr. Bellamie roused himself and began to question her. The child had to describe Lewside Cottage and her quiet dull life; and it came out gradually—for Boodles was perfectly honest—how poor they were, and the respectable Bellamies were shocked to hear of the numerous housekeeping difficulties, and the limited number of the little girl's frocks, and what was still worse, the fact that old Weevil was no relation; until Mr. Bellamie began to fear that things were getting inartistic, and his fragile wife asked gently whether the child's parents were still living.

"I don't know," said Boodles, flushing painfully because she felt somehow she had done wrong.

Aubrey could not stand that. He jumped up and tried to choke his sweetheart with small cakes, while Mr. Bellamie began to examine her concerning her favourite pictures, and found she hadn't any, as she had not been east of Exeter, and knew nothing whatever about the big town, which is chiefly in Middlesex and Surrey, and partly in most of the other counties. Mr. Bellamie was rather upset. No girl could be really artistic if she had not seen the picture galleries. He began to feel that it would be necessary either to check Aubrey's amorous propensities or to divert them into some more artistic channel. Mrs. Bellamie had already arrived at much the same conclusion. Girls who know nothing of their parents could not possibly be well-bred, and might easily become a source of danger to those who were. Aubrey, of course, was not of their opinion. While his father was weighing Boodles in the æsthetic balance and finding her wanting, he went round to his mother, passed his arm about her neck, and whispered fervently: "Isn't she sweet? I may get her a ring, mother, mayn't I?"

"Don't be foolish, Aubrey," she whispered back. "You are only children."

They went soon afterwards, but not back to the fair, which was beginning to be marred by the drunkard and his language; they went into the very different atmosphere of Tavy woods; and there picked up the thread of the story, with the trees and the kind weather about them. But it was not the same somehow. Boodles had been to the gate of Castle Dolorous, had looked inside, and thought she had seen the skulls and bones of the young men and maidens, who had wandered in the woods to hear nightingales and pick the tender grapes of passion, but had been caught instead by the ogre, that he might trim his mantle with their hearts. She began at last to wonder whether it could be a sin to have no recognised parents and no name. Even the mongrel can be faithful, and the hybrid flower beautiful; and in their way they are natural, and for themselves they are loved. But they have no names of their own. The plant may cast back in its seed to the weed stage, and the owner of the mongrel may grow ashamed of it at last. Such a

splendid name as Bellamie could hardly be hyphenated with a blank. Still Boodles was very young, only a baby, as she said; and she soon forgot the ogre; and they went down by the river and smeared their kisses with ripe blackberries.

Aubrey's parents strolled in their garden, and agreed that Miss Weevil's head was perfect. They also agreed that the boy had better fall in love with some one else.

"He is so constant. It is what I love in him," said the mother. "He has been devoted to the child always, and now that he is approaching the age when boys do foolish things without consulting their parents, he loves her more than ever. I thought the last time he went away he would come back cured. What a nose she has!"

"She is a perfect Romney," said, her husband.

"I don't believe she knows her name. Boodles, she told me, means beautiful, and her foster-father is called Weevil. Boodles Weevil does not go at all with Aubrey Bellamie," said the lady.

The fragile gentleman agreed that the girl's name violated every canon of art. "If Aubrey will not give her up—" he began, breaking off a twig which threatened to mar the symmetry of the border.

"I shall not influence him. It is foolish to oppose young people. Leave them alone, and they usually get tired of each other as they get older. She is a good child. Aubrey is perfectly safe. He may go about with her as much as he likes, but we must see he does not run off with her and marry her."

"We had better find out everything that is to be known," said Mr. Bellamie. "I will go and see this old Weevil. He may be a fine old gentleman with a Rembrandt head for all we know. She may be well-born, only it is remarkable that she remembers nothing about her parents. She would be a daughter to be proud of, if she had studied art. She offended slightly in the matter of drapery. I noticed a hole in her stocking, but it might have been caused during the day."

"You did not kiss her, I think?" said his wife quickly.

"No, certainly not," came the answer.

"I don't want you to. Her mouth is pretty."

"We must go in," said Mr. Bellamie decisively. "They are beginning to light up the fair. How horribly inartistic it all is!"

Peter and Mary were being pushed about in the crowd below, still enjoying themselves, although somewhat past riding on wooden horses, for Mary was stupid and Peter was sleepy and absent-minded. They had followed custom and done the fair thoroughly, and had not forgotten the liquor. It was an unusual thing for Mary to have a head like a swing and a body like a roundabout, but Peter was used to it. He had been throwing at cocoa-nuts, without hitting anything except a man's knee; and for some time he had admired the ladies dancing in very short skirts to the tune of a merry music-hall melody until Mary, who was terribly hampered by her big umbrella, dragged him away from a spectacle so degrading. It was time for them to return home. They got clear of the crowd, and set their faces, as they supposed, towards the station.

Thomasine was upon the bridge no longer. She had been joined by Will Pugsley, who had lost sight of his new sweetheart, as they had managed to drift apart in the crowd, and were not likely to meet again. She had probably been picked up by some one and would be perfectly happy with her new partner. Thomasine went off with young Pugsley, and it was only in the natural order of things that she should meet Pendoggat at last, not alone, but accompanied by Annie Crocker. It was unfortunate for Thomasine that she should have Pugsley's arm round her waist, although it was not her fault, as he had placed it there, and she supposed her waist had been made for that sort of thing. It was impossible to tell whether Pendoggat had seen her, as he never looked at any one. It was not a happy holiday for Thomasine, although she did go home between Pugsley and another drunken man, a young friend of his, who ought to have made her feel common, had she been capable of self-examination.

It was at the bridge that Peter and Mary went wrong. They ought to have crossed it, only they were so confused they hardly knew what they were doing. It was another bridge of sighs. Lovers, who had probably met for the first time that day, were embracing upon it; and a couple of young soldiers were outraging the clear water of the Tavy by being sick over the parapet. Peter and Mary stumbled on, found themselves in darkness and a lonely road, and soon began to wonder what had become of the town and the station. They had no idea they were walking straight away from Tavistock in the direction of Yelverton.

"Here us be!" cried Mary at length. "A lot o' gals in white dresses biding for the train. Us be in time."

"There be hundreds and millions of 'em," said Peter sleepily.

The road was very dark, but they could see a low wall, and upon the other side what appeared to be a host of dim white figures waiting patiently. They went up to a building and found an iron gate, but the gate was locked, and the house was in darkness. It looked as if the last train had gone, and the station was closed for the night.

"Us mun climb the wall," said Mary. She began to shout at the girls in the white dresses: "Open the gate, some of ye. Open the gate."

There was no reply from the white figures; only the murmuring of the river, and a dreary rustling of dry autumnal foliage. Peter rubbed his eyes and stared, and put his little peg-nose over the wall.

"It bain't the station," he muttered, with a violent belch. "It be a gentleman's garden."

"Aw, Peter, don't ye be so vulish. It be vull o' volks biding to go home."

They climbed the wall, far too sleepy and intoxicated to know they were in the cemetery; and finding themselves upon soft grass they went to sleep, using the mound of a young girl's grave for their bolster, adding their drunken slumbers to the heavier sleep of those who Mary thought were "biding to go home."

About the middle of the night Peter awoke, much refreshed and less absent-minded, and discovered the nature and the dampness of their resting-place. The little man was not in the least dismayed. He aroused Mary with his fist and facetious remarks. "Us be only lodgers. Us bain't come to bide," he said cheerfully.

Mary also saw the fun of the thing. It was a fitting climax to her travelling experiences. Without being at all depressed by her surroundings she said: "Aw, Peter! To think us be sleeping among the corpses like." To the novelty of this experience was to be added the fact that she had slept at last outside her native parish.

They went back to Tavistock, to find the town at rest, and the fair dark and silent. Returning to the house where they had eaten at midday, they banged upon the door and shouted for sleeping accommodation, which was at last provided. Peter felt a thrill of satisfaction when he comprehended that he was putting up at what he was pleased to style an hotel. While he was examining the furniture, the insecure bed, the chair without a back, the cracked crockery, and all the other essentials of the civilised bedroom, Mary began to shout violently—

"Aw, Peter, du'ye come along and see the light! 'Tis a hot hair-pin in a bottle on a bit o' rope, and yew turns 'en on and off wi' a tap like cider."

Peter had to admit that electric light was something startling. He perceived that the same phenomenon occurred in his bedroom, and he was at a loss to account for it. Mary's shouts had alarmed the young slut of a maid who had introduced them to their rooms, and she hurried up to see what was wrong, well accustomed, poor wench, to be on her feet most of the day and night. She found Peter and Mary regarding their luminous bottles with fear and amazement, not venturing to go too close lest some evil should befall them.

"Where be the oil?" asked Mary.

The ignorant little wench said there wasn't any oil; at least she thought not. She knew nothing about the light, except how to turn it on and off. It had only been put into the house lately, and she confessed it saved her a lot of work. She believed it was expensive, as her master had told her not to waste it. A man had come in one day and hung the little bottles in the rooms, and they had given light ever since when they were wanted. They did not seem to wear out, and nothing was ever put into them. Some telegraph-wires had been put about the house at the same time, but she didn't know what they were for, as they did not appear to have anything to do with the post-office. That was all the little slut could tell them. She demonstrated how easy it was to turn the light on and off. She plunged them into darkness, and restored them to light. She couldn't tell them how it was done, but there was a big barrel in the top attic, and perhaps the light was kept in that.

Peter was unable to concur. He had recovered from his first bewilderment, and his learning asserted itself. He considered that the light was natural, like that of the sun. It was merely a matter of imprisoning it within an air-tight bottle; but what he could not understand was where the light went to when the tap was turned. This, however, was nothing but a little engineering problem, which a certain amount of application on his part would inevitably solve. He could make clocks and watches; at least he thought he could, though he had never tried; and the lighting of Ger Cottage with luminous bottles would, he considered, be an undertaking quite within his powers.

"Us wun't have no more lamps," he said. "Us will hang up thிக்க bottles. Can us buy 'em?" he asked the little slut.

"There be a shop where they sells 'em, bits o' rope and all. I seed 'em in the window," said the girl.

"Us will buy two or dree in the morning," declared Mary. "Can us hang 'em up, du'ye reckon, Peter?"

Her brother replied that the task would be altogether beyond her; but it was not likely to present any serious difficulties to him. He promised to hang up one light-giving bottle in his own hut-circle, and another in Mary's. She would pay for the fittings, and he would in return charge her a reasonable sum for his services.

The proprietor of the lodging-house made a poor bargain when he took in Peter and Mary. They

spent most of the remainder of the night turning the wonderful light on and off, "like cider," as Mary said.

CHAPTER XII

ABOUT THE OCTAVE OF ST. GOOSE

Things had gone wrong with Peter and Mary ever since the festival. Excitement, Plymouth liquors, and ignorance were largely to blame for the general "contrairiness" of things; but the root of the trouble lay in the fact of their refusal to be decent savages; of Peter's claims to be a handy man, and of Mary's desire to be civilised.

Old Sal had last been seen wandering towards Helmen Barton; that was the principal grievance. Others were the complete failure of Peter as an electrical engineer; the discovery that nearly a pound's worth of precious shillings had been dissipated at the fair in idle pleasures alone; and the loss of a number of little packages containing such things as tea, sugar, and rice, which Mary had bought in Tavistock and placed, as she thought, in a position of safety. The pills and flower-seeds had proved also a source of trouble. A bottle of almighty pills had been thrust upon Peter for his liver's sake, and Mary had later on acquired packets of sweet-peas and mignonette in order that her garden might be made glorious.

The loss of the groceries caused the first lamentation. Mary had a clear recollection of buying them, or at least she remembered paying for them, but beyond that memory did nothing for her. She had no impression of walking about the streets with her arms full of packages; they were not in her pocket, nor had they ever been in Peter's; she could not have left them in the shop; she was ready to swear she had not dropped them. The only possible conclusion was that the pixies had stolen them. Peter the hypocrite grunted at that. Although he offered sacrifice continually to the pixies that dwelt in Grandfather's bosom, he declared there were no such things. School-master had told him they were all dead. Education had in some obscure way shot, trapped, or poisoned the lot.

"You'm a gurt vule," was Mary's retort. "Dartmoor be vull o' piskies, allus was, and allus will be. When I was a little maid and went to schule wi' Master, though he never larnt I more than ten fingers and ten toes be twenty, though I allus remembered it, for Master had a brave way of larning young volks—What was I telling, Peter? Aw ees, I mind now. 'Twas when I went to schule wi' Ann Middleweek, her picked up a pisky oven and broke 'en all to bits, 'cause her said the piskies were proper little brutes, and her was beat cruel that night wi' brimmles and vuzzy-bushes 'cause her'd broke the oven, and her was green and blue next day. 'Twas the piskies stole my tea and sugar, sure 'nuff. If I'd ha' spat on 'em, and marked 'em proper wi' a cross betwixt two hearts, they'd ha' been here now."

Mary worried so much over her lost groceries that she felt quite ill. As Peter also became apprehensive of the state of his health every time that he looked at the bottle of pills, they decided to take a few. Then Peter went out into the garden to sow the flower-seeds, while Mary tramped over the moor to search for her missing goose.

Peter imagined that he had mastered the science of horticulture. At least he would not have accepted advice upon the subject from any one. Vegetables he had grown all his life, and in exactly the same way as they had been grown in his boyhood, and he was quite as successful as his neighbours. He was a ridiculous little man, and in several ways as much of a savage as his ancestors, but he had inherited something from them besides their unpleasant ways. His pretensions to being skilled with his hands and clever with his brain were grotesque enough; but he possessed a faculty which is owned by few, because it is not required by civilised beings, a faculty which to strangers appeared incredible. When a bullock or a pony was pointed out to him, as it stood outlined against the sky on the top of some distant tor, or even as it walked against the dull background of the moor, he would put his hand to his eyes, and almost at once, and always correctly, give the owner's name. He earned several shillings at certain seasons of the year, and could have earned more had he not been lazy, by going out to search for missing animals. Peter was always in demand by the commoners about the time of the drift.

Flowers were useless things according to Peter, and concerning their culture he knew nothing. However, Mary insisted upon the seeds being planted, to give her garden a civilised appearance, so Peter set about the task. The packet of sweet-peas had broken in his pocket during the fair, and upon returning he had placed them in a small bottle. The mignonette was his first care. The instructions outside stated that the seed was to be sown "in February, under glass." Peter shook his head at that. February was a long way off, but he went on to argue that if the seed would grow during the winter it was certainly safe to sow it during the far warmer month of October. It was the "under glass" that puzzled him. This was evidently something new in gardening, and Peter objected to new-fangled methods. It occurred to him that the expression might have been intended for "under grass," but that seemed equally absurd. School-master would know, but Peter was not going to expose his ignorance by asking questions. Besides, it would mean a long walk, and Master's cottage possessed the distinct disadvantage of being a considerable distance from the inn. Peter had no idea what sort of a plant mignonette might be, but he supposed it was

a foreign growth which managed to flourish upon certain nutritive qualities possessed by glass. There were plenty of bottles in the linyah. Peter broke up a couple with the crowbar, collected the fragments—the instructions omitted to state how much glass—scattered the seeds in an unimportant corner of the garden, strewed the pieces of glass over them, and trod the whole down firmly. Then he dug a trench and buried the sweet-peas.

Soon afterwards he began to feel ill; and when Mary returned without news of Old Sal she said she was "cruel sick-like tu." They conferred together, agreed that the trouble was caused by "the oil in their livers," and concluded they had better go on with the pills. Presently they were suffering torments; the night was a sleepless time of groans and invocations; and in the morning they were worse. Peter was the most grievously afflicted, at least he said he was; and described the state of his feelings with the expressive phrase: "My belly be filled wi' little hot things jumping up and down."

"So be mine. Whatever be the matter wi' us?" groaned Mary.

"They pills. Us ha' took tu many."

"Mebbe us didn't tak' enough. Us ha' only took half the bottle, and he said dree bottles for a cure."

"Us wun't tak' no more. I'll smash that old bottle on they seeds. 'Twill dung 'em proper," said Peter, shuffling painfully across the floor and reaching for the bottle.

A moment later he began to howl. He had discovered something, and terror made him own to it.

"Us be dead corpses! Us be pizened! Us ha' swallowed they peas!" he shouted.

"Aw, my dear life! Where be the pills, then?" cried Mary.

"I've tilled 'em," said Peter. "They be in the garden, and them peas be growing in our bellies."

"Aw, Peter, us will die! I be a-going to see Master," groaned Mary.

Peter said he should come too. He was afraid to be left alone, with Grandfather ticking sardonically at him, and sweet-peas germinating in his bowels. If it had been only Mary who was suffering he would have prescribed for her; but as he was himself in pain he argued that it would be advisable to seek outside assistance. Master was a "brave larned man," and he would know what ought to be done to save their lives. They made themselves presentable, and laboured bitterly across the moor to St. Mary Tavy village.

Master was never out. He lived in a little whitewashed cottage near the road, gazing out of his front window all day, with a heap of books on a little table beside him, and pedantic spectacles upon his nose. He was nearly eighty, and belonged to the old school of dames and masters now practically extinct, an entirely ignorant class, who taught the children nothing because they were perfectly illiterate themselves. Master was held in reverence by the villagers. That pile of books, and the wonderful silver spectacles which he was always polishing with knowing glances, were to them symbols of unbounded knowledge. They brought their letters to the old man that he might read them aloud and explain obscure passages. Not a pig was killed without Master's knowledge, and not a child was christened until the Nestor of the neighbourhood had been consulted.

"Please to come in, varmer. Please to sot down, Mary," said Master, as he received the groaning pilgrims into his tiny owlery, "varmer" being the correct and lawful title of every commoner. "Have a drop o' cider, will ye? You'm welcome. I knows you be main cruel fond of a drop o' cider, varmer."

Peter was past cider just then. He groaned and Mary moaned, and they both doubled up in their chairs; while Master arranged his beautiful spectacles, and looked at them in a learned fashion, and at last hit upon the brilliant idea that they were afflicted with spasms of the abdomen.

"You've been yetting too many worts?" he suggested with kindly sympathy.

"Us be tilling peas in our bellies," explained Mary. .

Master had not much sense of humour. He thought at first the remark was made seriously, and he began to upbraid them for venturing on such daring experiments. But Mary went on: "Us bought pills to Goosie Vair, 'cause us ha' got too much oil in our livers, and us bought stinking-peas tu. Us ha' swallowed the peas, and tilled the pills. Us be gripped proper, so us ha' come right to wance to yew."

Master replied that they had done wisely. He played with his books, wiped his spectacles, and dusted the snuff from his nose with a handkerchief as big as a bath-towel. Then he folded his gnarled hands peacefully across his brass watch-chain, and talked to them like a good physician.

"I'll tell ye why you'm gripped," he said. "'Tis because you swallowed them peas instead o' the pills. Du'ye understand what I be telling?"

Peter and Mary answered that so far they were quite able to follow him, and Mary added: "A cruel kind larned man be Master. Sees a thing to wance, he du."

"Us ha' got innards, and they'm called vowels," Master went on. "Some calls 'em intestates, but that be just another name for the same thing. Us ha' got five large vowels, and two small ones."

The large ones be called *a, e, i, o, u*, and the small ones be called *w* and *y*. I can't tell ye why, but 'tis so. Some of them peas yew ha' swallowed have got into *a*, and some ha' got into *o*, and mebbe some ha' got into *w* and *y*. Du'ye understand what I mean?"

The invalids replied untruthfully that they did, while Peter stated that Master had done him good already.

"They be growing there, and 'tis the growing that gripes ye. Du'ye understand that?" continued Master.

Peter ventured to ask how much growth might be looked for.

"They grows six foot and more, if they bain't stopped," said Master ominously.

"How be us to stop 'em?" wailed Mary.

"I'll tell ye," said Master. "Yew mun get home and bide quiet, and not drink. Then mebbe the peas will wilt off and die wi'out taking root."

"Shall us dig up the pills and tak' some?" Suggested Peter.

"Best let 'em bide. They be doing the ground good," said Master. "It bain't nothing serious, varmer," he went on. "Yew and Mary will be well again to-morrow. Don't ye drink and 'twill be all right. The peas will die of what us calls instantaneous combustion. If yew was to swallow anything to pizen 'em 'twould pizen yew tu. Aw now, you might rub a little ammonia on your bellies just to mak' 'em feel uneasy-like. I'll get ye a drop in a bottle. Nothing's no trouble, varmer."

"It taketh a scholar to understand it," said Mary. "When he putched a-telling I couldn't sense 'en, but I knows now it bain't serious. A brave larned man be Master. There bain't many like 'en."

The invalids were pretty well by that evening. Their pains were departing, and Mary was able to hunt again for Old Sal and bewail her lost groceries, while Peter turned his attention towards establishing electric light into the two hut-circles. He had brought back from Tavistock two little bottles with taps, hairpins, and bits of rope complete, also mystic circles made of china, which, he had been informed, were used for securing the completed article to the roof, and nearly a mile of thin wire, which he had picked up very cheaply, as it was getting rusty.

The wire had excited Mary's amazement, but Peter refused to give her any information concerning it. He had enjoyed an instructive conversation with the man in the shop, who perceived that Peter was a savage, but did not on that account refuse to sell him the required articles. Peter asked how the light was made, and the answer "with water," or words to that effect, so stunned him that he heard nothing for the next few moments. If it could be true that fire and heat were made out of water he was prepared to believe anything. The man seemed to be serious and not trying to make a fool of him; for he went on to explain that the light was conveyed from the water by a wire which communicated with the little bottles—he showed Peter that what he had mistaken for a piece of rope was in reality twisted wires—over any distance, although more power would be required if the house to be lighted was far from the water. The word "power" was explained to Peter's satisfaction as meaning a strong current, preferably a waterfall. The entire art of electrical engineering became clear to Peter at once. He remembered how the ignorant little girl in the lodging-house had mentioned the telegraph wires which had been put about the house. The child could not be expected to understand what the wires were for—Peter had not much tolerance for such stupidity—but it was evident, after the shopman's explanation, that those wires communicated with the Tavy and brought the light into the lodging-house from its waters. If the river at Tavistock, which is wide and shallow, could give forth light of such excellent quality, what might not be expected from the rushing torrent of Tavy Cleave? Peter perceived that every difficulty had been smoothed away.

"Best tak' they old lamps to the village and sell 'em," he said, with vast contempt for old and faithful servants. "Us ha' done wi' they. Us will ha' lights in our bottles avore to-night." He had hung them up already, one in his own hut, the other in Mary's, and they looked splendid hanging from the beams. "Like a duke's palace," according to the electrician.

"Aw ees, I'll sell 'em," said Mary, getting out a bit of sacking to wrap the old lamps in. "Us won't be mazed wi' paraffin and wicks and busted glasses. I'll tak' 'em' to Mother Cobley, and see if her will give us two or dree shilluns for 'em."

Mary went off with the lamps, which Peter's science was about to render superfluous, while the little man took up his bundles of wire and stumbled down the cleave, to put the hidden radiance of the Tavy into communication with their humble dwellings.

It was very pleasant down by the river that crisp October afternoon; the rich autumnal sun upon the rocks, the bracken in every wonderful tint of brown and gold, the scarlet seed-clumps of bog asphodel, and the trailing red ropes of bramble sprinkled with jetty berries, full of crimson blood like Thomasine's cheeks. It was nearly a month past Barnstaple Fair, and yet the devil had not put his foot upon the blackberries. The devil is supposed to attend Barnstaple Fair in state and tread on brambles as he goes home; which is merely the pleasant Devonshire way of saying that there is generally a frost about Barnstaple Fair week which spoils the fruit. The fairy cult was much prettier than all this demonology, but when education killed the little people there was only the devil to fall back upon; and though education will no doubt kill him in due time it has not

done so yet.

Peter trampled among the brambles and swore at them because they caught his legs. He saw nothing beautiful in their foliage. It was too common for him to admire. The colours had been like that the year before; they would be the same the year after. Peter appreciated bluebells and primroses because they were soft to walk upon; but the blood-red "brimmles" only pricked his legs and made him stumble; and the golden bracken was only of use in the cow-shed, or in his hut as a floor-litter; and the gracious heather was only good for stuffing mattresses; and the guinea-gold gorse would have been an encumbrance upon the side of the moor had it not been so useful as a thatch for his hut, and a fence for his garden, and a mud-scraper for his boots. Peter, though very much below the ordinary moorman, was artistically like them all—insensible to beauty which is not of the flesh. Not a Dartmoor commoner would pause a moment to regard the sun setting and glowing in a mist upon the tors. Yet a Cornish fisherman would; and a Norman peasant perhaps would take off his hat and cross himself, not so much with a sense of religion, as because there is something in his mind which can respond to the beauty and poetry and romance of the sun in a mist. Possibly, with the Dartmoor commoner, it is his religion which is to blame. His faith is as dark and ugly as the bottom of a well. The Cornish fisherman has his Cymric blood, his instincts, his knowledge of folklore, to help him through. The Norman peasant has the daily help of gleaming vestments, glowing candles, clouds of sun-tinted incense—pretty follies perhaps, but still pretty—the ritual of his mass, and the Angelus bell. But the Dartmoor commoner has little but his hell-fire.

In the midst of all the splendour of Tavy Cleave on fire with autumn, Peter the ridiculous unwound a portion of the first roll of wire, and pondered deeply. It seemed absurd even to him to place the end into the water and leave Nature to do the rest; but he couldn't think of any other method. The shopman had distinctly mentioned wire and waterfalls, and both were ready to hand. As Peter went on to consider the matter it became clearer in his mind. The ways of Nature are incomprehensible. There were lightning-conductors, for instance. They were just bits of wire sticking aimlessly into the air, and apparently they caught the lightning, though Peter was not sure what they did with it. To put a piece of wire into a waterfall to attract light could not be more absurd than to erect a bit of wire into space to catch lightning. It was amazing certainly, but Peter had nothing to do with marvels, except to turn them to practical account. Once, when he was ill, a doctor had come to visit him armed with a little instrument which he had put against his chest and had then looked right inside him. Peter knew the doctor had looked inside him, because he was able to describe all that he saw. That was another marvellous thing, almost as wonderful as extracting light and heat from cold water.

There was a waterfall lower down, and below it a pool fringed with fern and boiling with foam. It was an ideal spot, thought Peter, so he went there, and after fastening his wire to a stone, dropped it into the pool at the foot of the falls. The silver foam and the coloured bubbles laughed at him, and had Peter been blessed with anything in the form of an imagination, he might have supposed they were inviting him to play with them, and the sunlight made a rainbow out of flying foam. The scene was so full of radiance that Peter easily believed how brilliantly the hairpins in the bottles would presently be glowing.

It was a lengthy business laying the wire up the side of the cleave among the boulders, fern, and brambles, and the task was not finished until twilight. The wire was rotten stuff, breaking continually, and had to be fastened together in a score of places.

Peter reached the top of the cleave at last, and discovered Mary waiting to inform him in an angry way how Mother Cobley had given her only a shilling for the two lamps, and that only under pressure, because they were old and worn out. Mary wanted light in her bottle at once, as she had to mix the bread and make the goose-feed. "That Old Sal be a proper little brute. He bain't come home, and I can't hear nothing of 'en," she concluded.

Peter replied that he would not be able to introduce the light into both huts that evening. Mary would have to wait for hers, for it did not occur to him that it would be possible to illumine Mary's hut before his own.

"How be I to work in dimsies?" said Mary.

"Can't ye mix bread in my house?" replied Peter.

Mary admitted the thing was possible, so she stalked off for the bread-pan, while Peter completed the installation by running the wire through his door, along the roof, and twisting it about the "bit o' rope" holding the little bottle which he fondly imagined would soon be radiant.

"Bain't a first-class job, but I'll finish him proper to-morrow," he said.

"Turn thikky tap!" cried excited Mary. "Aw, Peter, wun't the volks look yaller when they sees 'en?"

The folks were not destined to look yellow, but Peter and Mary were soon looking blue when repeated turning of the tap failed to lighten their darkness. It was not such a simple matter as tapping a cask of cider after all. They turned and twisted until the hut was dark and dreary, but not a farthing's worth of rush-light was produced.

"Mebbe the wire's been and broke," suggested Peter hopefully.

He lighted his lantern, and they tramped together down the cleave, following the wire all the way

to the river and finding it intact. Presumably it was the waterfall which was not doing its duty.

They returned to their gloomy huts, the one sorrowful, the other angry. "You'm a gurt dafty-headed ole vule! That's what yew be!" cried the angry one, when they reached the top of the cleave.

Peter received this opinion with unwonted humility; and replied as meekly as any Christian martyr: "He be gone wrong somehow. I'll put 'en right to-morrow."

"Put 'en right, will ye?" cried Mary scornfully. "How be I to mix bread' and get supper? You'm a proper old horniwink, and I hopes the dogs 'll have ye."

These curses aroused Peter. He spat upon the ground, and drew mystic figures with his boot between Mary and himself. Having done what he could to avert the evil, he turned upon Mary and threatened her with the lantern. She continued her insults, having lost her temper completely, not so much because Peter had failed in his electrical engineering, as because she had an idea he had been making a fool of her. They were both ignorant, but one did not know it and was brazen, while the other was aware of it and was sensitive. She went on calling him weird names, and hoping the whist hounds would hunt him, until he lost his temper too. They had never quarrelled so violently before, but Peter was helpless in spite of his big threats, for Mary could have tackled and beaten two men as strong as her little brother. When he came to close quarters she picked him up, lantern and all, cuffed him, carried him into her hut, and snatching up her bulging umbrella whacked him well over the head with it.

Peter was immediately overwhelmed, not merely by the umbrella, but with packages which tumbled upon his shoulders, then to the floor, and were revealed to Mary's eyes by the dull gleam of the lantern, which was giving a very different light from that which had been anticipated from what had been the little glass globe hanging from the roof—had been and was not, for Mary had utterly demolished it with an upward sweep of her immense umbrella.

"Lord love us all!" she cried, her good-humour returning at once. "If there hain't the tea, and sugar, and t'other things what I bought to Goosie Vair, and thought the piskies had been and took!"

CHAPTER XIII

ABOUT VARIOUS EMOTIONS

Pendoggat stood beneath the penthouse of his peat linhay, looking at a newspaper. The issue was dated Friday, and it contained the news of the week; not the news of the world, which was of no local interest, but a condensed account of the great things begun, attempted, and accomplished in the rural districts of Devon. The name of the parish was printed in big letters, and under it appeared the wonder of the week: how little Willie Whidden, while tramping to school, had picked a ripe strawberry from the hedge; or how poor old Daniel Ashplant had been summoned for drunkenness—P.C. Coplestone stating that defendant had behaved like a madman—and fined half-a-crown, despite his solemn oath and covenant that he had never tasted liquor in his life. Unimportant items, such as the meeting of Imperial Parliament, and a great railway disaster, served as stop-gaps in cases where advertisements just failed to fill the column.

Pendoggat was looking for something. The testimony of a Wesleyan minister after twenty years of faithful service, accompanied by his photograph, caught his eye, and he thought he had found what he was searching for. He was astonished to learn that friend and pastor Pezzack was so popular; but when he read on he discovered it was only an advertisement for a nerve tonic. He turned over a page, and at last came upon the heading which he required. The title was that of a small sub-parish north of the moor, celebrated for a recent pronouncement of the curate-in-charge, who had congratulated the inhabitants upon their greatly increased sobriety, as during the late year only forty-seven persons, out of a total population of seventy-two, had been guilty of drunkenness. Printers had blundered and mixed things up rather. A hedge-builder had in the course of his duties come across a hole containing a rabbit, a hedgehog, and a rat; and in the same paragraph the Reverend Eli Pezzack had been safely married to Miss Jeconiah Sampson, with a good deal of bell-ringing, local excitement—the bride being well known in the neighbourhood for her untiring zeal in the matter of chapel teas—and an exhibition of such numerous and costly presents as a pair of brass candlesticks, an American clock, a set of neat doyleys, and an artistic pin-tray.

It was one of Pendoggat's peculiarities that he did not smile. His idea of expressing pleasure was to hurt something; just as a boy in moments of excitement may slash at anything with his stick. Pendoggat dropped the paper suddenly, ran at a goose which was waddling across his court, captured the big strong bird, and wrung its neck. He flung the writhing body on the stones and kicked it in his joy. The minister could not side against him now. He had burdened himself with a wife, and there would soon be the additional burden of a child. Pezzack was a free man no longer, and had become dependent upon Pendoggat for food and home and boots. He would have to obey his master and be his faithful dog, have to keep his mouth shut when he discovered that the nickel-mine was a fraud, for his home's sake and his wife's sake. Pendoggat could strip him naked

at a stroke.

Annie Crocker crossed the court towards the well with a crock in her hand. Pendoggat noticed that her hair was growing grey, and that she was getting slovenly.

"Who killed that old goose?" she said, standing and staring at the big white body.

"I did," muttered Pendoggat.

"You'll have to pay," she said shrilly. "That be Mary Tavy's Old Sal, what she thinks the world of. Killed him, have ye? I wouldn't be you, Farmer Pendoggat, when Mary comes to hear on't. Mary's as good a man as you."

"Shut your noise," he growled. "Who's to tell her?"

"Who? What's my tongue for? The first time you lift your hand to me Mary knows."

Annie carried her crock to the well and lowered the bucket, muttering to herself, and keeping a watchful eye upon the man who kept her; while Pendoggat took the bird by the neck and dragged it towards the furze-brake. He was afraid when he learnt that it was Mary's Old Sal, for Mary was a creature whom he could not tackle. She seemed to him more a power of Nature than a strong hermaphrodite; something like the wind, or the torrential rain, or the storm-cloud. No commoner in his heart disbelieves in witchcraft; and even the girls, who twist a bridal veil across their faces when they are going to be married, know that the face-covering is not an adornment, but a fetish or protection against the "fascination" of the Evil Eye.

"Going to bury him!" sneered Annie. "Aye, he bain't the only one in there. Bury him in the vuzz till Judgment, if ye can. The Lord will send fire from heaven one day to consume that vuzz, and all that be hidden shall be revealed. Drag him in by the neck, du'ye? Maybe they'll be dragging you to a hole in the ground avore long."

She staggered across the court, splashing water like curses from the crock, and slammed the house door violently. Pendoggat said nothing. He bore with Anne because he was used to her, and because she knew too much about him; but he felt he would murder her some day if he didn't get away. He pushed the dead body of Old Sal as far into the furze as he could with the pole that propped up the washing-line, then went into the linhay, sat down upon the peat, and muttered hoarsely to the spiders in the roof.

Two things he required: the return of Pezzack, and winter. He had received through the minister nearly two hundred pounds from the retired grocer and his friends, and he hoped to get more; but Pezzack the secretary was a miserable correspondent without Pendoggat's assistance, and nothing could be done until he came back to resume the duties which were being interfered with by the honeymoon. Frost and snow were also essential for his plans, because the fussy grocer, to whom had been thrown the sop of chairman of the company—a jobbing printer had prepared an ill-spelt prospectus, and the grocer never moved a yard without a pocketful—was continually writing to know how things were going, and Pendoggat wanted snow as an excuse for deferring mining operations until spring. He would have left Dartmoor before then. He was going to take Thomasine with him, and enjoy her youth until his passion for her cooled; and then she could look after herself; and as for Annie, the parish would look after her. He had reckoned on getting five hundred pounds out of the visionary mine, only those respectable people of Bromley were so chary of parting with their money, even though they had Pezzack's unquestioned morality and good character to rely upon. His only fear was lest the grocer should take fright and get it into his head that the mine was a wild-cat scheme. It was hardly likely, as Dartmoor is to Bromley minds an unknown and almost legendary district.

"I gave him five pounds of his uncle's money to get married on," Pendoggat muttered, without a trace of humour. "For the next few weeks I'll give him fifteen shillings to live on, and then he may smash, if he can't preach his pockets full."

He was more afraid of Annie than any one else. The suspicious nature of women is one of their most animal-like characteristics. There had never lived a man better able to keep a secret than Pendoggat; and yet Annie knew there was something brewing, although he did not guess that she knew. It was a matter of instinct, the same instinct which compels a dog to be restless when, his master is about to go away. The animal knows before his master begins to make any preparation for departure; and by the same faculty Annie knew, or perhaps only guessed, that Pendoggat was meditating how he could leave her. She was in the miserable position of the woman who has lived for the best part of her life with a man without being married to him, having no claim except a sentimental one upon him, but compelled to cling to him for the sake of food and shelter, and because he has taken everything from her whatever of charm and beauty she might have possessed, and left her without the means of attracting an honest man. She had passed as Mrs. Pendoggat for nearly twenty years. Every one in the neighbourhood supposed she was married to her master. Only he and she knew the truth: that her marriage-ring was a lie. Pendoggat was a preacher, and a good one, people said. He was severe upon human frailties. He preached the doctrine of eternal punishment, and would have been the first to condemn those who straightened a boundary wall or led a maid astray. He could not have maintained his position had it been known that she who passed as his wife was actually a spinster. Pendoggat did not know the truth about himself. When in the pulpit religious zeal seized hold upon him, and he spoke from his heart, meaning all that he said, believing it, and trying to impress it upon the minds of his listeners. Outside the chapel his tempestuous passions overwhelmed him. Inside the chapel

he could not feel the Dartmoor winds, although he could hear them; but the stone walls shielded him from them. Outside they smote upon him, and there was nothing to protect him. He was a man who lived two lives, and thought he was only living one. His most strongly-marked characteristic, his inherent and incessant cruelty, he overlooked entirely, not seeing it, not even knowing it was there. He could steal a fowl from his neighbour's yard, and quote Scripture while doing it; and the impression which would have remained in his mind was that he had quoted Scripture, not that he had stolen the fowl. When he thought of his conduct towards Pezzack he saw no cruelty in it. The only thought which occurred to him was that the minister was a good man and did his best, but that he, Pendoggat, was the better preacher of the two.

It was Thursday; Thomasine's evening out, and her master's day to get drunk. Farmer Chegwidden was regular in his habits. Every Thursday, and sometimes on Saturdays, he went to one of the villages, drank himself stupid, and galloped home like a madman. It was a matter of custom rather than a pleasure. He had buried his father, mother, and sister, on different Thursdays; and it was probably the carousal which followed each of these events which had fixed Thursday in his mind as a day for drowning sorrow.

Mrs. Chegwidden was one of the minor mysteries of human life. People supposed that she lived in some shadowy kind of way, and they asked after her health, and wondered what she was like by then; but nobody seemed to have any clear notion concerning her. She was never visible in the court of Town Rising, or in the garden, and yet she must have been there sometimes. She never went to chapel, or to any other amusement. She was like a mouse, coming out timidly when nobody was about, and scuttling into some secret place at the sound of a footfall. She passed her life among pots and pickle-jars, or, when she wanted a change, among bottles and cider-casks, not drinking, or even tasting, but brewing, preserving, pickling all the time. Chegwidden did not talk about her. He always replied, "Her be lusty," if inquiries were made. The invisible lady had no home talk. She was competent to remark upon the weather, and in an occasional burst of eloquence would observe that she was troubled with rheumatism. There are strange lives dragged out in lonely places. No doubt Mrs. Chegwidden had been conceited once; and perhaps the principal cause of her retirement into the dark ways and corners of Town Rising might have been traced to the fact that she was bald. A woman with no hair on her head is a grotesque object. Thomasine was really the mistress of the house, and she did the work well just because she was stupid. She worked mechanically, doing the same thing every day at the same time. Stupid women make the best housekeepers. Thomasine was a useful willing girl, who deserved to be well treated. Her master had not meddled with her.

Young Pugsley had been round to the kitchen door after dark since Goose Fair, and had urged Thomasine to wear a ring. The poor girl was willing, but she could not accept the offer, for more than one reason. Young Pugsley was not a bad fellow; not the sort to go about with a revolver in his pocket and an intention to use it if his young woman proved fickle. His wages were rising, and he thought he could get a cottage if Thomasine would let him court her. He admitted he was giving his company to another girl, and should go on with his attentions if Thomasine would not have him. The girl went back into the kitchen and began to cry; and Pugsley shuffled after her in a docile manner and sought to embrace her in the dark; but she pushed him off, with the saying: "I bain't good enough for yew, Will." Pugsley felt the age of chivalry echoing within him as he replied that he was only an everyday young chap, but if he was willing to take her it wasn't for her to have opinions about herself; only he couldn't hang on for ever, and she must make up her mind one way or the other, as he was doing well, getting fourteen shillings now, and with all that money it was his duty to get married, and if he didn't he might get into the way of spending his evenings in the pot-house. Thomasine only cried the more, until at last she managed to find the words of a confession which sent him from her company for ever. On that occasion it was fortunate for the girl that she could not think, because the faculty of reason could have done nothing beyond suggesting to her that the opportunity of leading a respectable life had gone from her, like her sweetheart, never to return.

She dressed herself in her best, and went to the old tumble-down linhay on the moor where Brightly had taken shelter after his unfortunate meeting with Pendoggat. She had been told to go there after dark and wait. She did not know whether she was going to be murdered, but she hoped not. She mended her gloves, put on her hat, twisted a feather boa round her neck, though it would be almost as great a nuisance in the wind as Mary's umbrella, but she had nothing else, gave a few tidying touches to the kitchen, and stepped out. It was very dark, and the sharp breeze pricked her hot face and made it smart.

She reached the linhay and waited. The place smelt unpleasantly, because beasts driven from the high moor by bad weather had taken shelter there. A ladder led up to a small loft half filled with dry fern except in places where moisture dripped through the roof. It was very lonely, standing on the brow of the hill where the wind howled. A couple of owls were hooting pleasantly at one another. No drearier spot would be found on all Dartmoor. Thomasine felt horror creeping over her, and her warm flesh kept on shuddering. She would not be able to wait there alone for long. Terror would make her disobedient. She wished she had been walking along the sheltered road by Tavy station, with young Pugsley's arm about her waist. It was not an evening to enjoy that bald stretch of moor with its wild wind and gaping wheels.

A horse galloped up. The sound of its iron shoes suggested frost, and so did the girl's breathing. She was wondering what her father was doing. He was a village cobbler, and a strict Methodist, fairly straight himself, and without sympathy for sinners. She moved, trod on some filth, and cried out. A man's voice answered and told her roughly to be quiet. Then Pendoggat groped his

way in and felt towards her.

He had come in an angry mood, prepared to punish the girl, and to make her suffer, for having dared to flaunt with young Pugsley before his eyes in Tavistock. He had brought his whip into the lincage, with some notion of using it, and of drawing the girl's blood, as he had drawn it with the sprig of gorse at the beginning of his courtship. But inside the dreary foul-smelling place his feelings changed. Possibly it was because he was out of the wild wind, sheltered from it by the cracked cob walls, or perhaps he felt himself in chapel; for when he took hold of Thomasine and pulled her to him he felt nothing but tenderness, and the desire in him then was not to punish, nor even to rebuke her, but to preach, to tell her something of the love of God, to point out to her how wicked she had been to yield to him, and how certain was the doom which would come upon her for doing so. These feelings also passed when he had the girl in his arms, feeling her soft neck, her big lips, her hot blood-filled cheeks, and her knees trembling against his. For the time passion went away and Pendoggat was a lover; a weak and foolish being, intoxicated by that which has always been to mankind, and always must be, what the fragrance of the lime-blossom is to the bee. Even Pendoggat had that something in him which theologians say was made in heaven, or at least outside this earth; and he was to know in that dirty lincage, with moisture around and dung below, the best and tenderest moments of his life. He was to enter, if only for once, that wonderful land of perennial spring flowers where Boodles and Aubrey wandered, reading their fairy-tales in each other's eyes.

"Been here long, my jewel?" he said, caressing her.

Thomasine could see nothing except a sort of suggestion of cobwebby breath and the outline of a man's head; but she could hear and feel; and these faculties were sharpened by the absence of vision. She did not know who the man was. Pendoggat had galloped up to the lincage, Pendoggat had entered and seized her, and then had disappeared to make way for some one else. He had, as it were, pushed young Pugsley into her arms and left them alone together, only her old sweetheart had never caressed her in that way, with a devotional fondness and a kind of religious touch. Pugsley's courtship had been more in the nature of a duty. If she had been his goddess he had worshipped her in a Protestant manner, with rather the attitude of an agnostic going to church because it was right and proper; but now she was receiving the full Catholic ritual of love, the flowers, incense, and religious warmth. This was all new to Thomasine, and it seemed to awaken something in her, some chord of tenderness which had never been aroused before, some vague desire to give a life of attention and devotion to some one, to any one, who would reward her by holding her like that.

"Who be ye?" she murmured.

"The man who loves you, who has loved you ever since he put his eyes upon you," he answered. "I was angry with you, my beautiful strong girl. You went off with that young fellow at the fair when I'd told you not to. He's not for you, my precious. You are mine, and I am going to have you, and keep you, and bite the life out of you if you torment me. Your mouth's as hot as fire, and your body pricks me like a furze-bush. Throw your arms around me and hold on—hold on as tight as the devil holds us, and let me love you like God loves."

He buried his lips in her neck, and bit her like a dog playing with a rabbit.

"I waited on the bridge all day," faltered Thomasine, merely making the statement, not venturing a reproof. She wanted to go on, and explain how young Pugsley had forced himself upon her and compelled her to go with him, only she could not find the words.

"I couldn't get away from Annie. She stuck to me like a pin," he muttered. "I'm going to get away from her this winter, leave her, go off with you somewhere, anywhere, get off Dartmoor and go where you like. Heaven or hell, it's the same to me, if I've got you."

This was all strange language to Thomasine. Passion she comprehended, but the poetry and romance of love, even in the wild and distorted form in which it was being presented, were beyond her. She could not understand the real meaning of the awakening of that tenderness in her, which was the womanhood trying to respond, and to make her, like Boodles, a creature of love, but failing because it could not get through the mass of flesh and ignorance, just as the seed too deeply planted can only struggle, but must fail, to grow into the light. She felt it would be pleasant to go away with Pendoggat if he was going to love her like that. She would be something of a lady; have a servant under her, perhaps. Thomasine was actually thinking. She would have a parlour to keep locked up; be the equal of the Chegwidens; far above the village cobbler her father, and nearly as good as the idol-maker of Birmingham. That Pendoggat loved her was certain. He would not have lost his senses and behaved as he had done if he did not love her. Thomasine, like most young women, believed as much as she wanted to, believed that men are as good as their word, and that love and brute passion are synonymous terms. Once upon a time she had been taught how to read, write, and reckon; and she had forgotten most of that. She had not been taught that love is like the flower of the Agave: rare, and not always once in a lifetime; that passion is a wayside weed everywhere. Perhaps if she had been taught that she would not have forgotten.

"We'll go away soon, my jewel," Pendoggat whispered. "Annie is not my wife—you know that. I can leave her any day. My time at the Barton is up in March, but we'll go before then."

"Don't this old place smell mucky?" was all Thomasine had to say.

They climbed up the ladder, and sat on the musty fern, which had made a bed for Brightly and his bitch, and Pendoggat continued his pleasant ways. He was in a curious state of happiness, still believing he was with the woman that he loved. The walls of the linnay continued to be the walls of Ebenezer and a shelter against the wind. They embraced and sang a hymn, but softly, lest any chance passer-by should overhear and discover them. Pendoggat knelt upon the fern and prayed aloud for their future happiness, speaking from his heart and meaning what he said. Thomasine was as happy as the fatted calf which knows nothing of its fate. It was on the whole the most successful of her evenings out. She was going to be a respectable married woman after all. Pendoggat had sworn it in his prayer. He could do as he liked with her after that, now that she was his in the sight of Heaven. The dirty linnay was a chapel, and a place of love where they were married in word and deed.

Farmer Chegwidden came thundering home from Brentor, flung across his horse like a sack of meal, and almost as helpless. He crossed the railway by the bridge, and his horse began to plunge over the boggy slope of the moor. It was darker, the clouds were hurrying, and the wind was a gale upon the rider's side as he galloped for the abandoned mines, clinging tighter. His horse knew what Thursday-night duty meant. He knew he had to gallop direct for Town Rising with a drunken man upon his back, and that he must not stumble more than he could help. There was no question as to which was the finer animal of the two. They crossed Gibbet Hill, down towards the road above St. Mary Tavy about two hundred yards above the linnay; and there the more intelligent animal swerved to the right, to avoid some posts and a gravel-pit which he could not see but knew were there; but as they came down the lower animal struck his superior savagely upon the ear to assert his manhood, and the horse, in starting aside, stumbled upon a ridge of peat, came to his knees, and Farmer Chegwidden dived across the road with a flourish that an acrobat might have envied.

These gymnastics were no new thing, but the farmer had been lucky hitherto and had generally alighted upon his hands. On this occasion his shoulder and the side of his head were the first to touch ground, and he was stunned. The horse, seeing that he could do nothing more, sensibly trotted off towards his stable, and Farmer Chegwidden lay in a heap upon the road after the manner of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves.

There was no good Samaritan about that part of Dartmoor; or, if there was one, he was not taking a walk abroad with the idea of practising his virtues. There was, indeed, no reason why any one should pass that way before morning, as people who live in lonely places require no curfew to send them under cover, and the night was wild with the first big wind of autumn. Still some one did come that way, not a Levite to cross over to the other side, but Peter, to take a keen interest in the prostrate form. Peter had been into the village, like a foolish virgin, to seek oil, and new lamps to put it in. All attempts to install the electric light had continued to prove that there was still something in the science which he had failed to master; and as the evenings were getting long, and the light afforded by the lantern was quite inadequate, Mary had sent him into the village to buy their old lamps back. Mother Cobley the shopwoman said she had sold them, which was not true, but she naturally desired to make Peter purchase new lamps. He had done so under compulsion, and was returning with a lamp under each arm and a bottle of oil in his pocket, somewhat late, as an important engagement at the inn had detained him, when he stumbled across Farmer Chegwidden. He placed his purchases upon the road, then drew near to examine the body closely.

"He'm a dead corpse sure 'nuff," said Peter. "Who be ye?" he shouted.

As there was neither reply nor movement the only course was to apply a test to ascertain whether the man was living or dead. The method which suggested itself to Peter was to apply his boot, and this he did, with considerable energy, but without success. Then he reviled the body; but that too was useless.

"Get up, man! Why don't ye get up?" he shouted.

There was no response, so Peter began to kick again; and when the figure refused to be reanimated by such treatment he lost his temper at so much obstinacy and went on shouting: "Get up, man! Wun't ye get up? To hell, man! Why don't ye get up?"

It did not appear to occur to Peter that the man could not get up.

The next course was the very obvious one of securing those good things which the gods had provided. Farmer Chegwidden had not much money left in his pockets, but Peter discovered it was almost enough to pay for the new lamps. Mary had advanced the money for them, so what Peter gained through the farmer's misfortune was all profit. Then he picked up his lamps, and hurried back to the village to lodge the information of the "dead corpse lying up on Dartmoor" in the proper quarter.

He had not been gone long when Pendoggat rode up. Thomasine had hurried back to Town Rising by the "lower town," afraid to cross by the moor in that wind. He too discovered the farmer, or rather his horse did; and he too refused to pass by on the other side. Dismounting, he knelt and struck a match. The wind blew it out at once, but the sudden flash showed him the man's face. Chegwidden was breathing heavily, a fact which Peter had omitted to notice.

"Dead drunk! He can bide there," muttered Pendoggat.

He got upon his horse and rode on. As he crossed the brow, and reached a point where there was

nothing to break the strength of the wind, he pulled his horse round, hesitated a moment, then cantered back. The wind was in his lungs and in his nostrils, and he was himself again, a strong man, not a weak creature in love with a farm-wench, not a singer of hymns nor a preacher of sermons, but a hungry animal to whom power had been given over weak and lesser beings of the earth.

He knelt at Chegwidden's side, and tore the clothes off him until he had stripped him naked. He dragged the body to the side of the road and toppled it into the gorse. The clothes he rolled up, took with him, and higher up flung into an old mine-shaft. Then he rode on his way, shouting, fighting with the wind.

CHAPTER XIV

ABOUT A STRUGGLE AT THE GATE OF FAIRYLAND

Old Weevil walked about the moor, because there was no room in the cottage or garden, and whispered to the sun: "I wish she wasn't so happy, I wish she wouldn't laugh so, I wish she wouldn't talk about that boy." A good many other things he wished for. Mr. Bellamie had written to present his compliments to Abel Cain Weevil, Esquire—though the old man was not used to that title—and to announce that he proposed giving himself the pleasure of calling at Lewside Cottage and enjoying a little conversation with its tenant. Weevil guessed how he would blunder through that interview in his simple beetle-hearted way; and then he would have to break his little girl's heart as carefully as he could. After all she was very young, and hearts broken early can be put together again. Plants broken off in the spring grow up as well as ever. It is when they are broken in the late summer that there is no chance, and no time, to mend.

"She will feel it—like a butcher's knife," he whispered. "I was wrong to pick her up that night. I ought to have left her. It would have been all over long ago, and she would have been spared the knife. But no, she is too nice, too good. She will do it! She will fight her way through! You'll see, Abel-Cain. You watch her, my old dear! She will beat the Brute yet." He chuckled, snapped his fingers at the sun, waved his hand at Ger Tor, and trotted back to the cottage.

Weevil talked in parables with the eccentricity, not of genius, but of habit. His life had been spoilt by "the Brute." He had done what he could to fight the monster until he had realised his utter helplessness. And now his little maid's life was to be spoilt by the Brute, but he thought she would succeed better than he had done, and fight her way out into a more serene atmosphere. Old Weevil's Brute was simply cruelty, the ugly thing that encompassed him.

He was a silly old man in many ways. People with an intense kindness for animals are probably freaks of Nature, who has tried to teach them to be cruel, only they have rejected her teaching. Love for animals is, strictly speaking, no part of the accepted religion. Hebrew literature, so far from teaching kindness to animals, as the Koran does, recommends the opposite; and the founder of Christianity in his dealings with animals destroyed them. Fondness for animals began probably when men first admitted beasts into their homes as members of the family, as the Bedouin Arab treated his horse. Such animals developed new traits and advanced towards a far higher state of evolution than they would have attained under natural conditions. With higher intelligence came also a greater sensitiveness to pain. Those animals, such as the horse and dog, who have been brought up with men, and acquired so much from them, have an equal right to be protected by the laws which protect men. Such were some of Weevil's arguments, but perhaps he was mistaken. He had failed signally to impart the doctrine of kindness to animals to his neighbours. He went too far, a common fault among men who are obsessed with a single idea. He attacked the rabbit-trap violently, which was manifestly absurd, and only convinced people that he was mad. He declared that the rabbit, caught and held in the iron jaws of the trap to perish miserably hour by hour, must suffer agonies. He had himself put his finger into such a trap, and was unable to bear the pain more than ten minutes. Naturally people laughed at him. What a fool he must be to put his finger in a trap! It had always been the custom to capture rabbits in that savage way, and if it had been cruel the clergy would have preached against it and the law would have prohibited it. But when Weevil went on to assert that the rabbits had feelings he got beyond them entirely, and they could only shake their heads at him, and feel sorry for his insanity, and despise him for being such a bad sportsman. Even the village constable felt he must draw the line somewhere, and objected to paying any tribute of respect to a daft old man who went about telling people that rabbits could feel pain. When he met Weevil he grinned, and looked the other way to avoid saluting him.

Weevil spent much of his time drafting petitions to Parliament for the abolition of various instruments of torture, but of course nobody would sign them; and he indited lengthy screeds to humane societies upon the same subject, and these were always courteously acknowledged and placed on file for future reference, which was another way of saying that they would not be looked at again. He was himself a member of one society, and some years back had induced it to prosecute a huntsman who had been guilty of gross cruelty to a cat; but as the man was popular, and the master of the hounds was upon the Bench in the company of other sportsmen, the prosecution failed, although the offence was not denied; and old Weevil had his windows broken the next day. After that he quieted down, acknowledging that victory must remain with the

strong. He went on preparing his indictments, writing his letters, and drafting his useless petitions; and whenever he discovered a rabbit-trap in his walks he promptly sprung it; and if the river happened to be handy, and nobody was about, that trap disappeared for ever.

It was unfortunate for Weevil that he was more eccentric in appearance than in habits. He had a comic face and a nervous smile. The more in earnest he was the more he grinned; and that helped to convince people of his insanity. Then he was a loose character, and had evidently enjoyed a lurid past. People were not going to be lectured by a wicked old fellow, with a face like a rag-doll and a foolish smile, who lived in a small cottage with an illegitimate daughter. Weevil had never openly denied the paternity; he did not want it to be known that Boodles was a child of shame for her own sake; and he was in his heart rather proud to think people believed he was the father of such a radiant little maid.

"You must do it," he said, as he trotted into the cottage. "You must prepare the child, Abel-Cain. Don't be a fool now."

The little sitting-room was very neat. Boodles was not there, but visible tokens of her industry were everywhere. A big bowl of late heather from the moor, with rowan and dogwood berries from Tavy woods, stood upon the table. A little stocking, rather plentifully darned, was being darned again. A blotting-book was open, and a sheet of paper was upon it, and all that was written on the sheet was the beginning of a letter: "My dearest Boy," that and nothing more. It would have been a pretty little room had it not been for that sheet of paper. The silly old man bent over it, and a very good imitation of a tear splashed upon the "dearest Boy" and blotted it out. "You must not be such an old fool, Abel-Cain," he said, in his kindly scolding voice.

Then Boodles came in laughing, with a head like the rising sun. She had been washing her hair, and it was hanging down to dry, and sparkling in the strong light just as the broken granite on Dartmoor sparkles when the sun casts a beam across and seems to fill the path with diamonds.

"Oh, what a grumpy face, old man!" she cried. "Such a toothachy face for as butiful a morning as ever was! Have you been cruel and caught a wee mousie and hurt it so much that you couldn't let it go? I think I shall throw away that trap and get a benevolent pussycat instead."

Lewside Cottage was infested with mice, very much as Hamelin town was once overrun with rats, and as Weevil could not pipe them into the Tavy he had invested in a humane trap which caught the little victims alive. Then the difficulty of disposing of them arose. Weevil solved it in a simple fashion. He caught a mouse every night and let it go in the morning. In spite of these methods of extermination the creatures continued to increase and multiply.

"I was going out this afternoon," said Boodles, tugging at her hair with a comb. "But if you have got one of your umpy-umpy fits I shall stop at home. I want to go, daddy-man, 'cause my boy hasn't got much longer at home, and he says it is nice to have Boodles with him, and Boodles thinks, it is nice too."

"Boodle-oodle, my darling," quavered Weevil, "the sun may be shining outside, but it is damp and clammy in here. The Brute has got hold of me again."

"No, it isn't clamp and dammy, daddy," she laughed. "It's only a stupid old cloud going by. There are lots of butterflies, if you will look out. See! I can nearly tread upon my hair. Isn't it butiful?"

"You must try and grow up, little girl."

"Not till I'm twenty," said she.

"You mustn't laugh so much, my little maid."

"Why, daddy?" she cried quickly. "You mustn't say that. Oh, I don't laugh too much; I couldn't. I'm not always so very happy when I laugh, because it's not always afternoon out with me, but it does us good to make believe, and I thought it helped you to forget things. You telling me I mustn't laugh! You've been and killed a mouse."

"They say fair-haired girls don't feel it like the dark-haired ones," muttered Weevil.

"What are you talking about?" cried Boodles. She had stopped laughing. The clouds were coming up all round and it was nearly snow time; and there is little laughter in a Dartmoor winter. "Is it the Brute, daddy?" she said sympathetically.

"Yes, Boodle-oodle," said the sorrowful old man, with his nervous grin. "It is the Brute."

"I wish you could catch him in your trap. You wouldn't let him go," said Boodles, with a little smile.

Weevil was kneeling at the table, his comic head jerking from side to side, while his fingers tried to make a paper-boat out of the "dearest Boy" sheet of note-paper.

"I want to talk to you, my little maid," he said. "I want to remind you that we cannot get away from the Brute. I came to this lonely cottage to hide from him, because he was making my life miserable. I could not go out without meeting him. But it was no good. Boodles. Doors and bolts won't keep him out. Do you know why? It is because he is a part of ourselves."

"Such nonsense," said she. "Silly old man to call yourself cruel."

"The Brute is only myself after all. I cannot put my foot to the ground without crushing some insect. I cannot see the use of it—this prolific creation of things, this waste of life. It drives me nearly mad, tortures me, makes me a brute to myself."

"But you're such a—what do you call it?—such a whole-hogger," said the child. "Try and not worry, daddy. You only make yourself wretched, and you make me wretched too, and then you're being cruel to me—and that's how things get cold and foggy," said she. "May I laugh now?"

"No, Boodles," he said, quite sternly. "I was cruel when I picked you up that night and brought you in."

The girl winced a little. She wanted to forget all about that.

"Nature preserves only that she may destroy," he rambled on. "Take the plants—"

"I've taken them," broke in Boodles merrily.

"Be serious, Boodle-oodle," said the old man, grinning worse than ever. "The one and only duty of the flower is to bear seed, and when it has done that it is killed, and that it may do so Nature protects it in a number of different ways, many of which cause suffering to others. Some plants are provided with thorns, others with stinging-cells, others with poison, so that they shall not be destroyed by animals. These are generally the less common plants. Those that are common are unprotected, because they are so numerous that some are certain to survive. All the plants of the desert have thorns, because vegetation is so scarce there that any unprotected plant would soon be devoured. The rabbit is an utterly defenceless creature among animals, and almost every living thing is its enemy; but lest the animal should cease to survive Nature compels it to breed rapidly. Surely it would have been kinder to have given it the means of protecting itself. I cannot understand it, Boodles. There seems to be no fixed law, no limit to Nature's cruelty, although there is to her kindness. The world is a bloody field of battle; everything fighting for life; a pitiful drama of cowardice right through. I don't know whether I am talking nonsense, Boodles. I expect I am, but I can't speak calmly about these things, I lose control over myself, and want to hit my head against the wall."

Boodles slipped her arm about his neck and patted his white whiskers. The paper-boat was a heap of pulp by this time.

"Now it's my turn," she said gaily. "Let Boodles preach, and let old men be silent. Dear old thing, there are lots of queer puzzles, and I'm sure it is best to leave them all alone. 'Let 'em bide,' as Mary would say. We can't know much, and it's no use trying. You might as well worry your dear white head about the queer thing called eternity. You start, and you go round, and then you go round again faster until you begin to whirl, and you see stars, and your head aches—that's as far as you can ever get when you think about queer puzzles. And that's all I've got to say. Don't you think it rather a good sermon for a babe and suckling?"

"It's no use. She doesn't see what I'm driving at," muttered poor old Weevil.

"My hair is nearly dry. I think I'll go and do it up now," said Boodles. "I'm going to wear my white muslin. Shan't I look nice?"

"She doesn't know why she looks nice," murmured the silly old man. "It is Nature's cruel trick to make her attract young men. Just as the flowers are given sweetness to attract the fertilising bee. There it is again—no fixed law. Every sweet flower attracts its bees, but it is not every sweet girl who may."

"What's all that about bees?" laughed Boodles. "Oh, I forgot! I'm not to laugh."

"Boodle-oodle, do try and take things seriously. Do try and remember," he pleaded.

"Remember—what?" she said.

"We cannot get away from the Brute."

"But I'm not going to be grumpy until I have to," she said. "It would be such nonsense. I expect there will be lots of worries later on. I must be happy while I can. Girls ought not to be told anything about unhappiness until they are twenty. There ought to be a law made to punish any one who made a little girl grumpy. If there was you would go to prison, old man."

"You must think, Boodles. We are putting it off too long—the question of your future," he said blunderingly. Now he had got at the subject! "I am getting old, I have only an annuity, and there will be nothing for you when I die. I do not know what I shall do without you, but I must send you away, and have you trained for a nurse, or something of the kind. It will be bad to be alone again, with the Brute waiting for me at every corner, but worse to think of you left unprovided for."

"My dear daddy-man," sighed Boodles, with wide-open eyes. "So that's the trouble! Aren't you worrying your dear old head about another queer puzzle? I don't think I shall have to work very dreadful hard for my living."

"Why not?" said the old man, hoping his voice was stern.

"Why?" murmured Boodles prettily. "Well, you know, dear old silly, some one says that my head is lovely, and my skin is golden, and I'm such a jolly nice little girl—and I won't repeat it all, or I might swell up with pride, and you might believe it and find out what an angel you have been

keeping unawares—"

"Believe," he broke in, catching at the straw as he went down with a gurgle. "You mustn't believe too much, Boodle-oodle. You are so young. You don't in the least know what is going to happen to you."

"Of course I know," declared Boodles; "I'm going to marry Aubrey when I'm twenty."

"But his parents—" began Weevil, clutching at the edge of the table, and wondering what made it feel so sharp.

"They are dears," said Boodles. "Such nice pretty people, and so kind. He is just an old Aubrey, and I expect he had the same girl's face when he fell in love with his wife. She's so fragile, with beautiful big eyes. It's such a lovely house. Much too good for me."

"That's just it," he said eagerly, wishing she would not be dense. "It's much too good for you, darling."

"Yes, but I don't think you ought to say it," pouted Boodles.

"We are ordinary people. I am not quite what the Bellamies would call a gentleman. My father was only a piano-maker," old Weevil faltered, hoping that the girl would think of her unknown parents when she heard him refer to his. "I went to a grammar-school, then became a bank-clerk until I was shelved, partly on account of my grey hairs, but chiefly because I hit the cashier on the head with a ruler for kicking a dog. I could not go into Mr. Bellamie's house, Boodles. It is too good for both of us. There is nothing to be ashamed of in my name, but it is not a genteel one. We are only unimportant beetles, and the Bellamies are big bugs," he said, laughing in spite of his feelings at his joke because it was so seldom that he made one.

"Aubrey knows all about it. He doesn't care," declared Boodles, nodding cheerfully. "Besides, I'm not really your daughter anyhow."

Weevil gasped at her innocent impertinence. Here he was trying to make her understand that she was a nameless little lady who could not possibly marry any one of gentle birth, and she was calmly suggesting she might be superior to him. It was only a thoughtless remark, but it served to show him that nothing but plain speaking would serve with a girl in love. She looked at everything through Aubrey's eyes; and Aubrey was only a boy who could hardly know his own mind. A boy does not care whether his sweetheart's father is a tinker or a rake; but a man, and an only son, who has reached an age when he can understand what his family and society and his profession demand of him, cares a great deal. There comes a time for every young person when he or she must leave fairyland and go into the world; and the pity of it is they cannot return. They look back, but the gate is shut. It is a gate which opens only one way—to exclude. For every child is born inside. They grow up, and see their children in that pleasant land, and wish they could join them there; but if they could go back they would not be happy, for it would be to them no longer a place of romance and sunshine, but a place of shadow, and dead selves, and memories. It would not be spring, with primroses and bluebells in flower, but a Christmas Eve when the dead life and the dead companions haunt the house, and grim Mother Holle is plucking her geese and dropping the feathers down the chimney. Aubrey at twenty adored Boodles. Aubrey at thirty might worry his head about her parents and her birth-name. Boodles at thirty would be the same as she was then, loving, and wanting nothing else. Weevil was right in some of his theories. Every one must suffer from the Brute, except those who deserve it most. The innocent have to suffer for them. Boodles too was right. It is no use trying to solve queer puzzles.

"No, darling; you are not my daughter. I wish you were. I wish you were."

"You are too old, daddy-man—at least rather too old," said Boodles gently. "I should have been born when you were past fifty. Why, what's the matter? You are dreadful funny to-day, old man."

Weevil had jumped up nimbly, and running to the window poked his head out to gulp into his lungs a good mouthful of air. He ran back to the astonished little girl, took her by the shoulders, shook her severely, grinned at her; then he stumbled back into his chair and began to laugh furiously.

"Shall I tell you a story, Boodle-oodle, a beautiful story of a little girl who wasn't what she thought she was, though she didn't know who she was, and didn't care, and wouldn't think, and couldn't listen when people tried to tell her? Shall I tell you all that, darling?"

"Not now," gasped Boodles. "I must go and dress. And I shall laugh as much as I like—mean old thing! Telling me I mustn't laugh, and then shaking the house down. Dad, if you go on making explosions you'll bring up rain-clouds, and my afternoon will be spoilt, and so will my frock; and then I shall have to tell you a story of a horrid old man, who wasn't a bit like what he hoped his daughter thought he was, though he didn't know how horrid he was, and didn't care, and wouldn't listen when people tried to tell him. Well, I'll give you a kiss anyhow, though you are mad."

"Not daughter," cried the excited old man. "Remember you are not my daughter, Boodles."

"I know. You needn't rub it in."

"I've got the Brute! I've got him by the neck. He's made me suffer, but I'll pay him now. Run away, darling. Run away and put on your white muslin. Laugh as much as you can, and be as

pretty as you like. The Brute shan't touch you. I'll put a muzzle on him. Don't forget to tell them I am not your father. I've got the whole story in my head. Run away, little girl, while I think it out."

Boodles was used to these fits, but usually she understood them. They were generally provoked by rabbit-traps. She could not understand this one. Evidently the old man had got hold of something new; but she couldn't stop any longer, as it was nearly time to go down to the Tavy and turn up the stones to look for fairies.

Weevil certainly had got hold of something new. When Boodles had gone he jumped up and locked the door. Then he looked at his watch. Mr. Bellamie might arrive at any time; and he was not nearly ready. He began to jump about the room in a most eccentric way, snapping his fingers, and grinning at his comic features in the mantel-glass.

"You've got to be a liar, Abel-Cain, the worst liar that ever lived, as big a rogue as your namesake Cain, who murdered your namesake Abel. You're an old man, and you ought not to do it, but if lies can save her from the Brute lies shall. They'll punish you for it when you're dead, but if she is saved no matter, none at all. I shall tell them they ought not to have created the Brute. I won't be afraid of them. Now you mustn't make a mess of it. I'm afraid you will, Abel-Cain. You're a shocking old fool sometimes. Put it all down—write it out, then learn it by heart. The old hands are shaking so. Steady yourself, old fool, for her sake, for the sake of that pretty laugh. Come along now! Abel-Cain *versus* the Brute. We must begin with the marriage."

He pressed his cold hands upon his hot face, and began to scribble tremulously on the paper.

"You were married at the age of twenty-five to a girl who was superior to you socially. Her name—let me see—what was her name? You must find one that sounds well. Fitzalan is a good name. You married Miss Fitzalan at—at, why, of course, St. George's, Hanover Square. She's dead now. She died of—of, well, it don't matter; she's dead. We had a daughter, or was it a son? Better keep to one sex, and then there will be no saying him's for hers, and you mustn't get confused, Abel-Cain, you must keep your brain as clear as glass. We had a daughter, and called her—now it must be something easy to remember. Titania is a pretty name. We called her Tita for short, Titania Fitzalan-Weevil That's it! You are doing it, Abel-Cain! Keep it up, you old liar. He'll be here presently. You took the name of Fitzalan-Weevil because it sounded better, but when your wife died you went back to your own. She was buried in Hendon churchyard. You don't know why it should be Hendon. Ah yes, you do, Abel-Cain. Don't you remember how you used to walk along that road on Sundays and holidays, and have some bread and cheese in the little tea-garden at Edgware; and then by Mill Hill and Arkley to Barnet, and back by Hampstead Heath to your lodgings in Kentish Town? That's why your wife was buried in Hendon churchyard. Then Titania was married, a very grand marriage, Hanover Square again. It's a pity you haven't got the press-cuttings, but they are lost—burnt, or something of the sort—and Titania's husband was the youngest son of the Earl of—No, that won't do. You mustn't lie too high, or you'll spoil the story. He was Mr. Lascelles, Harold Lascelles, second son of the late Reverend Henry Arthur Lascelles, sometime rector of St. Michael's, Cornhill, and honorary canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. Drag the clergy in, Abel-Cain. It's respectable. They lived in Switzerland for his health. You remember he was rather delicate, and Titania wasn't very strong either; and Boodles was born there. It's working out fine. You can't be her father, but you can be her grandfather. Boodles was born in Lausanne, at the hotel where Gibbons wrote his history.

"Now you come to the mystery; there must be a mystery about Boodles, but it must be respectable, a tragedy in high life, a regrettable incident, not a shameful episode. Titania disappeared. What happened to her nobody knows. You don't know, and Harold doesn't know. She may have gone for a walk in the mountains and never come back, or she may have gone out in a boat on Lake Geneva and been drowned, or she may have been murdered by a madman in a pine-wood. It was all very sad and dreadful, and has naturally cast a cloud over Boodles's life, though she knows nothing about it, as she was scarcely a year old when her mother disappeared. You have never got over it, Abel-Cain, and you don't think you ever will, as Titania was your only child. You couldn't bear to keep any of her photographs, so you destroyed them all.

"Now there is Harold. You can't kill him, Abel-Cain. So much mortality might be suspicious, and if you let him marry again that would mean a lot more names to remember. Harold went into the Catholic Church and became a priest. At the present time he is in charge of a mission in British Guiana. That's a good long way off, but you must look it up in the map and make sure where it is."

The old man leaned back and mopped his face. He was working under a kind of inspiration, and was afraid it might die out before he had got to the end of the story. Again he plunged into the narrative, and continued—

"Harold didn't know what to do with Boodles. Young Catholic priests cannot be bothered with babies, so he sent her to you, to old grandfather, and asked you to bring her up. He couldn't pay anything, as he had devoted his fortune to building a church and establishing his mission, and besides, you didn't need it in those days, He was a good fellow, Harold, an earnest, devoted man, but you haven't heard anything of him for a long time. You called the child Boodles when she was a baby because it was the sort of name that seemed to suit her, and you have never got out of it. Her real name is—There must be a lot of them. They always have a lot in high life. No girl with a long string of names could be anything but well-born. Her name is Titania Katherine Mary Fitzalan-Lascelles."

He read out the list again and again, grinning and crying at the same time, and chuckling joyfully: "There's nothing of the Weevil in her now."

"Then there came the smash," he went on, resuming his pen to add the finishing touches to the story. "You lost your money. It was gold-mines. That is quite safe. One always loses money in gold-mines, and you were never much of a man of business, always ready to listen to any one, and so you were caught. You retired with what little you could reclaim from the wreck of your shattered fortunes—that's a fine sentence. You must get that by heart. It would convince any one that you couldn't tell a lie. You retired, broken in health and mind and fortune, to this little cottage on Dartmoor, and you have lived here ever since with Boodles, whom you have brought up to the best of your ability, although you have lacked the means to give her that education to which she is entitled by her name and birth. It is almost unnecessary to add, Abel-Cain," he concluded, "that you have told the child nothing about her parents lest she should become dissatisfied with her present humble position. You are keeping it all from her until she comes of age."

It was finished. Weevil stared at the blotted manuscript, jabbered over it, and decided that it was a strong and careful piece of work which would deceive any one, even the proudest father of an only son who was much too precious to be thrown away. He was still jabbering when there were noises outside the door, and he hurried to open it, and discovered Titania Katherine Mary Fitzalan-Lascelles, looking every syllable of her names; her beautiful hair coiled under her poppy-trimmed hat, the white muslin about her dainty limbs, her lips and little nostrils sweet enough to attract bees with their suggestion of honey, and about her that wonderful atmosphere of perfect freshness which is the monopoly of such pretty creatures as herself.

"You're looking quite wild, old man. What have you been doing?" she said.

"Story-writing. About the little girl who—"

"I can't stop to listen. I must hurry. I just came to say good-bye," she said, putting up her mouth. "Be good while I am gone. Don't fall into the fire or play with the matches. You can say if this frock suits me."

"If I was a boy I shouldn't bother whether it suited you or not," said Weevil, nodding at her violently.

"But as you are only an old daddy-man?" she suggested.

"It will do, Boodle-oodle. Sackcloth would look quite as well—on you."

"I'll wear sackcloth presently; when Aubrey goes and winter comes," she laughed.

Weevil became excited again. He wished she would not make such heedless and innocent remarks. They suggested the possibility of weak points in his amazing story. Another unpleasant idea occurred as he looked at the charming little maid. She was always walking about the moor alone. The Brute might seize her in one of his Protean forms, and she might disappear just as her fictitious mother had done. Weevil had invoked his imagination, and as a result all sorts of ghostly things occurred to his mind to which it had been a stranger hitherto. There were traps lying about for girls as well as rabbits.

"Where are you going, little radiance?" he said.

"Down by the Tavy. Our walk. We have only one."

Boodles answered from the door, and then she went. She had only one walk. On all Dartmoor there was only one. Weevil caught up his manuscript and began to jabber again. She must not have that one walk taken away from her.

For two hours he worked, like a student on the brink of an examination, trying to commit his story to memory. Each time he read the fictions they became to him more probable. He scarcely knew himself what a miserable memory he had, but he was well aware how nervous he could be in the presence of strangers, and how liable he was to be confused when any special eccentricity asserted itself. As the time when his visitor might be expected approached he went and put on his best clothes, tidied himself, brushed his hair and whiskers, tried to make himself look less like a Hindoo idol, burnished his queer face with scented soap, and practised a few genteel attitudes before the glass. He hoped somebody had told Mr. Bellamie he was eccentric.

Weevil was still poring over his manuscript when the visitor arrived. With a frantic gesture the old man went to admit him. People were not announced in that household. Mr. Bellamie entered with a kindly handshake and a courteous manner; but his impressions were at once unfavourable. Well-bred men tell much by a glance. The grotesque host, the pictures, furniture, and ornaments, were alike inartistic. Mr. Bellamie was a perfect gentleman. He had come merely as a matter of duty to make the acquaintance of the tenant of Lewside Cottage, not because it was a pleasure, but he had received Boodles at his house, and his son's attachment for the little girl was becoming serious. He could not definitely oppose himself to Aubrey's love-making until he had ascertained what manner of people the Weevils were. The pictures and ornaments told him. The cottage represented poverty, but it was hardly genteel poverty. A poor gentleman's possessions proclaim his station as clearly as those of a retired pork-butcher betray his lack of taste. A few good engravings, a shelf or two of classical works, and a cabinet of old china, would have done more for Boodles than all the wild romances of her putative grandfather.

"You have a glorious view," said the visitor, turning his back upon art that was degraded and rejoicing in that which was natural. "I have been admiring it all the way up from the station. But you must get the wind in the winter time."

"Yes, a great deal of it. But it is very fine and healthy, and we have our windows open most days. Tita insists upon it."

"Tita?" questioned Mr. Bellamie, turning and looking puzzled. "I understood that—"

"Her name is not Boodles," said Weevil decidedly. "That is only a pet name I gave her when she was a baby, and I have never been able to break myself of it. She is my grand-daughter, Mr. Bellamie, and her name is Titania Katherine Mary Fitzalan-Lascelles," he said, reading carefully from the manuscript. "I think she must have inherited her love of open windows and fresh air from her father, who was the Reverend Henry—no, I mean Harold Lascelles, second son of the Reverend Henry Arthur Lascelles—the late, I should have said—sometime Director of St. Michael's, Cornhill, and minor canon—no, honorary—honorary canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. He was rather delicate and lived in Switzerland a good deal, and died there—no, he didn't, that was Tita's mother. He is in charge of a Catholic mission in British Guiana."

Polite astonishment was upon every feature of the visitor's fragile face. He had not come there to talk about Boodles, but to see Weevil and Lewside Cottage, that he might judge for himself whether the girl could by any chance be considered a suitable subject for Aubrey's adoration; to look at the pictures, and make a few conventional remarks upon the view and the weather; then to return home and report to his wife. He had certainly not expected to find Weevil bubbling over with family history, pedigrees, and social intelligence, regarding the child whom he had been led to suppose was not related to him. Mr. Bellamie glanced at Weevil's excited face, at the pencil he held in one hand and at the sheet of paper in the other; and just then he didn't know what to think. Then he said quietly: "I will sit down if I may. That long hill from the station was rather an ordeal. As you have mentioned your—your grand-daughter, I believe you said, you will, I hope, forgive me if I express a little surprise, as the girl—and a very pretty and charming girl she is—came to see us one day, and on that occasion she distinctly mentioned that she knew nothing of her parents."

Mr. Bellamie would have murmured on in his gentle brook-like way, but Weevil could not suppress himself. While the visitor was speaking he made noises like a soda-water bottle which is about to eject its cork; and at the first opportunity he exploded, and his lying words and broken bits of story flew all about the room.

"Quite true, Mr. Bellamie. Boodles—I mean Tita—was telling you the truth. I have never known her to do the contrary. She has been told nothing whatever of her parents, does not know that her daughter was my mother—"

"You mean that her mother was your daughter," interposed the gentle guest.

"Yes, Mr. Bellamie, that is what I did mean, but I am rather confused. She does not know that her father is living, nor that her rightful name is Lascelles, nor that her paternal grandfather was the rector of St. Michael's, Cornhill, and prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral—"

"I understood you to say honorary canon," murmured the visitor.

"I am not certain," cried the excited old man, who was by no means sure what a prebendary might be. "It is a long time ago, and some of the facts are not very clear in my mind. You can easily find out," he went on recklessly. "The Reverend Canon Lascelles was a very well-known man. He wrote a number of learned books. I believe he refused a bishopric. Let me see. I was telling you about my little maid. I have kept everything from her because I feared she might be upset if she knew the truth and found out who she was. She mightn't be satisfied to go on living in this little cottage with a poor shabby old man like me, if she knew how well born she was. I am going to tell her everything when she is twenty-one, and then she can choose for herself, whether to remain with me, or to join her father if he wants her in British Guiana."

"There must be some reason," suggested Mr. Bellamie gently, with another wondering glance at Weevil's surprising aspect. "I am not seeking to intrude into any family secret, but you have introduced this subject, and you must permit me to say that I feel interested in the little girl on account of my son's—er—friendship with her."

"I was just coming to it," cried Weevil, exploding again. He was warmed up by this time. He had lost his nervousness, felt he was playing a winning game, and believed he had the story pat. The lies had stuck in his throat at first, as he was a naturally truthful man, but they were coming along glibly now. "You have a right to be told. There is a little mystery about Tita's mother. They were living in Lausanne—Tita was born in the hotel where Gibbings wrote his history—and one day her mother went out and disappeared. She has never been heard of since that day. It is supposed she went for a walk in the mountains. Perhaps she fell down a glacier," he added, brilliantly inspired.

"A crevasse," corrected Mr. Bellamie mildly. "It is hardly likely. Lausanne is not quite among the mountains."

Weevil had not known that. Hurriedly he suggested a fatal boating trip upon the lake of Geneva, and was relieved when the visitor admitted in a slightly incredulous manner that was more probable.

"You have interested me very much," he went on, "and surprised me. You are the girl's grandfather on the mother's side?"

"Yes; and now I must tell you something about myself," said Weevil, with a hurried glance at his notes which the visitor could not help observing. "I am not your social equal, Mr. Bellamie, and I cannot pretend to be. I have not enjoyed the advantages of a public-school and university education, but I was left with a fortune from my father, who was a manufacturer of pianos, at an early age, and I then contracted a marriage with a lady who was slightly older than myself, and very much my superior socially, mentally—possibly physically," he added, with another inspiration, as he caught sight of his comic face in the mantel-glass. "Her name was Miss Fitzalan, and we were married at St. George's, Hanover Square."

The visitor inclined his head, and did so just in time to conceal a smile. Weevil was overacting the part. He was placing an emphasis on every word. In his excitement he dropped the manuscript, without which he was helpless. It fluttered to Mr. Bellamie's feet, and before Weevil could recover it the visitor had a distinct recollection of having read: "Your wife was buried in Hendon churchyard." It was strange, he thought, that a man should require to make a note of his wife's burying-place.

"Titania was our only child," Weevil went on, after refreshing his memory, like a public speaker, with his notes. "She was something like Boodles, only her hair was flaxen, and she was taller and more slim. I am sorry I have not a photograph of her, but after her tragic disappearance I burnt them all. I could not bear to look at them. There was one of her in court dress which you would have liked. Some time after my wife's death I lost my money in gold-mines. It was my own fault. I was foolish, and I listened to the advice of knaves. I came here with what little I could reclaim from the wreck of my shattered fortunes," he said, pausing to notice the effect of that tremendous sentence, and then repeating it with added emphasis. "I settled here, and Father Lascelles, as he was by then, sent me my grandchild and asked me to bring her up as my own. At first I shrank from the responsibility, as I had not the means to educate her as her birth and name require, but I have been given cause every day of my life since to be thankful that I did accept, for she has been the light of my eyes, Mr. Bellamie, the light and the apple of my eyes."

Weevil sank into a chair and wiped his face. His task was done, he had told his story; and he fully believed that Boodles was safe and that the Brute was conquered. The visitor was looking into the interior of his hat. He seemed to have found something artistic there. He coughed, and in his gentle well-bred way observed: "Thank you, Mr. Weevil. You have told me a piece of very interesting family history."

Weevil detected nothing of a suspicious or ironical nature in that admission. He nursed his knee, and wagged his head, and grinned triumphantly as he replied in a naive fashion: "I took the name of Fitzalan-Weevil after my marriage, because I thought it sounded better, but after I lost my wife and fortune I went back to my own."

Mr. Bellamie took another glance round the room, just to make sure he had missed nothing. There might be some little gem of a picture in a dark corner, or a cracked bit of Wedgwood ware, which he had overlooked in the former survey. There might be some redeeming thing, he thought, in the environment which would fit in with the amazing story. The same inartistic features met his eyes: Weevil pictures, Weevil furniture, Weevil carpet and wall-paper. There was nothing to represent the family of Fitzalan or the family of Lascelles. The simple old liar did not know what a powerful advocate was fighting against him, and how his poor little home was giving verdict and judgment against him. The visitor completed his survey, turned his attention to the old man, regarding him partly with contempt and pity, chiefly in admiration. Then he took out his trap and set it cleverly where Weevil could hardly fail to blunder into it.

"I think I knew Canon Lascelles a good many years ago," he said in his gentle non-combative voice. "He was a curious-looking man, if I remember rightly. Tall, stooping very much, with a red face which contrasted strangely with his white hair, and he had a trick of snapping his fingers loudly when excited. Do you recognise the portrait?"

Old Weevil gasped, said he did, declared it was life-like, and then fumbled for his manuscript. Hadn't he made any notes on that subject? There was nothing to help him in the inky scrawl. He was being examined upon unprepared subjects. So there had been a Canon Lascelles in real life, and Mr. Bellamie had known him. Well, there was nothing for it but to agree to all that was said. His imagination would not work upon the spur of the moment, and if he tried to force it he would be sure to contradict himself or become confused. He replied that he distinctly remembered the Canon's trick of snapping his fingers loudly when excited.

"Your daughter married the second son Harold. Of course you knew Philip the eldest. I think his name was Philip?"

"Quite right, Mr. Bellamie, quite right. Philip it was. He went into the Army," gasped Weevil.

"Surely not," said Mr. Bellamie. "Excuse me for contradicting you, but I know he went into the Navy, and I think he is now a captain. Aubrey will tell me. Very possibly my son has met Captain Lascelles, and may indeed have served under him."

Weevil was trying to look contemplative, but succeeding badly. He was digging new ground and striking roots everywhere. There was nothing for it but to admit his mistake. He was old and forgetful. He had probably been thinking of some one else. Of course Philip Lascelles went into

the Navy. He had heard nothing of him for years, and was very glad to hear he had risen to the rank of captain.

"Then there was a daughter. Only one, I think?" Mr. Bellamie continued, in his pleasant conversational way.

"That's right," agreed Weevil, longing to add something descriptive, but not venturing. He was not going to be caught again.

"Edith?" suggested the visitor. "I think the name was Edith."

"No," cried Weevil determinedly—he could not resist it; "Katherine. She was the godmother of Boodles—Tita, I mean—and the child was named after her."

"Yes, it is my mistake this time. Katherine of course," agreed Mr. Bellamie. "But I am certain she was the eldest child, and she married young and went to India. She must have been in India when your grandchild was born."

"She came over for the ceremony. Harold was her favourite brother, and when she heard of Tita's birth she came to London as fast as she could," cried Weevil, not realising what a wild thing he was saying.

"To London!" murmured Mr. Bellamie. "The child was baptised at St. Michael's, Cornhill?" he added swiftly.

"No, in Hendon church."

"I thought you said she was born in Lausanne at the Hotel Gibbon?"

"So she was," gasped Weevil, perspiring and distraught. "I mean she was buried in Hendon churchyard."

"What! the little girl—Boodles!" said Mr. Bellamie, laughing gently.

"No, my wife. We were married there." Weevil did not know what he was saying. The pictures and ornaments, which had been his undoing, were dancing about before his eyes.

"You are getting confused," said the gentle visitor. "I understood you to say you were married at St. George's, Hanover Square."

"Ah, but I used to go to Hendon," said Weevil eagerly, nodding, and grinning, and speaking the truth at last. "I used to walk out there on Sundays and holidays, and have bread and cheese in a tea-garden at Edgware, and then go on by Mill Hill and Arkley and round to Barnet, and back across Hampstead Heath to my lodgings in Kentish Town. I was very fond of that walk, but I couldn't do it now, sir. It would be much too far for an old man like me."

Weevil was happy again. He thought he had succeeded in changing the subject, and getting away from the fictitious family of Lascelles. Mr. Bellamie was satisfied too. Canon Lascelles was a fiction with him also. The pictures and furniture had given truthful evidence. Weevil was a fraud, but such a well-meaning pitiable old humbug that the visitor could not feel angry. They had fenced at each other with fictions, and in such delicate play Weevil had not much chance; and his latest and only truthful admission had done for him entirely. Gentlemen of means do not walk up the Edgware Road on Sundays and holidays, and partake of bread and cheese in suburban tea-gardens, and then return to lodgings in Kentish Town.

"Thank you for what you have told me," said Mr. Bellamie, rising and looking into his hat; and then, succumbing to the desire to add the final artistic touch: "I understand you to have said that you were married to Miss Fitzalan in Hendon church, and that your daughter married Mr. Harold Lascelles, who disappeared in an unaccountable fashion in Lausanne?"

"No, no," cried Weevil despairingly. He was tired and had put aside his manuscript. "I never said that. You have got it quite wrong. I was married to Miss Fitzalan in St. Michael's, Brentor, and our daughter Boodles married Philip Lascelles—captain as he now is—at Hendon, and Tita was baptised in St. George's, Hanover Square, and then went to Lausanne to that hotel where Gubbings wrote his history, and there she disappeared—no, not Boodles, but her mother Tita. But she may be alive still. She may turn up some day."

"Then how about Father Lascelles?" suggested Mr. Bellamie.

"Why, he married my daughter Tita," said Weevil rather crossly. "And now he is in British Columbia at his mission. He won't come back to England again. Boodles doesn't know of his existence, but I shall tell her when she is twenty-one."

The visitor smiled rather sadly, and after a moment's hesitation put out his hand. Old Weevil had been turned inside out, and there was nothing in him but a foolish loving heart. Mr. Bellamie understood the position exactly. There was a mystery about the little girl's birth, and it was probably a shameful one, and on that account the old man had concocted his lying story, not for his own sake, but for hers. Mr. Bellamie could not feel angry at the queer shaking figure, with tragedy inside and comedy on its face. Boodles was his all, the only thing he had to love, and he was prepared to do anything which he thought might ensure her happiness. There was something splendid about his lies, which the visitor had to admire although they had been prepared to dupe him. It was not a highly moral proceeding, but it was an artistic one; and Mr. Bellamie was able

to forgive anything that was artistic.

"Good-bye," he said, in a perfectly friendly way. "I hope you will come and see me at Tavistock, and look at your tors from my windows."

Weevil returned thanks effusively, happy in the belief that he had played his part well; but it was characteristic of him that his thoughts should be for Boodles rather than for himself. "If you would let her come and see you sometimes it would make her happy. It's a dull life for the little maid here, and she is so bright and full of laughter. I think she laughs too much, and to-day I told her so. There is a lot of cruelty in this world, Mr. Bellamie, and I want to keep her from it. The man who makes a little maid miserable deserves all the cruelty that there is, but it shan't touch Boodles if I can put myself before her and keep it off. I could not see her suffer, I couldn't hear her laugh ring false. I would rather see her dead."

Mr. Bellamie walked away slowly. He had prepared a mild revenge, but he did not execute it. He had intended to tell Weevil a story of a man who took a dog out to sea that he might drown it; but while fastening a stone to its neck the boat overturned, the man was drowned, while the dog swam safely to shore. He thought Weevil might be able to interpret the parable. But when he heard those last words, and saw the love and tenderness on that queer grinning face, he said no more. He walked away slowly, with his eyes upon the ground.

CHAPTER XV

ABOUT JUSTICE

What luck is nobody can know, but it is certainly a gift to be preferred before natural ability. Luck is that undefinable thing which enables a man to push his head and shoulders well above the crowd. Make him wise it cannot, but no man cares about wisdom if he can only be wealthy. Lucky men pile up big fortunes, and invariably become humbugs in their old age, and assure young men that their affluence is entirely owing to the splendid virtues of application, perseverance, and early rising, which they practised in their youth. No doubt the virtues help, but hard work alone makes no man wealthy, let him toil like Sisyphus. It is luck that lodges the stone on the top of the mountain. The idle apprentice who has luck is far more likely to marry his master's daughter than the industrious apprentice who hasn't it. The clever man and the lucky one start out side by side, but they soon drift apart; the lucky man goes to the right door, the clever man goes to the wrong one; and the end of it is that the clever man writes from his cottage to the lucky man in his mansion, begging the loan of a few pounds to keep the bailiffs out. There is nothing to which a man without luck cannot attain by hard work, except one thing—success.

Decidedly there had been no fairy godmothers at Brightly's christening. None of the good things of life had fallen upon him; and yet he possessed those virtues which are supposed to make for wealth; no man could have worked harder or showed more perseverance; and as for early rising it was easy because he had no bed to rise from. Still he could not make a living. The elusive coppers refused to increase and multiply into shillings; and as for sovereigns they were as extinct as dodos.

Brightly continued his various progresses with that strict attention to business which had always characterised him, and with the empty stomach which had become a habit; but without any luck. Any one might have mistaken him for a poet.

He was working the same old stretch: Meldon, Sourton Down, Bridestowe, Lydford, Brentor, and the Tavys, his basket dragging at his arm, and Ju trotting her poor little life away at his heels. Ju also had been deserted by canine fairy godmothers. Perhaps she too had dreams—of a basket, furnished with soft cushions beside a fire, and perennial plates of bones and biscuits.

Brightly had a fresh stock of atrocious yellow vases, thanks to the generosity of the lovers at the fair; and he was hard at work again collecting rabbit-skins; and still encouraged himself by thinking of the glorious time when he would jog contentedly along the stony roads in a little cart neatly littered with fern, with a lamp to be lighted after dark, and the board bearing the inscription: "A. Brightly. Purveyor of rabbit-skins," set forth for all to read. It was not a very lofty ambition, although quite an impossible one. Brightly was getting on in years; his rheumatism and asthma were increasing; so was his blindness; he wept sometimes, but that did not assist his business. Sometimes he thought the time was getting near when he would have to sell his vases and buy two pennyworth of rat-poison. He thought he would do it with rat-poison. Perhaps when he woke up, if he did wake up, he would find himself in Jerusalem among the jugs of milk and honey-pots; and perhaps there would be somebody like Boodles looking at him with the same moist eyes. He could not go into the poorhouse. They would frighten him there, and he would much rather be dead than in that prison. Nature seemed rather to have overreached herself when she created Brightly. What was the use of such a defenceless creature, this sort of human rabbit whom any one could attack? Why turn him out feeble and half blind when he had his living to make? Even the wayside weed is better cared for. When its crown-bud is bitten off by a cow Nature sets to work to repair the injury at once, and the plant grows up as well as ever. Nature did nothing to repair Brightly's injuries. She did not even permit him to enjoy tobacco, that one luxury of the lonely and friendless. Probably she foresaw what a boon tobacco would be to him,

so she afflicted him with asthma. Nature delights in thus adding toil to toil and trouble to trouble. It is only in the matter of adding pleasure to pleasure that she is niggardly.

Brightly was coming up the moor towards St. Mary Tavy. His face looked smaller and his hands bigger. There was another change, a far more striking one; he was actually well dressed; there was nothing, of course, in the shape of useless accessories, such as shirt or underwear, but the black seal-like raiment had been discarded and a suit of brown cloth had taken its place. He had picked up those clothes while burrowing in a wheal to find shelter from a pitiless downpour. It had been a great find which had rejoiced his heart, for although he was accustomed to make a living by picking up things which other people threw away, he had never before discovered anything half as priceless as a suit of stout garments. It had never occurred to him that they might not have been thrown away, but merely hidden in the wheal, or that he had no right to them, or that it could be dangerous for him to be seen about in them.

"Us will pitch here," said Brightly, stopping near the moor gate, and lowering his basket carefully. "It be dinner time, Ju."

The little dog wagged at the prospect. Dinner time occurred frequently, but generally without the dinner. She sniffed ravenously at the handkerchief in the corner of the basket, and decided that the menu of the day was cheese, largely rind, but still cheese, a slab of bread, and two onions. It was one of the feast-days. They reposed upon heather, and Brightly made a division of the food, reserving the onions for himself, but allotting Ju a bigger piece of rind as compensation. "You'm a lot littler than I," he explained. "Your belly be filled quicker. It be no good giving yew an onion, 'cause yew wun't yet 'en. Tak' your cheese—don't swallow like that, ye little stoopid! Yew don't get the taste of 'en at all. Yet 'en slow, and tak' a bit o' bread wi' 'en same as I du. Us wun't get no more to-day like enough."

The meal was soon over, and then Brightly sat up and began to whistle, while Ju squatted upon the heather, her tongue lolling out, and her poor little mongrel head following every motion of her master's body. Brightly's only recreation was whistling, and he took the pastime seriously. With his pinched face and big round glasses set towards Brentor he piped away as hard as he could; first a ballad which he had heard in an ale-house, then a hymn, and another ballad, and then the favourite of all, Jerusalem the Golden. He whistled them all wrong, but he didn't know it. For the time being he was happy enough, as he was a contented soul, and his chief happiness was to be alone on the moor, which then seemed to be his own property, with the scented garden of heather and gorse about him, and the sweet wind blowing upon his face; and they all seemed to be his own while he was alone. It was only when he saw a cottage, or a farm, or a man approaching him, that he understood they were not his own, but the property of the cottage, or the farm, or the man approaching him, and that he lived only upon sufferance, and might get into trouble for lying on the heather, and smelling the gorse, or for permitting the pleasant wind to blow upon his face.

After whistling he began to sing, making, it must be owned, a shocking noise. He did not know the words of the ballads, nor more than a single line of the Wesleyan hymn which children sing in procession upon chapel anniversary day. Brightly had often listened as he tramped by, with his full basket and his empty stomach, but he had never caught the Words because the children gabbled them so in their hurry to get the religious exercises over and attack the cakes and splits. "Jesu, Master, us belongs to yew," he howled discordantly, while Ju howled in dismal agreement, and began to whimper when her master went on to scream about Jerusalem and dairy produce.

"I reckon that be the beautifullest tune as ever was sung," commented Brightly, "I'll sing 'en again, Ju, and I'll get 'en right this time. I mun sing him a bit stronger. I reckon the end o' the world can't be over far off, wi' volks got so cruel wicked, and us mun get ready vor't."

He folded his hands upon his knees, and was about to resume his noises when the moor gate clicked. Brightly's faculties were as keen as a bat's. He could not see much, but he could sense the approach of danger; and when he heard the gate slam violently, and a thick voice exclaim: "There a' be!" he started up, anxious to get back to his solitude, conscious somehow that unfriendly beings were upon him, to steal his "duppence," and put him out of business by smashing his vases. He stared through his glasses until he distinguished two fat figures, one in uniform, the other in shabby raiment, advancing upon him with threatening movements, one the village constable, the other the village reprobate; and when he saw them, that grim thing called terror descended upon Brightly. He had done nothing wrong so far as he knew, but all the same he could not resist the fear, so he fled away as hard as he could, the basket dragging upon his arm, and Ju trotting at his heels. He knew what it meant to fall into the hands of his fellow-men. Pendoggat had shown him, and most men were Pendoggats to Brightly.

He went up the moor towards the top of the village, and the stout constable soon gave up the chase, as he was not used to violent exercise, nor did he receive any extra pay for exerting himself. Besides, he was sure of the man. He wiped his face and told the village reprobate, who was his most obliging servant and had to be, that it was cruel hot, and he'd got that lusty he didn't seem able to run properly, and he thought he would return to the village and prepare for more strenuous deeds with a drop o' cider; and he charged the reprobate to follow Brightly and head him off at the top of the village, and keep him close until he, the constable, should have cooled down and recovered from his fatigue sufficiently to attend in great pomp and arrest the rascal. He reminded the reprobate he must not arrest Brightly because that was not allowed by law; but he was at perfect liberty to knock him down, and trample on him, and inform him that the criminal law of the land was about to spread its net around him. The constable's state of mind

regarding the law was peculiar. He had no idea that laws were made to punish crime. He conceived that creatures like Brightly existed to supply the demands of the law.

At the head of the village Brightly encountered more man-hunters, but he managed to escape again, although he had to leave his basket behind. Some children soon rifled it, and took the gorgeous vases home to their mothers. With the instinct of the hunted animal the fugitive turned upon his tracks, fled up a side lane, climbed over a hedge, waited until his pursuers had passed, then hurried back for his basket, hoping to reclaim it and get away upon the moor, where he could soon hide himself. But he had not gone far when he saw a vision; the angel again, the angel of Tavistock, the angel from Jerusalem, who had dropped out of the church window and set him up in business with half-a-crown; and she came to meet him in the road, as angels do, with his basket in her hand, and just the same pitiful look in her eyes. There was no church just by, only a little white cottage; but perhaps it was furnished like a church, with coloured windows, booming organ, and a big black book on the outspread wings of a golden goose.

"I have got some of the vases. The children have not taken them all," said Boodles. "I saw it from the window. What have you done?"

"They knows, your reverent; I don't," gasped Brightly. He didn't know how he ought to address the angel, but he thought "your reverent" might do for the present. He stood upon the road, panting, shivering, and coughing, while Boodles looked at him and tried to laugh, but couldn't.

"What a dreadful cough!" she said sorrowfully.

"It's asthma, your reverent. I allus has it, and rheumatics tu—just here, cruel, your reverent. I be getting blind. I don't seem able to see you properly," he said, in the voice of one saying his prayers, and half choking all the time.

"Don't call me your reverent," said Boodles. "How silly! I—I'm only a little girl."

Brightly had always supposed that celestial beings are modest. He only shook his head at that remark. He had seen little girls, and knew quite well what they were like. They didn't have golden skin and a glory about their heads, neither did they drop down suddenly before starving and persecuted beings, to give them half-crowns, and save them from their enemies.

"Asthma, rheumatics, and getting blind," he repeated, shattering the words with coughs. He hoped the angel might touch him and heal his infirmities if he told her all about them.

She only gave him the basket, and said: "You had better come in and rest. I don't like to hear you cough so. I hope you haven't been stealing anything?" she said reproachfully.

"I ain't done nothing—nothing serious," declared Brightly. "I was a-sitting on the heather, singing about Jesus and us belonging to 'en, when policeman comes a-shouting, there 'a be,' and I ran, your reverent. I was that mazed I didn't hardly know what I was doing. They'm after I now, and I ain't done nothing that I knows on. I was a-yetting my bread and cheese and singing. I warn't a-harming a living thing. I warn't a-harming not a butterfly, your reverent."

Boodles would have laughed had Brightly been a less pathetic object. She said she believed he was honest, bent to pat Ju, then took them both into the cottage and into the little room where old Weevil was preparing a long screed, to be addressed to some society, and headed: "An Inquiry into the Number of Earthworms mutilated annually by Agricultural Implements." He was very much astonished when he saw Brightly, but became as pitiful as the girl when he had heard the story.

"I am sure he speaks the truth," said Boodles for the defence.

"I don't care whether it's the truth or a lie. Another poor thing caught by the Brute," muttered Weevil. "We must help him to escape. We will keep him here until dark, and then he can creep away. It's what we are always doing, all of us—trying to creep away from the Brute."

Brightly seated himself in a reverential attitude, regarding poor old Weevil as a patriarch, a sort of modern Abraham who had pitched his tent in that part of the country for the benefit of the poor and friendless. He wondered if the patriarch was a prophet also, and could tell him if he would ever attain to the pony and cart; but he had not the courage to ask.

"What are those things in your basket?" said Weevil.

"Two rabbit-skins, sir. I makes my living out o' they. Least I tries to," added Brightly drearily.

"Where have you come from?"

"To-day from Lydford, sir. Yesterday from Belstone, round Okehampton, and over Sourton Down. Trade be bad, sir."

"How many miles is that?"

"Mebbe nearly twenty from Belstone. I went round about like, and pitched to Lydford last night."

"Twenty miles for two rabbit-skins. Merciful God!" gasped Weevil.

"Amen, sir," said Brightly.

"Don't you know what the policeman wants you for?"

"I don't, sir. I was a-sitting on the heather when he come, and I ran. I got to the top o' the village, and a lot more of 'em were after I, and I ran again. I got away from 'em, and was a-coming back vor my basket, when the reverent appeared avore I wi' my basket in the reverent's hand."

"That's me," said Boodles, demurely and ungrammatically, in answer to Weevil's puzzled look. She was feeding Ju with biscuit, stroking her thin sides at the same time, and making the poor bitch share her master's impressions concerning the pleasant nature of angelic visions.

There was a knock upon the door, not the timid knock of a visitor, nor the obsequious knock of a tradesman, but the loud defiant knock of authority. The constable had arrived, full of cider and a sense of duty, and behind him a number of villagers had gathered together, with a sprinkling of children, some of whom had stolen Brightly's vases, and seen him enter Lewside Cottage, and then had run off to spread the news everywhere.

"Very sorry, miss," said the policeman, with a polite hiccup. "You've got the man I'm after. Got in when you wasn't looking, likely enough. He'm a bad lot. I've been after him a long time, and now I've got him."

"What has he done?" said Boodles, guarding the door, and making signs to Weevil to get Brightly out at the back.

"Robbery with violence, attempted murder, and keeping a dog wi'out a licence," said the happy policeman, in the satisfied manner of a fat boy chewing Turkish delight. "You must stand aside, if you plase, miss. Mustn't interfere with the course of law and justice."

"It's horrid," cried the child. "I'm sure he has done nothing."

"Come away, my maid. We can't do anything," called Weevil tremulously. "The man must go to the Brute. Innocent or guilty, it's all the same. The Brute has us all in turn."

Brightly sat in the corner coughing, and beside him Ju huddled, swallowing the last crumbs of biscuit. They were an unlovely but entirely inoffensive pair. A student of human nature would have acquitted the pinched little man of guilt at a glance, but the policeman was not a student of either human nature, law, or morals. He had promotion to consider, and weak and friendless beings like Brightly were valuable assets in a place where opportunities for distinction were few. Brightly had no relations to come behind the constable on a dark night and half murder him. Little difficulties like that compelled him to look the other way when commoners set the law aside. But Brightly and Ju were fair game, and the constable had long regarded them as such.

"You come along with me," he said pleasantly, pulling at Brightly's sleeve. "Best come quiet, and I've got to warn ye that anything you ses will be used agin ye. If you tries to get away again 'twill go hard wi' ye."

"What ha' I done, sir?" whispered Brightly, lifting his thin face and pathetic spectacles. He was not usually of an inquisitive nature, but he was curious then to learn the particular nature of the villainies he had committed.

The policeman winked at Weevil and smiled greasily, meaning to imply that the prisoner was an old hand and a desperate character.

"Ain't he a booty?" he said, with professional admiration for a daring criminal. "Wants to know what he's done. Well, I'll tell ye. Thursday night, not last week, but week avore, you set on Varmer Chegwidden as he was a-riding home peaceable across Gibbet Hill, and you pulled 'en off his horse, and stripped the clothes off 'en, and flung 'en into vuzzy-bushes, and purty nigh murdered 'en, and you steals his money and his clothes, and you'm a-wearing his clothes now; and he wants to know what he've been and done," said the policeman, with another wink at Weevil's distressed countenance.

"What nonsense!" cried Boodles. "He pull Chegwidden off his horse! Why, Chegwidden could keep him off with two fingers."

"He'm one of the artfullest criminals in the country," explained the constable.

"How did you get those clothes?" asked the girl, turning towards the accused.

"Picked 'en up in a wheal, your reverent," answered Brightly.

"Didn't I tell ye?" cried the policeman. "Artful ain't the word for 'en. If 'twasn't for me, and the evidence I got agin him, he'd purty nigh make the magistrates believe he was innocent. Walks about in stolen clothes, he du, and says he never stole 'em. Takes a bit of a bad 'un to du that."

Brightly could not understand much about it, but he supposed it was all right. He was evidently a rascal, but he felt almost proud to learn that he had dragged Chegwidden off his horse, although he could not remember having done so. His own impression was that if he had seen Chegwidden approaching he would have fled like a frightened rabbit. He supposed they would not hang him, and anyhow, if they did try, the angel would very likely appear before him and help him to escape, and show him a short-cut to Jerusalem, or tell him how he could get the pony and cart without being accused of having stolen them. He got up, ready to go with the policeman, and Ju rose too and shook herself, knowing nothing of the law.

"Where's your dog-licence?" demanded the constable.

Brightly looked about in his misery, but his glasses were so dim he could see nothing. He had always been afraid that question would come, and he had often wondered how he should answer it. He had tried again and again to save up for that licence in pennies and halfpence, but it was quite impossible. The sum never reached a shilling. Prosperous commoners could easily obtain exemption orders for their dogs; but a large sum of money was demanded from him, although he had none, for the right to keep his only little friend.

"I ain't got no paper, sir," he said. "I've tried time and time, but the pennies wun't keep. I couldn't mak' it up. I'll tell 'en how I tried to save it, sir."

Boodles turned to the window and her shoulders began to shake, while old Weevil was using his handkerchief as if he had a cold. The constable was grinning more than ever. After such zeal on his part he considered that his promotion to a more important station was practically assured.

"Don't tak' the little dog away, sir; don't ye. I ain't got much, sir, only the basket and bit of oil-cloth to keep the rain off, and the vases, and two rabbit-skins, and four pennies in my pocket, and she, sir. I ain't got nothing else, 'cept an old pan to Belstone Cleave what I cooks in, and a few bits o' cloam, and a blanket I sleeps under. I never stoled the clothes, sir. I picked 'en up in the wheal, and reckoned they'd been thrown away. I'll give 'em back, sir. I'll tak' 'em back to Varmer Chegwiddden to wance, sir."

The policeman did not listen to that nonsense. He had his duty to think of, and with a loud "Come on here" he fished a bit of rope out of his pocket and tied it round Ju's neck. The dog shrank back, frightened at such roughness, so the man promptly kicked her with his big boot and growled angrily, "Bite me, will ye?"

There was a yelp of pain from the poor beast, and the next moment the constable had himself to think of. Brightly lost control over himself. He could bear most things fairly well, but not cruelty to Ju. He flung out his raw hands in a blind sort of way, and one went against the policeman's nose, and the other on his ear, astonishing the fat creature a good deal, but not hurting him in the least, as Brightly's arms had no strength in them.

"Assaulting the police," he cried triumphantly, feeling for his note-book, "resisting arrest, and keeping a furious animal not under proper control."

"She did not try to bite you," choked Boodles in a tearful manner. "He did not assault you. He was only protecting his dog;" while old Weevil clutched the table, his head nodding wildly as if it was about to fall off, muttering continually, "The Brute! the Brute!"

"You had better be careful," the child went on. "We shall come and give evidence against you."

The fat constable was more amused than angry at the threat. As if the magistrates would believe a silly old man and a foolish young girl, when he had the crowd of villagers outside to swear that Brightly had knocked him about and Ju had bitten him. Not that the villagers had seen anything, but that would not make much difference, as he could easily tell them what had happened. He had always kept in with them, and winked at their little peccadilloes, and they would not forsake him in the hour of need. On the whole the constable was a much bigger rogue than Brightly.

Presently there was a scene upon the road and much laughter. The policeman went before dragging Ju at the end of the rope, and the villagers followed after, enjoying themselves exceedingly. There was not much excitement in their lives, and this was as good as a pony-drift or an otter-hunt, for Brightly had assumed the part of buffoon and was making a fool of himself for their delectation. The policeman did not hold him, as he was unlikely to escape again, and besides, Ju was giving so much trouble. She had to be dragged along over the stones and through the gorse, with her tongue hanging out and the rope chafing her neck, and the policeman found it necessary to kick her frequently because she was "so contrary like"; while Brightly jumped about like a new kind of frog, his glasses nearly tumbling from his nose, his big useless eyes bulging, and his foolish hands flapping in the air, whining and panting like his dog, and blubbering like a baby.

"Give I back my little dog. Don't ye tak' my little dog away, sir. You'm hurting she cruel, and her ain't done nothing. Ah, don't ye kick she, sir. Let she come wi' I, sir. Her will follow I close. Her wun't run away. Her be scared of yew, sir, and you'm hurting she cruel."

The villagers applauded these sayings, and tried to encourage Brightly to perform again for their benefit. He was funnier than a dancing-bear, and his dramatic efforts were very much appreciated. "Go at 'en again," they shouted, and Brightly responded nobly.

"I'll starve and pinch for the money, sir, if yew lets she go. I'll save 'en up somehow, pennies and duppences, till I gets the seven-and-sixpence for the paper. 'Tis a cruel lot o' money for a hungry man, but I'll get it, sir. I'll work day and night and get it, sir."

"Steal it from one of you, likely," shouted the constable, grinning more greasily than ever at the tumultuous laughter which welcomed his subtle humour. He was so delighted at having discovered within him a hitherto unsuspected vein of humour that he tried again, and won instant recognition of his brilliant talent with the inspired witticism, "Walks about in Varmer Chegwiddden's clothes, and says he never stole 'em."

"Purty near killed varmer tu. Tored 'en off his horse and beat 'en mazed," added the reprobate, who saw no reason why the policeman should have all the jokes.

Some of the others regarded Brightly with admiration. He was not only a clever low-comedian, but he was also the most desperate character on all Dartmoor. They were well able to appreciate the spirit of lawlessness because their own careers had been strongly marked with the same peculiarity. He was not exactly their idea of what a criminal ought to be, as in appearance he was little better than a half-starved worm, but the fact remained that he was a criminal, and as such was entitled to receive their admiration and their stones.

"Listen to 'en! He'm play-acting again," shouted the reprobate.

"Du'ye let I have my little dog, sir. Don't ye tak' she away 'cause I can't pay for the paper," whined Brightly, continuing his strange dance of agony. "I ain't got nothing now, sir. My vases be took, and my basket and rabbit-skins, and her be all I have. I'd ha' paid the fine for she, sir, but trade be cruel dull, and the pennies wun't keep. Don't ye tak' she away, sir. I couldn't go abroad on Dartmoor wi'out she. I'd think and wonder what had come to she, and 'twould hurt I cruel."

"You ain't going to tramp about on Dartmoor. You'm going to prison," shouted the witty policeman, while the villagers applauded him again, and Ju struggled, and Brightly went on weeping.

Not every one would have enjoyed the spectacle, although the constable and the crowd appreciated it. The rugged little mountains stood about silently, and became tired perhaps of looking on, for they began to mask their heads in mist. Even the sun didn't like it, and rolled himself up in a dark cloud, and came out no more that day. It was autumn, there was a smell of decay in the air, and a sense of sorrow somehow. The dark days were near; the time when warm earth, bright flowers, joy of life, are so unreal, so far away, that it seems sometimes they may not return again.

In due course Brightly appeared before the magistrates, as sober a set of justices as ever lived, as learned in law as a row of owls, but carefully driven by a clerk, who kept their heads up, and their feet from stumbling into the ditch. The case was fully stated, and witnesses were called, among them Chegwiddden, who had missed several Thursday evenings out, and was then only just well enough to attend the court. He explained that he had been riding home from Brentor on a dark windy night, and had been suddenly attacked, dragged off his horse, and stunned by a blow on the head. He remembered nothing more until he found himself in bed at home. He identified the clothes as his property. In answer to a question he admitted he had seen no one, but the attack had been made suddenly, and the night was very dark. Had he been drinking? Well, he might have taken a glass at Brentor, but not enough to upset him. He was a sober man. Nobody had ever seen him the worse for liquor, although he confessed he was not a teetotaler.

Others, who also owned they were not teetotalers, although they were for the most part habitual drunkards, swore that Chegwiddden was a sober man, and they had never seen him the worse for liquor. They did not add it was because they had been probably too drunk to see anything. Their evidence was accepted, although the magistrates might have known that it is impossible to obtain evidence which will incriminate a commoner from his own parishioners. They will give evidence against a man of the next parish, but not against one of their own. In such a case perjury is not with them a fault, but a virtue. The members of a parish hang together. They may hate each other, curse each other, fight with each other, but they will not give evidence against one another before outsiders. Brightly lived nowhere apparently, having no parish and no clan; therefore any one was prepared to give evidence against him, more especially as he had attacked one of themselves. His guilt was clear enough. The members of the Bench could not in their hearts believe that he had overpowered a strong man like Chegwiddden; but the testimony of the clothes could not be set aside. It was obvious he had stolen them. The constable gave him a bad character. There was no doubt he had been guilty of all kinds of grievous offences, only he was such an artful creature that he had hitherto succeeded in evading the law. He feigned to be asthmatic and half blind in order that he might secure a reputation for inoffensiveness; and he pretended to go about the moor buying rabbit-skins, while it was suspected that his real motive was to steal from farm-houses, or to pass on any information he might acquire in his wanderings to a gang of burglars who had not as yet been apprehended. The constable made up a very pretty story against Brightly.

The little man listened and tried not to be amazed. So he had been a rascal all the time and had never known it. No doubt it was true, for the gentlemen said so. He had pleaded not guilty, but he could not be sure about it, and he began to suspect that he must have told them a lie.

The chairman, a kindly old gentleman, who had lived long enough to know that it is a pleasant thing to be merciful, was inclined to deal with the case summarily, as it was a first offence; but, unfortunately for Brightly, there was a clergyman upon the Bench, a very able man, who received eight hundred a year for keeping a curate to preach twice on Sundays and perform any little week-day duties that might be required. He objected strongly, stating it was one of the worst cases he had ever known, and certainly not one in which the quality of mercy could be strained. Clemency on their part would be a mistaken kindness, and would assuredly tend to a regrettable increase of the lawlessness which, as he and his brother magistrates were so well aware, prevailed to such an alarming extent in the mid-Devon parishes. They were then given the opportunity of dealing with an individual who was, he feared, though he was sorry to have to say it plainly, one of the pests of civilisation. They were there to do their duty, which was necessarily unpleasant and even painful. They were there, not to yield to a false sentiment, and to encourage vice, but to suppress it by every means in their power. If they did not protect law-abiding people from highwaymen and robbers, of what use were they? He ventured to think, and to say, none

whatever. He concluded by stating that he was strongly in favour of committing the prisoner for trial at the Assizes.

There was another charge against the miserable Brightly. He had kept a dog without a licence. At that point Boodles stepped forward, with quaint old Weevil at her side, and said in her pretty girlish way that if the magistrates would allow it she would pay for the licence. Brightly began to weep at that, which was a bad thing for him, as only the worst type of cunning criminals venture upon that sort of appeal to the court. Boodles had a little money saved, and she had easily obtained Weevil's permission to spend part of it in this manner.

The chairman beamed at her through his glasses, and said she was a very kind-hearted little girl, and he regretted very much they could not take advantage of her generous offer. They appreciated it very much, but he assured her that she was wasting her kindness and sympathy upon an object totally unworthy. It was their duty, he hoped, to encourage generosity; but it was still more their duty just then to punish vice. They thanked her very much, but it was quite impossible for many reasons to encourage her kindness on the prisoner's behalf. He hoped she would devote the money to some more deserving cause. Boodles listened with her head down, sighed very much, and then she and Weevil left the court.

The constable's chance had come. He described Ju as a savage and mangy cur, and he offered to produce her for the inspection of their worships. He said the dog had tried to bite him, and he hoped the Bench would issue an order for the animal's destruction. The magistrates conferred together, and the clergyman was soon saying that he had enjoyed a very large experience with dogs, chiefly sporting-dogs he admitted, but he knew that animals which had been associated with criminals were always unpleasant, frequently diseased, and generally ferocious. He should certainly vote in favour of the animal's destruction.

Brightly confirmed the worst suspicions of the Bench by his foolish and extravagant conduct.

The deliberations were soon over. Brightly was committed for trial, and Ju was sentenced to be destroyed.

CHAPTER XVI

ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

One day Peter went into the village to buy stimulants, and found, when he reached the house of the creaking sign-board, that he was penniless; a serious discovery, because the landlord was an austere man who allowed no "slate." Some people are born thirsty, others have thirstiness thrust upon them, and a third class, to which Peter belonged, acquire thirstiness by toilsome and tedious endeavour. It was a long walk, and the moor, like the bones in the valley, was very dry; there was not a foot of shade, and the wind was parching. Peter had long ago discovered it was easy to acquire thirst by the simple expedient of proceeding as directly as possible to the place where it could be quenched. He would borrow three-halfpence from his sister, or extract it from her box if she was absent, and then make for the village by the nearest route, winning the necessary dryness as he went. On this occasion he had forgotten about money, chiefly because he had not been compelled to borrow or steal from Mary recently, as Chegwidden had unconsciously supplied him with the means for enjoyment.

Peter leaned against the wall, and cursed all living creatures and things inanimate. He flattered himself with the belief that he was a man who never wasted time. He had walked from the hut-circles with a definite object, which was twofold: the acquiring of thirst and the quenching of the same. The first part had been attained to perfection, but unfortunately it was the inferior part, it was the laborious side, and the reward was not to come because he had been absent-minded before the event, instead of, as was usually the case, afterwards. He wondered if there was in the immediate neighbourhood any charitable soul who would lend him twopence, not to be repaid.

It was a feast-day in the village. Chapel tea and an Ebenezer love-feast were in full swing, for Pezzack and his bride had arrived that day to take up their abode in a cottage which had been freshly whitewashed to symbolise the spotless nature of its new occupants' souls. Children, dressed in their best, had earlier paraded the street with a yellow banner, shrill hymn-screaming, and a box to collect the offerings of the faithful.

It had been announced that Pezzack would preside over the tea, and that his bride would pour it out. Eli would recite grace, and all the children would say amen. Later there would be prayer and preaching, when Pendoggat was expected to give further proof of his rough eloquence and of his devotion to the particular form of religion which he favoured and to the pastor who was its faithful and local representative. Then a blessing would be given, and the girls and young men would pair off in the dark and embrace in lonely places.

Peter saw signs of the love-feast, and tokens of the refreshments, and the sight increased his thirst. Had beer been on supply within the chapel, instead of rather weak tea, he would probably have experienced a sudden ardour for religion, and have hurried there with incoherent entreaties to be placed on the penitential bench and received into the Wesleyan fold. As the festivities were

of an entirely temperate nature, so far as things fluid were concerned, he decided to go and visit school-master. It was not in the least likely that the old man would lend him twopence, but Peter had enough wit to argue that it is often the most unlikely things which happen.

Master was sitting at his window, writing a letter to his son in Canada. He welcomed Peter gladly, and at once asked him to spell "turnips." It was a strange question, considering their positions, but Master explained he was getting so old and forgetful, and never could get the simple words right. The long and difficult words he could spell readily enough, but when it came to anything easy he felt so mazed he couldn't seem to think of anything.

"I be telling my Jackie how amazing fine the turnips be this fall," he explained.

Peter was glad to oblige Master. To help him with such an obscure word would be worth twopence. Slowly and stertorously he spelt it thus: "Turnnups."

"B'est sure that's right?" said Master, rather suspiciously.

Peter had no doubt whatever. He could spell harder words than that, and with the same accuracy.

"Seems to me somehow some spells 'en wi' one *n*," said Master.

"Us don't. Us allus spells 'en wi' two," said Peter.

"I reckon you'm right. What yew knows I larnt ye," said Master. "I larnt yew and Mary to spell, and I mind the time when yew was a bit of a lad wi' a turned-up nose and squinty eyes. Proper ugly yew was. Didn't I whack they old breeks o' yourn? Aw now, didn't I? Dusted 'em proper, I did. In these council schules what they has now there bain't no beating, but love ye, Peter, in the old village schules us used to whack the lads every day—aye, and the maids tu. There be many a dame about here and Lydford whose buttocks I warmed when her was a maid. Them was brave times, Peter, sure 'nuff."

"Better volks tu. Us had Dartmoor to ourselves them days," said Peter, anxious to propitiate the old man.

"Mun spell all the words proper when I writes to Jackie. He'm vull o' education," Master went on. "T-u-r-double-n, turnn, n-u-p-s, nups, turnnups. Aw, Peter, yew ain't forgot what I larnt ye."

He put down his pen, assumed the mantle of Nestor, and asked: "Can I oblige ye, Peter?"

The little man replied that he could, to the extent of twopence.

Master became grave and sorrowful, wagged his head, and behaved generally as people will when the integrity of their purse is threatened.

"Anything else, Peter—advice, sympathy, loving-kindness, you'm welcome," he answered. "I be a poor man. I was never treated as I deserved, yew mind. If I lends two pennies they don't come back. I be an old man, and I've a-larnt that. They be like little birds, what come to my window in winter for crumbs, and don't come back 'cept for more crumbs. I be advising yew, Peter; don't ye borrow money, I ses. And I be advising myself; don't ye lend it, I ses."

This was all very wise, only Peter could not appreciate it. Wisdom slakes no man's thirst. He replied that he had come to the village for sugar, and Mother Cobby at the shop refused to serve him without the money, which he had unfortunately forgotten. He added an opinion of Mother Cobby which was not charitable.

Master recited other verses from his book of wisdom. To succeed in trade it was necessary to be severe when people came buying without money. He admitted that Mother Cobby practised severity to the point of ruthlessness, he was not prepared to deny that Mother Cobby would rather permit her closest relations to walk in darkness than advance them one tallow candle to walk by on credit, but he impressed upon Peter the fact that Mother Cobby was a "poor lone widdie" who had to protect herself against the wiles of customers. To sum up the matter: "If yew buys her sugar her wants your twopence. It bain't no profit to she if yew has her sugar and she don't ha' your twopence. It gives she what us calls book-debts, and they be muddlesome and contrary things."

With the ethics of business Peter was not concerned while the thirst was spreading through his body. So far it had been confined to the tongue and throat, but while Master talked it extended its ravages throughout the whole of his system. Peter began to be afraid he would not be able to walk home without liquid assistance. Not the smallest copper coin of the realm could be hoped for from Master; but Peter was something of a strategist, he comprehended there were more ways than one out of his present difficulties, just as there are more ways than one into a house, and an enemy can be attacked from the rear as well as in front. Master certainly refused to advance him twopence, but he could hardly in common charity refuse him what the twopence would have purchased, if he was convinced that the need was urgent. So Peter put a hand to his throat, and made strange noises, and said it was coming on again.

"What be the matter?" asked Master.

"Hot vuzzy kind o' prickiness all over like. Starts in the throat, and goes all through. I be main cruel sick, Master."

"My dear life, but that be serious," cried Master. "What du'ye tak' for 'en, Peter?"

"Something cooling. Water will du. Beer be better though."

"I ain't got any beer, but I ha' cider, I'll fetch ye some in a mug," said Master.

He trotted off, while Peter sat and chuckled, and felt much better. He was not wasting his time after all; neither was he spending any money. When Master returned with a froth-topped cloam Peter adopted something of the reverential attitude of Sir Galahad in the presence of the Sangreal, drank deeply, and when he could see the bottom of the mug declared that the dangerous symptoms had departed from him for a season. Having nothing else to detain him he rose to go, and was at the door when Master called him back.

"Purty nigh forgot to tell ye," he said, pointing to a goose-quill erect in a flower-pot upon the window-seat. "Put that feather there to mind me to tell Mary or yew, if so be I saw yew go by. There be volks stopping wi' Betty Middleweek, artist volks, and they'm got a gurt ugly spaniel dog what's been and killed a stray goosie. Betty ses 'tis Mary's Old Sal, and I was to tell ye. Betty ha' got the goosie in her linny. Mary had best go and look at 'en."

Peter rubbed his hands and became very convalescent. The heavens were showering favours upon him. Artist folks could afford to pay heavy damages. "I'll go and tell Mary to wance," he said. "Us will mak' 'em pay. Old Sal be worth a sight o' money. Us wouldn't ha' lost she for fifty pound. Thank ye kindly, Master."

"Nothing's no trouble, Peter. Hope you'll be better to-morrow," said the kindly old man.

Peter brought on another thirst by the haste with which he hurried back to inform his sister that her Old Sal had been destroyed "by artist volks stopping wi' Betty Middleweek, at least not by they, but by a gurt big ugly Spanish dog what belongs to 'em."

Mary wasted no time. She did not trouble to attire herself suitably, but merely took a great stick "as big as two years and a dag," as she described it, and set off for the village; while Peter, who had "got the taste," as he described it, determined to help himself from Mary's money-box and follow her later on with a view to continuing the treatment which had benefited him so greatly in Master's cottage.

The artists were having their evening meal when Mary arrived and beat heavily upon the door. They were summoned, the body of the goose was brought from the linhay, Mary became coroner and sat upon the defunct with due solemnity. There was no question about its identity. The name of the bird which had been done to death by the dangerous dog was Old Sal beyond all argument.

"Aw now, bain't it a pity, a cruel pity, poor Old Sal!" wailed Mary, and would not be comforted until the artist produced his purse and said he was willing to pay, while his wife hovered in attendance to see that he did not pay too much. "He was a booty, the best mother on Dartmoor, and he laid eggs, my dear. Aw ees, a butiful lot o' eggs. He was always a-laying of 'em. And now he'm dead, and wun't lay no more, and wun't never be a mother again. Hurts I cruel to see him lying there. Would rather see Peter lying there than him."

"I understand the market price of geese is eightpence a pound," said the artist nervously, awed by the gaunt presence of Mary and her patriarchal staff. "If you will have the bird weighed I will pay you, as I cannot deny that my dog killed it."

At that Mary gave an exceeding bitter cry. Eightpence a pound for Old Sal! That was the market price, she admitted, but Old Sal had been unique, a paragon among web-footed creatures, a model for other geese to imitate if they could, the original goose of which all others were indifferent copies, the very excellence and quintessence of ganders. It was impossible to estimate the value of Old Sal in mere cash, although she was willing to make that attempt. It was the perfection of Old Sal's moral character and domestic attainments that Mary dwelt upon. He had been all that a mother and an egg-layer should be. He was— Words were wanting to express what. He had been the leader of the flock, the guiding star of the young, and the restraining influence of the foolish. The loss was irreparable. Such geese appeared possibly once in a century, and Mary would not live to see the like of her Old Sal again. Then there were the mental and moral damages to be considered. Money could not mend the evil which had been done, although money should certainly be allowed to try. Mary suggested that the experiment might commence with the transfer of five pounds.

"This bird is in very poor condition. It is quite thin," said the artist's wife.

"Thin!" shouted Mary. "Aw, my dear, du'ye go under avore yew be struck wi' lightning. He'm vull o' meat. Look at 'en, not a bone anywheres. He'm as soft wi' fat as a bog be o' moss, and so cruel heavy I can't hardly lift 'en. Yew don't know a goosie when yew sees one, my dear. Never killed one in your life, I reckon. Aw now, never killed a goosie, and ses Old Sal be thin! He was as good a mother as yew, my dear, and when it comes to laying eggs—"

The artist's wife thought it was time to "go under," or at all events to disappear, as Mary was getting excited.

At that point Betty Middleweek appeared and whispered to Mary; and at the same time a little boy in quaint costume, with a head two sizes too large, shuffled up the garden path, and stood staring at the defunct goose with large vacant eyes. "He bain't your Old Sal after all," said Betty.

"He belongs to Mary Shakerley, and her little Charlie ha' come for him. He saw the dog go after 'en, and he ran away mazed like to tell his mother, but her had gone to Tavistock market, and ha' just come home."

"He've only got one eye," piped little Charlie in evidence.

Mary examined the dead body. It was that of a one-eyed goose.

"Aw now," she said in a disappointed fashion, "I reckon he bain't my Old Sal after all."

"I am willing to pay some one. Who is it to be?" asked the artist, who wanted to get back to his food.

"Please to pay little Charlie, sir," said Betty Middleweek. "Charlie, come up to the gentleman."

"Well, my lad, how much do you want for your goose? Eightpence a pound, is it?"

"Dear life!" cried Mary. "He hain't worth eightpence a pound. Look at 'en! He'm a proper old goosie, wi'out a bit o' meat on his bones, and the feathers fair dropping out o' his skin wi' age. He'd ha' scared the dog off if he'd been a young bird, or got away from 'en. My Old Sal would ha' tored any dog to pieces. Don't ye pay eightpence a pound. He hain't worth it. He never laid no eggs, I reckon, and he warn't no good for a mother. He'd ha' died purty soon if that dog o' yours hadn't killed 'en."

"You seem to have altered your opinions rather suddenly," said the artist.

"Well, I bain't a one-eyed old gander," said Mary. "I knows what goosies ought to be to fetch eightpence a pound, and I can see he ain't got enough meat on him to feed a heckimal. Aw, my dear life, if I can't tell a goosie when I sees him who can?" And off went Mary, striking her big stick noisily on the ground, wiping her nose on the back of her hand, and muttering an epitaph upon the still missing Old Sal, who, she supposed, had been carried off by some evil beast and devoured in the secret places of the moor.

It was dark by this time, and the Ebenezer love-feast was over, so far as the eating and drinking and prayer-meeting were concerned. The god of good cheer had been worshipped, and now the goddess of common wayside love was receiving incense. Autumn invariably discovers those hardy perennials of the hedges and ditches—lovers—leaning against gates as if they were tied there. The fields and the moor are too wet to sprawl on, so at the end of October the gate season sets in, and continues until spring dries the grass. The gates are nothing like so damp as the hedges, and are much softer than boundary walls, although the latter are not without their patrons. Lovers are orthodox folk, who never depart from their true religion, or seek to subtract any clause from their creed. The young girl knows that her mother was courted against a gate, and that her grandmother was courted against a gate, so she is quite ready to be courted against a gate. It must be difficult to feel the necessary ardour, when several degrees of frost are nipping their noses, and a regular Dartmoor wind whirls up and down the lanes; but these gate-leaners manage it somehow.

Peter was having a pleasant day. He had followed up his success at Master's expense with a little bout at Mary's, and it was with a feeling of unalloyed satisfaction with himself that he started for home, returning thanks after his own manner to the god who presides over beer-houses. The benign influence of malted liquors was over him, stimulating his progress, rendering him heedless of the dark, and impervious to the cold. It was an unpleasant night, not frosty, but choked with clouds, and filled with raw mist. Peter had passed several gates, most of them occupied by couples finishing the day in a devout fashion, but he had said nothing, not even the customary "good-night," because it was not lawful to speak to people when thus privily engaged. Couples are supposed to be invisible while courting, and with the full knowledge of this point of etiquette they usually conduct themselves as if they were. Peter got up upon the moor, where the wind twisted his beard about as if it had been a furze-bush, and made his way beside one of the boundary walls which denoted some commoner's field. It was the usual Dartmoor wall, composed of blocks of granite placed one above the other in an irregular pattern without mud or method, each stone kept in place by the weight of those above it; a wall which a boy could have pulled down quickly one stone at a time, but if unmolested would stand and defy the storms for ever. It was a long wall, and there were three gates in it, but no lovers against them; at least not against the first two. But as Peter approached the last, which was well out on the moor where nobody but himself would be likely to pass that night, he heard voices, or rather one voice, speaking loudly, either in anger or in passion, and he recognised that it was Pendoggat who was speaking.

Peter crept up stealthily, keeping close beside the wall, which was just about the height of his nose. When near the gate he went on his hands and knees. The voice had ceased, but he heard kisses, and various other sounds which suggested that if Pendoggat was upon the other side of the wall there was probably a woman with him. Peter crawled closer, lifted himself, placed the grimy tips of his fingers upon the top stones, which were loose and rocking, and peeped over. There was a certain amount of light upon the high moor, enough of a weird ghostly sort of phosphorescence for him to see the guilty couple, Pendoggat and Thomasine. They were quite near, upon the peat, beside one of the granite gate-posts, and directly underneath Peter's nose. The little man grinned to see such sport. The moral side of the affair did not present itself before his barbaric mind. It was the spectacular part which appealed to him. He decided to remain there, and play the part of Peeping Tom.

Had Pendoggat been sensible, which was not possible, as sense and passion do not run together, he must have known that the discovery of his liaison with Thomasine could only be a matter of time. The greatest genius that ever lived would find it beyond him to conduct an illicit love-affair in a Dartmoor parish without being found out in the long run. He had employed every ordinary caution. It was not in the least likely that any one would be crossing beside that wall after dark; but the least likely things are those which happen, not only in Dartmoor parishes, but elsewhere.

Peter had not stood there long when very ordinary things occurred, all of them unfortunate for him. To begin with, he developed a violent attack of hiccups which could not be restrained. Then the stone to which he was holding kept on rocking and giving forth grating noises. The wind was also blowing pretty strongly; and what with the wind externally and the hiccups within Peter was soon in a bad way. He made up his mind to beat a retreat, but his decision came rather too late. He felt a hiccup approaching more violent than its predecessors; he compressed his lips and held his breath, hoping to strangle it; but Nature was not to be cheated; his lips were forced asunder, the hiccup came, its sound went out into the moor, and at the same moment Peter slipped, grabbed at the stone, and sent it bowling upon the peat on the other side of the wall. He gave a squeal like a frightened rabbit, and with another parting hiccup turned and ran.

He did not get far before Pendoggat caught him. Peter was a stumpy little creature with no idea of running; and he was captured at the end of the wall, and received a blow upon the head which nearly stunned him. Pendoggat stood over him, half mad with fury, striking at him again and again; while Peter made quaint noises, half passion and half pain.

Suddenly the clouds parted westward, and Pendoggat could see Ger Tor outlined against a liverish patch of night sky. By the same light he saw Peter; and his madness departed, and he became a coward, when he caught a glimpse of the little man's malignant eyes. Peter was his enemy for ever, and he knew it.

Neither of them had spoken a word. Pendoggat had growled and spluttered; Peter had choked and mumbled; the river far beneath roared because it was full of rain. These were all incoherent noises. Pendoggat began to slink away, as if he had received the beating, shivering and looking back, but seeing nothing except a dull little heap beside the wall, which seemed to have many hands, all of them scrabbling in the dirt. Peter panted hard, as if he had been hunted across the moor by the whist hounds, and had come there to take shelter; but all the time he went on scraping up the clay, gathering it into a ball, spitting on it, moulding it, and muttering madly from time to time: "You'm him! You'm him!"

During those first few moments, after leaving that horrible little man beneath the wall scrabbling with his hands, Pendoggat swore solemnly that he would make Thomasine his wife, swore it to himself, to the God that he believed in, and to her, if only nothing happened.

Presently Peter went on towards his home; and in his arms was a fantastic little thing of clay, a thing forked and armed like a human being, a sort of doll. When he got back he cleared the hearthstone, blew the peat into a red smoulder with his mouth, then took the doll, spoke to it solemnly, placed it upon the hottest part of the hearth, and piled the red embers round it. When Mary came in to call him to supper she found Peter sitting in a kind of trance before the hearthstone, and following his gaze she saw the quaint clay doll sitting upright in the centre of the fire, with the red peat gathered into a fiery little hell around it on every side.

"Aw, Peter!" she gasped in a tremulous whisper, falling on her knees at his side. "Who be the mommet, Peter? Who be the mommet?"

"Varmer Pendoggat," said Peter.

CHAPTER XVII

ABOUT PASTIMES

One cannot help wondering how the early inhabitants of Dartmoor spent their time. Possibly the men found plenty of work for their hands, while the ladies talked of their babies, though they could hardly talk of their clothes. Chapel teas and beer-houses were unknown, and the people may have led a wandering existence, following their cattle and goats from place to place, and merely erecting rough shelters at every pasture ground. It is said that they appeared before the Roman agents, who came to the Cassiterides, which no doubt included the Dartmoor region, to procure the precious white metal, clad in black cloaks, with tunics reaching to their feet, and girdles round their waist. A more unsuitable costume for the moor could not have been devised, but it is probable that they were then in holiday attire. They were simple, taciturn, heavily-bearded men. Of their women nothing is known, because the historians of those days did not trouble themselves about inferior details, and ladies had not then commenced to brawl in the streets for their rights. The numerous hut-circles about the moor were no doubt built by these men, utilised more as temporary sheltering-places than permanent homes, and were possibly regarded as common property. The stone avenues may have been boundaries, and the circles are more likely to be the remains of pounds than the ruins of temples. The lamp of architecture had not then been lighted in Britain, and sun-worship is by its very nature antagonistic to temples. So

much is conjecture, and cannot be anything else. Light is reached when we regard the great mounds beside the rivers, and the huge stone slabs which span them; and we know that prehistoric man was a miner, and that he objected to getting his feet wet. These rivers are mere streams to-day, which any one can wade across, and they could not have been larger when the bridges were erected. We know also by the presence of these slabs of granite, and various other stone remains, that the system of the *corvée* must have been practised upon Dartmoor; a good custom which disappeared centuries ago as an obligation on free people, but is still retained as an obligation on prisoners in such penal establishments as Princetown. The existence of rates for the maintenance of roads is a survival of the *corvée* in a form of demand upon those who can afford to pay, and not a few who cannot, for the upkeep of roads which many of them do not use; the idea of the rate being that the householder pays a sum which shall exempt him from the labours of the *corvée*, although without being given the option of offering his labour in lieu of cash.

We may safely conjecture that prehistoric men attended to their duties of obligation as well as to their pastoral affairs; and made a little profit at odd times in the form of tin which they bartered for salt, vases, and domestic utensils, with the Roman agents, very much as Brightly, who was their descendant, bartered his vases for rabbit-skins. But what about their pastimes?

History and tradition are alike silent on that point. They could not have been making love to their wives all their spare time. There must have been something to take the place of the beer-house, the chapel tea, the sing-songs, the rough-and-ready carnival. If tradition does not exactly speak it gives an echo. We listen to that echo, we put against it our knowledge of human nature, which does not change, and to that we add our experience of the desires, customs, and pastimes of the men who have passed into their places and live upon what was their ground; and then we get near the truth, possibly at the very heart of it. Their pastime was the shedding of blood. They fought together for the mere pleasure of inflicting wounds upon each other. They tortured inoffensive creatures because they were strong, the animals were weak, and the sight of suffering gave them a kind of pleasure. Since that barbaric age more than a thousand years of Christianity have done their civilising and humane work; have taught until there can be surely nothing left to teach; have practised until the virtues would have been pretty well worn out had they been practised less theoretically. And to-day one finds—

There were notices posted all over the place, upon walls and doors and gate-posts, little bills announcing a great pigeon- and rabbit-shoot, with money prizes for the three most successful competitors; the sport to conclude with a big feed at the inn at so much a head, drinks being extra. These shoots are among the most ordinary features of village life upon Dartmoor, and they are usually organised by the landlord of licensed premises, because at the conclusion of the sporting event the men gather together for the feed in a state of feverish excitement and soon drink themselves mad. That sort of thing means a handsome profit for the landlord. The men's passions are gratified, the victualler's pockets are filled, so every one is satisfied, and shoots do not lose in popularity year by year.

The event was held in a field upon the side of the moor, and all sportsmen of the district were gathered together, with a few women, and as many children as could possibly get there. It was a great time for the small boys; better than a Sunday-school tea or chapel anniversary; no self-control was required of them at the shoot, they could let themselves go, and release every one of the seven little devils in them. Farmer Chegwidden was there, completely restored to health, though he had an ugly black scar on the side of his head. He was half drunk before proceedings commenced, because he said he could shoot better when in that condition, Pendoggat was there, silent and gloomy, but handling his gun as if he loved it. The old Master was there, tottering about with two sticks, beaming upon every one, and wishing the young men good-luck; and the landlord of the inn, who presided over the safe conveyance of the victims from his barn to the place of massacre, jumped here and there in a wild state of excitement, explaining the programme and issuing instructions to competitors. The constable was there, dropping fatness; and near him Pezzack, with grave and reverend aspect and new clothes, stood and made the thing respectable with his blessing.

Two others were there who looked singularly out of place, and stood apart from the noisy crowd, both of them nervous and uncomfortable. They were Boodles and old Weevil. Close to them were crates stuffed full of pigeons, uttering from time to time little mournful notes, and bulging sacks filled with healthy rabbits.

"It is so silly," said Boodles, rather petulantly. "You will only be ill. We had much better go away."

"I must see it, darling—as much as I can bear. I am going to prepare a petition about these things, and I want to be fair. I must see for myself. It may not be so brutal as I believe it is."

"Yes, it is, and worse. I know I shall be ill," said Boodles.

"Go home, little girl. There is no reason why you should stay."

"I'm not going to leave you," declared Boodles bravely. "Only do let's go further away from those poor things in the sacks. They keep on heaving so."

"I must see it all," said the old man stubbornly. "Look the other way."

"I can't. It fascinates me," she said.

"Willum!" yelled the landlord. "Come along, my lad. Pigeons first. Dra' first blood, Willum."

A young man stepped out, smiling in a watery fashion, handling his gun nervously. The landlord plunged his hand into a crate, caught a pigeon by the neck, and dragged it out. The trap was merely a basket with a string fastened to it, and it was placed scarcely a dozen yards from the shooter.

"Kill 'en, Willum!" shouted the landlord as he pulled the string.

Willum fired and missed. The bird flew straight at him, and with the second shot he broke its wing. The pigeon fell on the grass, fluttering helplessly, and Willum walked up to it with a solemn grin, gave it a kick, then flung it aside to die at its leisure. The small boys pounced upon it, and assisted its departure from the world.

"Little devils," murmured Boodles, beginning to bite her handkerchief.

"I think we are all devils here," said old Weevil.

"This field is full of them. It is the field-day of the Brute, the worship of the Brute, the deification of the Brute."

The shoot proceeded, and the men began to get warmed up. Not a single pigeon escaped, because those that got away from the field with the loss of only a few feathers were bound to fall victims to the men who had posted themselves all round with the idea of profiting by the competitors' bad shots. The only man who was perfectly composed was Pendoggat. He shot at the pigeons, and killed them, as if he had been performing a religious duty. Chegwiddden, on the other hand, shouted all the time and fired like a madman. The little boys were kept hard at work torturing the maimed birds to death, with much joyous and innocent laughter.

"How be ye, Master? Purty fine shooting, I reckon," cried an old crony, hobbling up with a holiday air.

"Butiful," said Master. "Us be too old vor't, I reckon."

"Us bain't too old to enjoy it," said the old crony,

"Sure 'nuff, man. Us bain't too old to enjoy it. 'Tis a brave sight to see 'em shoot."

Then there was a pause. The string had been pulled, the basket had tumbled aside, but the pigeon would not stir. Possibly it had been maimed in the crate, or by the rough hand which had dragged it out. Everybody shouted wildly, waving arms and hats, but the bird did nothing except peck at the grass to get a little food into its hungry body. The landlord ran up and kicked it. The pigeon merely fell over, then hopped a little way feebly, but still refusing to fly, so the landlord kicked it again, shouting: "He be contrary. There be no doing nought wi' 'en."

"Tread on 'en, landlord," shouted a voice.

"What be I to du?" asked the man whose turn it was to kill.

"Shoot 'en on the ground. Shoot 'en, man! Don't let 'en get away. Kill 'en, man!" screamed the landlord.

The competitor grinned contentedly, and at a distance of half-a-dozen paces blandly riddled the creature with pellets. This was the funniest thing which had happened yet, and the crowd could not stop laughing for a long time.

"Now the rabbits! Fetch out two or dree," shouted the landlord. "Kill 'en quick, lads!" The worthy soul was anxious to have the massacre over, and start the real business of the day at the bar.

With the rabbits fun began in earnest. All that had gone before was tame in comparison, for pigeons die quickly, but rabbits continue to run after being shot, and still provide excellent amusement, if the vital parts are untouched. It was not shooting at all; not a particle of skill was required, as the basket was close to the competitor, and he shot immediately the animal began to run, and sometimes before; but it was killing, it was a sort of bloodshed, and nothing more was asked for. Hardly a rabbit was killed cleanly, as the moormen are, as a rule, awkward with the gun. As the creatures invariably ran straight away from the crowd, they were usually shot in the hinder parts, and then would drag themselves on, until they were seized, either by the man who had fired, or by the small boys, and carried back to be flung upon the heap of bodies, some of them dead, and some not. Even feeble old Master entered into the fun of the thing, and begged permission to break a rabbit's neck with his own hands, so that he might still call himself a sportsman.

"Come away, daddy. I'm getting queer," said Boodles.

Weevil woke from a sort of trance, and shook his head oddly, but said nothing. Power of speech was not his just then. He had hitherto kept himself scrupulously apart from such innocent village pleasures, afraid to trust himself at them, but what he saw quite confirmed what he had believed. It was not sport in any sense of the word. It was mere animal passion and lust for blood. It was love of cruelty, not any ambition to take a prize, which animated the competitors. It would have meant small enjoyment for them had the pigeons been made of clay and the rabbits of clockwork. Because the creatures they shot at could feel, could shed blood, and were feeling pain, were shedding blood, the men were happy; not only happy, but drunk with the passion, and half mad

with the lust, of their bloody game.

Weevil looked about, fighting down his weakness, which was not then altogether eccentric. He saw the transformed faces of the crowd. Not only the competitors but the spectators had the faces that a London mob of old might have presented, watching the hanging, drawing, and quartering of criminals, and finding the spectacle very much to their taste. They had become so excited as to be inarticulate. They could not make their shoutings intelligible to one another. They were gesticulating like so many Italian drunkards. Their boots were marked with blood, and it was also upon their hands, and smeared upon their faces. Blood was upon the ground too, with other matter more offensive. The ghastly pile of pigeons and rabbits, which were supposed to be done for, was not without motion. Sometimes it heaved; but there was no sound. Two little boys were enjoying a rare game of tug-of-war with a living rabbit. Another youngster was playfully poking out the eyes of a fluttering pigeon. They would make good sportsmen when they grew up. A tiny little fellow, nothing more than a baby, was begging a bigger boy to instruct him in the art of killing rabbits. A little girl was practising the deed upon her own account. The constable who had arrested Brightly looked on and said it was "brave sport." There were other things which Weevil saw, but he did not mention them afterwards, because he tried to forget them; but the sight made him feel faint, not being a sportsman, but a rather ignorant, somewhat foolish, and decidedly eccentric old man.

"I think I must go. Boodles," he said feebly.

He turned away, and his eyes fell upon the village. There was a church, and there was Ebenezer, and a meeting-house also. Surely so many religious houses were hardly necessary in one small village. Church and chapels dominated the place; and in those buildings a vast amount of theory was preached concerning ancient literature, and a place of morbid imagination called Hell, and a place of healthier imagination called Heaven; and upon that field on the side of the moor the regular worshippers at those buildings were enjoying themselves. There was a failure somewhere, only Weevil had not the sense to find out where. High above were the tors, and it was there, no doubt, that the early inhabitants stood to worship Baal; and there possibly a vast amount of theory was preached concerning the whole duty of man, and a twofold future state; and then the men went down to fight and plunder. It seemed to have been a theoretical religion then. It is a theoretical religion now. Theories have swamped the world, submerging the practical side like the lost Atlantis. It is not religion which compels men to cease from doing murder. It is the fear of vengeance.

Boodles and Weevil left the field, pale and miserable. When they were outside the old man went away and was violently sick. They abandoned the field in time, for the men were getting beyond control. When the rabbits were slaughtered they sought for small birds and shot at them until their cartridges were exhausted. Even Pendoggat had lost his self-restraint, although he did not show it like the rest. The smell of blood was in his nostrils, and he wanted to go on killing. He longed to shoot at the men around him. The victims were all dead at last. The happy children had seen to that, and went off home to get their hands and faces washed, tired out with the day's fun. That clever painter of human nature, Hogarth, missed something during his lifetime. He could not have seen a rabbit-shoot in a Dartmoor village. Had he done so, there might have been a fifth plate added to his Four Stages of Cruelty.

"I must drink something," said Weevil, when he reached home. "You were right, little maid. I ought not to have gone."

"Haunted water, daddy?" suggested Boodles, with a wan little smile.

"Yes, darling. I think I have earned it. But not badly haunted."

"Just a gentle rapping, not groans and chain-rattling," she said, trying to be merry, having no reason to feel unhappy, as she went for the brandy bottle. That was how the water was to be haunted. Weevil was practically a teetotaler, in a different sense from Farmer Chegwiddden, but he sometimes took a suspicion of brandy when he was run down, as then.

"Boodle-oodle," he said in a feeble way, after refreshing himself, "you have seen the Brute rampant. What do you think of it?"

"I don't think, daddy-man. It's no use when you can't do anything. I just label it a queer puzzle, and put it away along with all the other queer puzzles. And you would be much happier if you would do the same."

"I cannot," he groaned. "I suppose those men were enjoying themselves, but what right have they to an enjoyment which makes other people suffer? I say they have no right. Animals have to be killed for food; but what would be done to a butcher who slaughtered his beasts in the middle of the street? Those men were not killing for any purpose apart from the love of killing, and they were doing it publicly. They were mad. They had the faces one sees in a bad dream. And now they have gone to stuff themselves with food, and then they will swill liquor until they are mad again."

"Don't," said Boodles. "It's not fair on me. You will be giving me umpy-umpy feelings, and I'm going to see Aubrey to-morrow, and it may be the last time for ages, and I shall feel quite bad enough without having your worries to carry as well. Let's light up, and draw the curtains, and make believe that every one is as nice as we are, and that there are no troubles or worries in the whole wide world."

Old Weevil only moaned and shuffled about the room in a miserable fashion. "I can't get rid of the Brute, darling. He sits upon my shoulders and strangles me. Why should these people be outside the law because they are commoners? One hundred years ago you might have seen horrible deeds of cruelty in every London street. There are none to be seen now, because townfolk have become civilised, and law-makers have recognised that what may please the few is distressing to the many. But in these wild lonely places people may be fiends, and the law does not touch them. It exists for the populous centres, not for the solitudes."

"I'm going to get supper. Mind you are good when I come back," said the little housewife quickly.

"That is not all," raved the poor old man, still shuffling to and fro, heedless that he was alone. "The cry of the animals goes up to Heaven. There are the ponies and bullocks turned out upon the moor all winter, in weather which would kill the hardiest man, if he was exposed to it, in a few hours. They get no food. There is not a bit of grass for them. Many of them are done to death by cruel weather and starvation. In spring their carcasses are found lying upon the moor."

CHAPTER XVIII

ABOUT AUTUMN IN FAIRYLAND

The devil had passed through Tavy woods late that year, and in his path blackberries were blasted, the bracken was scorched, and all the foliage smouldered. He had trampled upon, and burnt, everything; the next time he passed through he would breathe on them and they would rot away. At last he would come with his big bellows; clear the wood out, and scatter a lot of dusty frost about the place to make it look tidy. Directly he was out of the way a busy little body in green would bustle into the woods with a big basket of buds on her arm, and she would stick these buds about upon the honeysuckles and the primroses, and then run away in a snowstorm laughing. Nobody would notice her; she is too small and shadowy, and yet observant folk would know she had been because the plants which had received the buds would smarten up at once. Every one loves the little green fairy, although she is often quite a plain creature, and usually is afflicted with a dreadful cold. She beats the devil and restores all that he has trampled and blown upon. She may often be seen in April, sweeping up the remains of the hoar-frost and attending to her buds, sneezing all the time. People call her Spring in those days. Her cold is quite incurable, but fortunately it does not kill her.

Even in fairyland it is not always pretty. Were it so the pleasant place would lose its charm, for it is the dull time which makes the gay time glorious. There is no winter for the little people, just as there is no winter for the flowers; and flowers and fairies are one and the same thing. They go to sleep until the sun comes to wake them up, and tell them it is time to dance and blossom as they did last year. There is a winter, only they know nothing of it. That is why the little people are so much happier than the big ones. When sorrow comes they simply go to sleep. Bigger people are not allowed to do that.

"You are going away, Aubrey," said Boodles. "You are going away."

She was always saying it, and thinking it when she was not saying it, and dreaming about it when she was not thinking of it. She was playing with a toy upon her finger, a hoop of gold, a little ring which he had given her, whose posy was the usual motto: "Love me and leave me not," and its symbol the pale-blue forget-me-not. Lovers are fond of adding poetry to poetry and piling sentiment upon sentiment.

It was not exactly an engagement-ring, but a present, and a promise of the full-flowered ring; just as the crown-buds upon the primroses were a promise of the spring. Boodles was eighteen at last. How slowly the years passed at that age! And the ring with the blue forget-me-nots was a birthday gift, although it was given and received as something more, and put upon a finger which meant much, and worn and fondled as if it meant everything. The girl's radiant hair was up relentlessly, and her frocks trailed for evermore. She was a baby no longer.

It was not a happy walk because it was to be their last for a long time, and they could not ramble there without treading upon and bruising some poor little memory; just as the devil had trodden on the blackberries, although the memories were not spoiled; they were the kisses of those first days of first love, and they were immortal memories, birth-marks upon their souls. They had grown up; their bodies were formed, although their minds were not matured; but whatever happened those memories were planted in Tavy woods perennially, and nothing could kill them. Tears would only water them and make them grow more strongly. Their sweet wild fragrance would cling eternally, because the odour was that of deep first love; the one gift, the only gift, which passes direct from the hands of the gods and has no dirt upon it.

Somehow Aubrey had never appeared as a perfectly distinct personality to Boodles. Her love was in a mist. He seemed to have come into her life in a god-like sort of way, to have dropped upon her as a child like rain from the clouds, saying: "You thought of me, and I have come." While she went on thinking of him he would remain, but directly she ceased to think he would vanish again. They had simply come together as children and walked about; and now they were grown up children still walking about; and they felt they would like to grow up a little more, then stop

growing, but still go on walking about. First love is a marvellous dose of fern-seed. They were content to look at one another, and while two young people remain in that state the gods can give them nothing. But Boodles was going on with her song: "You are going away, Aubrey. You are going away." There was a gate at the end of the wood, and it was something more than the gate of the wood. It opened only one way.

Aubrey loved the little girl. He was steadier than most young men and less fickle than most. Even when he was away from Boodles he did not forget her, and when they were together she absorbed him. She was so fresh. He had never met any girl with a tithe of her wonderful spring-like freshness, which suggested the sweet earth covered with flowers and steaming after a shower of warm rain. Boodles seemed to him to be composed of this warm earth, sunshine and rain, with the beauty and sweetness of the flowers added. She had taken him when young, and planted him in her warm little heart, and tended him so carefully that he could not help growing there; and he could not be torn up, for that would have lacerated the heart; the roots were down so deep; and he might not bear transplanting. First love thinks such things, and it is good for the lovers. Life gives them nothing else to equal it.

Still Aubrey had his troubles. It was the last walk for some time. He was disobeying his parents, and deceiving them. He had promised not to walk with Boodles again. No boy could have been blessed with kinder parents; but Mr. Bellamie, after his strange visit to old Weevil, and subsequent discussion with his wife, conceived that it was his duty to pull the reins. Aubrey had been allowed a free head long enough, and the old gentleman was afraid he might get the bit between his teeth and run. Boodles was a most delightful child in every way, but she knew nothing about art, and what was far more serious she knew nothing of her parents. Mr. Bellamie spoke plainly to his son; reminded him of the duty he owed his family; told him he had been to see Weevil and that the interview had not been satisfactory; mentioned that the old man either knew nothing of the girl's origin, or had certain reasons for withholding his knowledge; explained that to interfere with his son's happiness was his last wish, and that to interfere with the happiness of others was equally distasteful; and concluded by impressing upon Aubrey, what was true enough, namely, that it was not kind to encourage a young girl to fall in love with him when he could not possibly marry her. The boy had been then sufficiently impressed to give the promise which he was now breaking. He felt he could not help himself; he must see Boodles again, and at least tell her that he would never dream of giving her up, but that his parents were inclined to be nasty about it. Besides, it was the little girl's birthday; or rather what Weevil was pleased to style her birthday, as he could not possibly know the exact day of her birth. Aubrey eased his conscience by reminding himself that he had forgotten to urge the point with his father, and if he had done so the old gentleman would certainly have consented to one more meeting. So he bought the pretty ring for Boodles, met her, and the mischief was done again.

When the first stage of their walk was over, and they were getting reasonable, and Boodles had ceased singing her plaintive: "You are going away," Aubrey began to suggest that his father was not in alliance with them; and poor Boodles sighed and wanted to know what evil she had done.

"Nothing, darling. But he wants to know something about your parents."

"I told him. I don't know anything."

"But Weevil must know."

Somehow that had not occurred to Boodles. Perhaps Weevil did know, and for reasons of his own had kept the information from her.

"I'll ask him," she promised. "But Mr. Bellamie has been to see daddy. Why didn't he ask him?"

"Weevil told him he is your grandfather."

"You mean my old daddy-man is my grandfather?" cried Boodles, very much astonished. "Why hasn't he told me then?"

"Hasn't he?"

"Never."

Aubrey was too young to care; but he certainly felt suspicions about Weevil, and thoughtlessly expressed them by saying: "I suppose he was telling the truth."

"Of course he was," said Boodles. "Old daddy couldn't tell a lie however much he wanted to. It would hurt him so badly he would groan and grunt for a week. What else did he tell your father?"

"He didn't say. But, darling, you'll find out."

"Oh, Aubrey," she said pathetically. "Do you care?"

"Lovely little thing, of course I don't. Your parents must have been the best and nicest people that ever lived, or you wouldn't have been so sweet. But you see, darling, my people worry no end about name and family and all that sort of rubbish, and if they think any one is not what they call well-born they kick up no end of a smother."

"Well-born," murmured Boodles. She was beginning to comprehend at last, to recognise the existence of that grim thing called convention, and to feel a sort of misty shadow creeping up the wood. She felt something on one of her fingers, and it seemed to her that the pretty ring, which

she loved so much, was trying to work itself off. "Well-born," the child murmured to herself. "Whatever does it mean?"

This was what being eighteen meant. Boodles was learning things.

"I must have had a father and mother," she said, though in a somewhat dubious manner.

Aubrey only hummed something unintelligible, and wished the cloud out of her eyes.

"Now I must find out all about them?"

"I expect my people would like to know, dear," he said.

"If I can't find out, Aubrey?" she went on, in a moist kind of way.

"Then you will have to take mine," he said as lightly as he could.

Boodles stopped, turned away, began to play with a golden frond of bracken almost as bright as her hair, and began to cry as gently as an April shower. She had been on the point of it all the afternoon; and she persuaded herself it was all because Aubrey was going away, although she knew that wasn't true. It was because she was finding out things.

"Don't," she sobbed. "It's doing me good,"

However, Aubrey took her in his arms and tried to pet her, and that did her as much good as anything, although she went on crying.

"Can't give me yours—you silly! They won't be given. They don't want me to love you, they hate me, and your mother kissed me—she did—on my mouth."

"Mother is very fond of you, darling. She is really," Aubrey whispered as quickly as he could. "She said you were perfect, and father agreed with her, and said you would be all that a girl could be, if—if—"

"Go on," murmured Boodles. "It won't hurt. I've got hold of you. I'm taking all the starch out of your collar."

"Never mind what he said."

"We don't say good-bye until you have told me. I'll hang on to you. Stop you, perhaps. Oh, Aubrey, you are going away—that's why I'm crying. Your father said I should be a nice little girl, if—go on."

"If you had a name," said Aubrey, with an effort.

Boodles let him go and stepped back. She looked rather nice, with her eyes in the rain, and her head in the sunshine.

"What does that mean, Aubrey?" she said, almost fiercely.

"Nothing whatever to me, darling. Don't be silly," he said tenderly. "It's only father's nonsense. He thinks so much of his name because it's a fossilised old concern which has been in the county since Noah. He doesn't want me to marry you, only because he's afraid your people may not have lived about here since Noah. If you went and told him you're a Raleigh or a Cruwys he would lay his pedigree at your feet and ask you to roll on it."

"Not well-born. No name," said Boodles, aloud this time. "I think we have been silly babies. I seem to have grown up all at once. Oh, Aubrey, was it you and I who used to walk here—years ago?"

He bent and took her face between his hands and kissed the pretty head.

"We never bothered about names," sobbed Boodles.

"We are not bothering now—at least I'm not. It's all the same to me, darling."

"It's not. It can't be. How silly I was not to see it before. If your parents say I'm not—not your equal, you mustn't love me any more. You must go away and forget me. But what am I to do? I can't forget you," she said. "It's not like living in a town, where you see people always passing—living as I do, on the moor, alone with a poor old man who imagines horrors."

"Listen, darling." Aubrey was only a boy, and he was nearly crying too. "I'm not going to give you up. I'll tell you the whole truth. My people wanted me not to see you again, but I shall tell them that things have gone too far with us. They won't like it at first, but they must get to like it. I shall write to you every week while I am away, and when I come back I shall tell father we must be married."

"I wouldn't, not without his consent. I shall go on loving you because I cannot help it, but I won't marry you unless he tells me I may."

"Well, I will make him," said Aubrey. "I know how to appeal to him. I shall tell him I have loved you ever since you were a child, and we were promised to each other then, and we have renewed the promise nearly every year since."

"Then he will say you were wicked to make love to the first little red-headed girl you could find,

and he will call me names for encouraging you, and then the whole world will explode, and there will be nothing left but lumps of rock and little bits of me," said Boodles, mopping her eyes with his handkerchief. She was getting more cheerful. She knew that Aubrey loved her, and as for her name perhaps it was not such a bad one after all. At all events it was not yet time for the big explosion. "I'm only crying because you are going away," she declared, and this time she decided she meant it. "What a joke it would be if I turned out something great. I would go to Mr. Bellamie and ask him for his pedigree, and turn up my nose when I saw it, and say I was very sorry, but I must really look for something better than his son, though he has got a girl's face and is much prettier than I am. Oh, Aubrey," she cried, with a sudden new passion. "You have always meant it? You will be true to your little maid of the radiant head? I don't doubt you, but love is another of the queer puzzles, all flaming one time, all dead another, and only a little white dust to show for all the flame. The dust may mean a burnt-out heart, and I think that is what would happen if you gave me up."

He satisfied her in the usual way, declaring that if they ever were separated it would be by her action, not by his. She would have to unfasten the lover's knot. Then they went on. It was getting late, and the short day was already in the dimmies. They stood beside the gate, saying good-bye, not in two words, but in the old method which never grows musty. They passed on, the gate slammed, and they were outside; only just outside, but already they were lost and could not have found their way back; for the wand of the magician had been waved over "our walk," and fairyland had gone away like smoke to the place where babies come from.

Weevil was sitting in the dark, mumbling and moaning, when Boodles came in. He was in the seventh Hell of misery, as he had been for a walk and discovered beneath a hedge a rusty iron trap with its jaws fastened upon the leg of a rabbit. The creature had been caught days before, as decomposition had set in, and as it was only just held by one leg it must have suffered considerably. Such a sight is quite one of the common objects of the country, therefore Weevil ought not to have been perturbed; only in his case familiarity failed to breed indifference. He sat down in the dark, and as soon as the child entered began to quaver his usual grievance: "What right have they to make me suffer? Why may I not go a walk without being tortured? What right have the brutes to torment me so?"

"Groaning and grunting again, poor old man," said Boodles cheerfully, rather glad there was no light, as she did not want him to see she had been crying. "You must laugh and be funny now, please, for I've come home dreadful tired, and if you go on worrying I shall begin to groan and grunt too. I'm ready to have my boots taken off."

"Don't talk like that. Your throat sounds all lumpy," the old man complained, getting up and groping towards her in the dark. "What have you been doing—quarrelling?"

Boodles made noises which were intended to express ridicule, and then said miserably: "Saying good-bye."

Weevil knelt upon the carpet and began to unlace the first boot he could find, groaning and grunting again like a professional mourner.

"Did it hurt, Boodle-oodle?" he asked tenderly.

"Horrid," she sighed.

"It made you cry?"

"Ees."

"That was the Brute, darling. I've warned you of him so often. He doesn't let any of us escape. He shows me rabbits in traps, and he makes you cry. I believe you are crying now."

"Not much, daddy. Only a few little tears that were late for the big weep," said Boodles, burrowing her face into a cool cushion.

"I want you to laugh. You don't laugh so much now," he complained, drawing the boot off carefully, and then feeling inside to make sure that the foot had not come away too.

"One day you said I laughed too much, and I wasn't to do it any more," said a doleful voice.

"Ah, but there was a reason for that," said the old man cunningly. "I thought the Brute would be angry if he saw you laughing so much. That was before I took him by the throat and flung him out of the house. He hasn't been here since—not to worry you anyhow," he chuckled.

"You must explain that, please, and a lot of other things besides," she said hurriedly, sitting up and trying to locate the exact position of his head.

Old Weevil laughed in a silly sort of way. "It's a little personal matter between the Brute and me," he chuckled.

"But I come in. I'm the respondent, or whatever you call it. Now I must hear all about it," she said.

"You're not old enough. I shan't tell you anything until you are twenty-one."

"Yes, you will. I'm not a baby now. I am eighteen, and I feel more—nearly eighty-one to-night. I've got one boot on still, and if you won't answer I'll kick."

The old man jumped playfully upon the threatening foot like a kitten upon a ball of wool.

"Daddy-man, I'm serious. I'm not laughing a bit. I believe there is another cry coming on, and that will make you groan and grunt dreadful. Is it true you are my grandfather?"

The question was out with a rush, and murmuring: "There, I've done it," Boodles put her face back into the cushion, breathing as quickly as any agitated maid who has just received an unexpected offer of marriage.

Whatever Weevil was doing she could not think. He appeared to be scrabbling about the floor, playing with her foot. Both of them were glad it was so dark.

"Who told you that?" he said.

"Aubrey. You told his father. Why haven't you ever told me?"

"Boodle-oodle," he quavered, "let me take your other boot off."

"The boot can wait. Don't be unkind, daddy," she pleaded. "I've been worried dreadful to-day. Why did you tell Mr. Bellamie you are my grandfather, if you're not?"

"I am," cried old Weevil. "Of course I am. I have been your grandfather for a long time, ever since you were born, but I wasn't going to tell you until you were twenty-one."

"Why not? Why ever shouldn't I know? Are you ashamed of me?"

At that the old man began to throw himself about and make horrible faces in the dark.

"I expect you are," Boodles went on. "Mr. Bellamie is ashamed of me. He says I'm not well-born, and I have no name. Aubrey told me this afternoon."

"The liar," cried old Weevil. Then he began to cackle in his own grotesque way. He couldn't help being amused at the idea that he should be calling Mr. Bellamie a liar. "How did he know? How did he find that out?" he muttered. "Nobody could have told him. He must have guessed it."

"You are my grandfather," Boodles murmured. "Now you must tell me all about my father and mother. I've got to let Mr. Bellamie know," she went on innocently.

"I told him. I told him the whole story," cried Weevil. "He sat in this room for an hour, and I gave him the whole history. What a forgetful man he must be. I will write it out and send it him."

"Tell me," said Boodles. "How could you say that you picked me up on your doorstep, and never knew where I had come from?"

"It's a long story, my darling. I don't fancy I can remember it now." The old man wondered where he had put that precious piece of paper.

"Don't squeeze my foot so. Who was my mother? Do you really know who my mother was?"

"Tita, we called her that for short, Katherine, Mary—no, that's you. I've got it all written down somewhere. I must tell her the same story. Shall I light the lamp and find it?"

"You must remember. Are you my mother's father?" she asked impatiently.

"Wait a moment, Boodle-oodle. These sudden questions confuse me so. Mr. Bellamie would know. I told him. Yes, it was your mother. Miss Lascelles was her name, and I married her in Switzerland. We stayed at that hotel where Gubbings wrote his history of the world, and we fell out of a boat on Lake Geneva, and she was never heard of again."

"Where was I?" cried Boodles, knowing that impatience would only perplex him more.

"You were not born, darling. It was a long time after that when you were born, and your father was Canon Lascelles of Hendon."

"Dear old man, don't be so agitated," she said, putting out a hand to stroke his whiskers. "You are so puzzled you don't know what you are saying. How could my mother be drowned before I was born?"

"No, no, darling, you misunderstand me. It was my wife who disappeared mysteriously, not your mother."

"My mother was your daughter. That's one thing I want to know," said perplexed Boodles.

"Tita, we called her Tita for short," he said, glad of one fact of which he was certain.

"And my father, Canon Lascelles—really? A real canon, a man with a sort of title?" she cried, with a little joyous gasp.

"He's in British Honduras. I think that was the place—"

"Alive! My father alive!" cried Boodles. "And you never told me before! Why haven't I seen him? Why doesn't he write to me? Oh, I think you have been cruel to me, telling me those wild stories of how I came to you, keeping the truth from me all these years."

Old Weevil sat at her feet, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. He was protecting Boodles, giving her happiness, he thought; but when he heard that cry it suggested to him that his false

story might bring her in the end more sorrow than the truth. He could not go back now that he had gone so far. A lie is a rapid breeder of lies; and old Weevil, with his lack of memory, and natural instinct for the truth, was a man singularly ill-fitted for fictions. He had overlooked a great many things in his wild desire to make the child happy. It had never occurred to him that she would feel a natural love for her parents.

"I wanted to be kind to you, Boodles," he quavered. "I kept the truth from you because there were good reasons."

"What were they?"

"I can't tell you, darling," he answered truly. "You must not ask me," he said firmly, because she had touched upon a mystery which his inventive faculties were quite incapable of solving.

"And my mother—where is she?"

"Oh, she is dead," said Weevil cheerfully. He was not going to have any trouble with the mother, and he was sorry he had not killed the father too. "I told you she was drowned mysteriously."

"That was your wife, my grandmother. You are not playing with me? You are not deceiving me?" said Boodles pitifully.

"I'm trying to tell you, only it is all mixed up. It happened so long ago, and the Brute has worried me so much since that I don't seem able to remember anything very clearly. Your mother went out of the hotel one day, and never came back."

"Where?"

"Lausanne, the hotel where—"

"But she may be alive still," interrupted the child.

"Oh no, darling. Quite impossible. She was never heard of again, and it was nearly thirty years ago."

"Don't ramble. You are wandering off again. How could it be thirty years ago, when I'm only just eighteen?"

Weevil admitted the difficulty, and replied that he had been thinking just then of his wife. She would keep mixing herself up with the girl's mother.

"Now I'm getting at it," said Boodles, with a kind of fierce seriousness. "My mother is supposed to be dead. My father is in British Honduras—"

"British Guiana," corrected Weevil.

"Are you sure?"

"Almost certain. I looked it up on the map. I wish I had that piece of paper," the poor old man muttered.

"Well, it does not matter much for the present. You say my mother was Miss Lascelles, and my father was Canon Lascelles; but if my mother was your daughter her name would have been Weevil."

"So it was, my dear," he cried, with a new inspiration, "at least it would have been if—if—I mean, darling, my name is really Lascelles, only I changed it to Weevil when I lost my fortune."

"Why ever couldn't you have told me all this before? How is it that Canon Lascelles had the same name as you? Was he a relation?"

"Yes, darling, first cousin," he faltered, wondering if the story resembled that which he had told to Mr. Bellamie.

"So my name is really Lascelles?"

"Titania Lascelles. But there are a lot of others. I was nearly forgetting them. You have a whole string of names, but I can't remember them now, except Katherine and Mary—ah, yes, and there was Fitzalan. I never could understand why they called you Fitzalan. I've got them all written down somewhere, and I'll read them to you presently. We called you Tita after your mother, but I got into the way of calling you Boodles, which means beautiful, and have never got out of it."

"You told all this to Mr. Bellamie?" asked Boodles excitedly.

"I think so. I tried to," said Weevil hopefully.

"Then what does he mean by saying I am of low birth and have no name?" she cried indignantly.

"Perhaps he did not understand. Perhaps he hadn't grasped it. I tell a story very badly, dear."

That point could not be disputed, and the child seized upon it eagerly. There was no telling what wild rambling statements her grandfather might have poured into the ears of Aubrey's father. But she could tell him now she was quite a well-born little dame, and had a splendid name which was all her own, and she was really good enough for Aubrey after all. She put her head back upon the cushion and began to laugh because she was happy, the day was ending nicely, and she believed

the story would end nicely too. She had cried because Aubrey was going away and for no other reason; at one time that afternoon she had not been sure of it, she had almost been afraid that the tears had been brought on by Mr. Bellamie's evil suggestions about her birth; but now she knew that she could hold up her nose with the best of them. She was accustomed to Weevil's eccentric language, his contradictions gave her no suspicions; she swallowed the rambling story whole and wanted more. There were so many questions to be asked and answered. She thought she would write to Aubrey and sign herself Titania Lascelles with great flourishes.

"I am glad to hear you laughing, Boodles," said Weevil tenderly.

The poor old man was far from the laughing mood. He was indeed getting frightened at what he had done, and was wondering how he could carry it on, and how the story would end. Left to himself he would not have told the child anything; but she had caught him in an unguarded moment with a direct question, and he had been forced to answer without time to prepare himself by another rehearsal in private. He had hardly expected her to take things so seriously, forgetting how much the story meant to her, so utterly obsessed was his mind with the one great idea, which was her preservation from the Brute. Love blinds every one. The young it dazzles, like the sun low down on the horizon, so that they see no faults. Into the eyes of the old it flings dust to prevent them from seeing the end of the road.

"Now we must light the lamp and have supper," he said drearily, gently removing the child's other boot and pressing her warm little foot in his cold loving hand.

"I don't want lamps or suppers," she sighed. "What is that light, over in the corner?"

"I think it is the moon shining in between the curtains."

"The wind has got up. It's howling. I don't care, for I've got a name. I'm not Boodles Blank any more. I'm tired and happy."

"I have given you a little happiness. Boodles?" he quavered.

"Heavensfull. You have always been a funny old daddy-man, and now that you are my grand-daddy-man you are funnier than ever. Fancy keeping me in the dark all the time! To-morrow you must tell me everything. What was my mother like? Go on. Tell me a lot about my mother."

"I don't know, Boodles—I mean I can't think to-night."

Weevil had left her, and was tumbling about the room, knocking himself against things and groaning. He was beginning to understand that his efforts to destroy the Brute might only end by investing him with new powers. But the child was happy, and that was everything; she was singing to herself, and laughing, and thinking of her mother; not the mother who had tied her up in fern and flung her at his door, but the mother who existed only in his fantastic brain. Suppose Mr. Bellamie had found it out. But that was impossible, for nobody knew except that unknown mother and himself. He was doing what was right. His little maid was perfectly happy then. Sufficient for that day was the happiness thereof. There was just one trouble remaining—the problem of Mr. Bellamie's incredulity. Why had he not accepted the story which she was so ready to believe? Eccentric manner and contradictory statements did not explain everything. Mr. Bellamie had no right to put the whole story aside just because it had been badly told.

"I can tell you, Boodles. I have just found it out," he cried out of the darkness with a miserable sort of triumph. "There has been a lot of scandal about you, which I have never troubled to answer, and Mr. Bellamie has heard it, and finds it easier to believe than what I told him. There is the Brute again. He makes people prefer scandal to the truth. Nobody knows how you came to me, and so they invented a story to suit them. Everybody knows that story, and as I have not denied it Mr. Bellamie believes it is true. I think I'll write to him to-morrow."

"How did I come to you?" asked Boodles.

"It's a long story," he faltered. "I can't tell you now because I am feeling so tired. I shall have to think about it all night," he muttered.

"Why did you make up that queer story about finding me one night at your door?"

"That is true. Your father chose that way of sending you to me," he said lamely. "I kept the truth from you because I was afraid you might not want to stay with me if you knew everything. Your father wished you to be kept in ignorance. I was going to tell you on your twenty-first birthday."

"You needn't have told me you thought I was a poor woman's child," she said reproachfully.

"I am very sorry, darling. I won't do it again," the poor old creature promised.

Boodles jumped up, pattered to the window, and flung aside the curtains. The room was flooded at once with moonlight, and she could feel the wind coming through the chinks. Weevil looked up patiently, and she saw his weary old eyes and wrinkled face, ghastly in that light. It struck her he was looking very worn and ill.

"You are dreadful tired," she said very tenderly.

"Yes, Boodles, the noise of the wind makes me feel very tired."

"I am not Boodles now. That was my baby-name. I am Tita. And the others—Katherine, Mary—"

what are the rest?"

"I don't know, dear. I will try and think to-morrow."

"I won't tease you, but there is so much I want to know. Poor great big old grand-daddy-man, you look quite dead."

He shuffled towards her, put his arms round her, and began to make noises as if he was in pain. "I am tired and weak. That is all, darling, and the rabbit in the trap made me sick. I am weak and old and very tired, and I know I have done no good in my life. Shut it out, my maid—shut it out."

It was the prospect which he wanted shut out. They could see the bare stretch of moor, upon it the moon shining, and over it the wind rushing. There is nothing more dreary than a windy moonlit night upon the moor, filled with its own emptiness of sound, suggestive of wild motion and yet motionless, covered with light that is not light.

"It is like a lonely life," said Weevil bitterly.

Boodles dropped the curtains and tried to laugh. She did not like the look on the old man's face.

"The lonely life has gone," she said. "Now we will have some light."

Weevil shuffled after her, muttering to himself: "You have done it, Abel-Cain. You must keep it up. You must hold the Brute off her somehow, or she may have to go out, into the windy moonlight, into the lonely life."

CHAPTER XIX

ABOUT THE GOOD RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

One of the creeping-things to be crushed at the forthcoming Assizes was Brightly. Ju had been already stamped out of existence, and it was meet and right that the little man should follow her example, and be placed behind some stone walls where it would be impossible for him to drag lusty farmers from their horses and half-murder them for the sake of their clothes. Brightly had not long to wait in prison. Exeter put on the full panoply of the law during the first week of November; scarlet and gold were flourished; trumpeters and a special preacher brayed; bells clanged, the small grocer and the candle-maker were summoned to serve on the jury, to fail not at their peril, lawyers buzzed everywhere, and a lot of money was spent just because Brightly and a few poor yokels had misconducted themselves. It was a curious sort of net, this Assize net; it was constructed and cast in such a manner that it permitted a lot of coarse fish and golden carp to escape through its meshes, while all the little tadpoles and mud-grubbers were caught and held.

One of the coarse fish to swim into the judicial circuit was Pendoggat. He came to Exeter, partly that he might spend a portion of the capital of the Nickel Mining Company, and partly that he might visit the Guildhall to see sinners punished. Pendoggat had a keen sense of justice and a certain amount of dull humour. The Assizes represented to him a foreshadowing of the fiery pleasures of Hell—they were a pleasure to his mind because he was secure from them—and it amused him to think that another man was going to suffer for his wrongdoing. The idea that he was a sinner had never occurred to him. He had stripped Chegwidden, and flung him into the furze, because the wind had swept upon him, urging him to persecute the unconscious man, and he had obeyed. He had not robbed Chegwidden, nor had he stolen his clothes; and that was the principal charge against Brightly. If he had stood up in court, and confessed that he had dragged the farmer from his horse and stolen his clothes, he would have been telling a lie, which would have been painful to him. Brightly was not charged with finding Chegwidden unconscious, stripping the clothes from him, and throwing them down a wheal. Had that been the charge against him Pendoggat would probably have recognised that the purveyor of rabbit-skins was a good Christian, who had learnt the great principles of the gospel, and was willing to sacrifice himself for another. The mind of Pendoggat when it turned towards theology became incomprehensible.

The weather was changing into winter and there was a smell of snow upon the moor. Pendoggat had played his game, and so far as he could see had won it. The success was not brilliant, because the people of Bromley had proved to be a stingy set, and the amount of money subscribed for the mining venture did not reach three hundred pounds. The chairman of the company, Pezzack's retired grocer-uncle, who had after repeated failures at last discovered how to spell the word committee, was continually writing to know when the first consignment of ore was to be placed on the market, and, what was of far greater importance, when the first dividend might be expected. Pendoggat as frequently replied, through the agency of Pezzack, that operations could not be commenced until spring, as the climate of Dartmoor was not the same as that of Bromley; but the grocer could not understand, and went on writing. He appeared to think that nickel was like the inferior American and disreputable margarine—which in his business had been labelled respectively prime Cheddar and best butter—and would not keep. The little grocer deserved to lose his money, though he was eminently respectable. His position proved it, as only men of assured respectability can make enough money to retire and purchase a little suburban

villa, with such modern improvements as walls one brick thick, roofs of thin plaster, and defective drainage. His front doorstep was whitened daily. His parlour window was heavily curtained, and in it were geraniums and ferns further to attest respectability; and behind the curtains and floral display was a chamber crowded with stately furniture. All was very beautiful in front, and very dirty behind. The display in front was for the benefit of the road. The negligence and dirt behind were only visible from the railway. It was best butter according to the parlour window, and disreputable margarine judging by the testimony of the back-yard.

Queer objects of the country had come from all parts of Devon to assert their intelligence as witnesses in the various trials. Peter was a witness in the Brightly case, Peter who had comforted his system with many a pint of beer, paid for with Chegwidden's money, and was then enjoying himself at the expense of the country, although he had taken the opportunity to get his railway fare from Mary. Peter was not only travelling again, but he was principal witness, as he had discovered Chegwidden lying unconscious and fully dressed upon the road; and Peter did not underestimate his importance.

Brightly had not been fortunate of late, but luck was to turn his way a little at the trial. No doubt sentences upon small prisoners depend very much upon the state of his lordship's liver. A bottle of corked wine, or a burnt soup, may quite possibly mean another couple of months to the man in the dock. Mercy is supposed to have its lodging somewhere in the bowels, and if they are out of order, or offended by inferior cookery, mercy may conceivably be out of order too. The judge upon this occasion was in a robust state of health. His wine had not been corked, nor had his soup been burnt, and he was quite in the mood to temper the panoply of the law with a playful kind of mercy which presented counsel with several somewhat obsolete jokes and one new pun. When Brightly appeared another pun was instantly forthcoming upon his name. His lordship had at once a kindly feeling for the prisoner who had contributed towards the maintenance of his own reputation as a humorist; and he was soon saying that it was absurd to suppose that such a poor creature could be guilty of robbery with violence against the person of a strong man like Farmer Chegwidden.

A very able young barrister defended Brightly at the request of the judge, a youngster recently called, who had every inducement to do his best. That was Brightly's second bit of luck. The health of the judge was perfect, and he had been allotted a strong advocate, although he could not understand why the gentleman took such an interest in him and tried so hard to get him off. The fat constable and the other witnesses were given a melancholy time by the young barrister, who treated them all very much as Pendoggat had treated Chegwidden. He stripped the lies off them and left them shivering in the strangeness of the truth. Peter was a difficult witness at first, but after a few minutes counsel could probably have made him swear that when he had discovered Chegwidden the farmer was undressing himself with a view to taking a bath.

"In what condition was he when you found him lying upon the road?" asked counsel.

"Mazed," replied Peter. "Same as I be," he muttered.

"Was he drunk?"

"No," said Peter stoutly.

"Do you know a drunken man when you see one?"

Peter thought he did, but was not certain. They were common objects, and as long as a man could proceed from one place to another, and shout occasionally, he was, according to Peter, a fairly sober person.

"Do you suppose he had fallen from his horse and stunned himself?"

"Likely," said Peter. "He'm a cruel hard rider."

"You have often seen him galloping over the moor, in what some people might call a reckless way?"

"Seen 'en often," said Peter.

"Thursday evenings usually?" went on counsel, in a pleasant conversational manner.

Peter agreed that it was so.

"You know, of course, that it is the farmer's habit on these evenings to frequent some public-house; one night at Lydford, another at Brentor, and so on? There's nothing remarkable about that, but still you are well aware of it?"

Peter was.

"And you know what he goes there for? Everybody knows that. You know why you go to a public-house. You go to get beer, don't you?"

"I du," said Peter with some enthusiasm.

"Sometimes there is a glass too much, and you are not quite sure of the way home. That's only human nature. We all have our little failings. When you have that glass too much you might ride 'cruel hard,' as you express it, over the moor, without caring whether you had a spill or not. Probably you would have a tumble. Chegwidden comes off pretty often, I believe?"

"More often than he used to do," mumbled Peter, not in the least knowing where he was being led.

"Well, that's natural enough. He's getting older and less confident. Perhaps he drinks a bit harder too. A man can hardly find it easy to gallop over the rough moor when he is very drunk. Don't you feel surprised that Chegwidden has never hurt himself badly?"

Peter was not flustered then. Counsel was half-sitting on the edge of the table, talking so nicely that Peter began to regard him as an old friend, and thought he would like to drink a few glasses with this pleasant gentleman who, he fancied, had a distinctly convivial eye. "'Tis just witchery," he said in a confidential manner, feeling he was in some bar-room, and the judge might be the landlord about to draw the beer. "He'm got a little charm to his watch-chain, and that makes 'em fall easy like."

"I suppose he hadn't got it on that night?"

"Forgot 'em, likely," said Peter with some regret, knowing that had Chegwidden been wearing the charm and chain he would have gained possession of them.

Counsel smiled at Peter, and the witness grinned back, with a feeling that he was adding to his acquaintances. The next question followed quite naturally—

"I suppose Chegwidden was pretty far gone that night. Now I want you to use your memory, and tell me if you have ever seen him more drunk than he was that night?"

"When us gets drunk us comes to a stop like," said Peter thoughtfully. "Us gets no drunker," he explained to his new friend.

"You think Farmer Chegwidden had reached that stage? He could hardly have been more intoxicated than he was when you found him?"

Peter admitted that the farmer's condition was unquestionably as his friend had stated.

"He was dead drunk?"

"Mucky drunk," said Peter with a burst of confidence.

"You were not astonished, as you know he is an habitual drunkard?"

Peter was just going to agree, when he remembered he didn't know the meaning of the word habitual.

"He gets drunk frequently. Makes a habit of it," explained counsel.

"He du," said Peter, in the emphatic manner which makes for good evidence.

"Why did you say just now he was not drunk when you found him?" asked counsel smoothly.

Peter's eyes were opened, and he discovered he was not in a bar-room, but in the Guildhall between rows of unsympathetic faces, and his nice young companion was not a friend at all; and he knew also he had been giving evidence against a parishioner. It was useless after that to proceed with the charge against Brightly in its original form; and his advocate then attempted to show that he was equally innocent of theft.

Here, however, he failed, and his lordship himself, who felt in the mood to be merciful, could only point out that circumstantial evidence went entirely against the prisoner. He didn't believe that Brightly was a bad character. A long experience upon the Bench had enabled him to determine fairly accurately between the hardened criminal and the poor man who succumbed to sudden temptation. It was a wild cold night, and the prisoner in his wretched clothes had happened to pass that way, and when he found the drunken and stunned farmer lying upon the road the temptation to strip him of his clothing had been too strong. The subsequent ill-treatment of the senseless man, no doubt to gratify some old grudge, was the unpleasant feature of the case. It was not altogether easy for him to believe that Brightly had worked single-handed. He left the case to the small grocer and the candle-maker with every confidence that they would bring in a verdict in accordance with the evidence, and he hoped that their consciences would direct them aright. The consciences did their work rapidly, Brightly was declared guilty, and the learned judge found that he would not be doing his duty to the country if he sentenced him to less than three months' imprisonment with hard labour. The next case was called, and the police began as usual to complain about the sentence, and to declare that it was no use doing their duty when judges wouldn't do theirs. The prisoner was removed weeping, asking the gentlemen if they wouldn't let him have his little dog, and begging the warder to take his "duppence" and go out to buy him some rat-poison.

Brightly had indulged in several fits of play-acting since his committal. He was a dull-witted man, and they could not make him comprehend that he was a criminal of a particularly dangerous type, and his little Ju a furious beast which it had been found necessary to destroy. He was, indeed, so foolish that he failed to grasp the fact that Ju was dead. He was always asking if he mightn't have her to talk to. When they brought him food he would set a portion aside for Ju, and beg the warder to see that she got it. When he sang his hymns he put out his hand and patted the floor, thinking it was Ju. He did not want to go to the wonderful dairy without his little dog. She would like the milk and honey too. He would never have the heart to drive about in the pony-cart, which was sure to come some day if he only waited long enough, unless Ju was squatting upon

the fern at the bottom or on the seat beside him. It would be dreary Dartmoor indeed without tail-wagging starving Ju. They could not make him understand that Ju was starving no longer. Since his committal Brightly had failed to benefit from the food, which was the best he had ever eaten in his life, though it was prison fare. He was thinner because he could not feed upon the air and the solitude, or smell the moor, and he was more blind because the healing touch of the sun was off his eyes. He often thought of an evening how beautifully the sun would be shining across Sourton Down, and he wondered if the gentlemen would let him go, just to get a feel of it for a few minutes. Sometimes he thought he could hear the Tavy roaring, but it was nothing but the prison van rumbling in.

After sentence Brightly became more foolish, and rambled about his little dog worse than ever. The doctor certified he was totally incapable of undergoing hard labour, and he was removed to the infirmary, where kind people visited him and gave him tracts and hoped he would see the wickedness of his ways before it was too late. At last Brightly began to comprehend that he was a vagabond of the baser sort. All the gentlemen had said so, and they would not have impressed it upon him so frequently if it was untrue. It appeared that he had led a life of vice from his earliest years. It had been wicked to walk about the moor trading in rabbit-skins, and vile to live in a cave upon Belstone Cleave; and he had never known it until then. There was so much that he didn't know. He learnt a lot about literature in his confinement. A lady read portions of the Bible to him, and Brightly found some of it interesting, although he could not understand why the Hebrew gentlemen were always fighting, and his teacher didn't seem able to explain it. Another lady tried to teach him "Jerusalem the Golden," and he responded as well as he could, but the words would not remain in his poor memory, and he always gave a quaint rendering of his own when he tried to repeat the lines. He had the same question for every one: might he have his little dog and talk to her for a bit? At last the doctor made him understand that Ju was dead, and after that Brightly changed. His soul became rusty, as it were, and he did not respond to his teachers. He accepted everything with the same patient spirit, but he showed indifference. He became like a tortoise, and when people stroked his shell he refused to put his head out. It was all owing to the same old fault—he could not understand things. He comprehended that he was a criminal, and it had been fully explained to him that criminals must be kept in confinement because they constitute a danger to other people. But he could not understand what Ju had done that she should be taken away from him and killed. Apparently she too had been a criminal, and much worse than himself; for he had only been sent to prison, while she had been executed. That was what Brightly couldn't understand; but then he was only a fool.

Pendoggat left the court after sentence upon Brightly had been pronounced, and began his homeward journey. The trial had pleased him, and satisfied his sense of justice. He was hurrying back because there was a service that evening and he was going to preach. Brightly would make a good subject for his sermon, the man who was alone because he was not fit to dwell with his kind, the man who had been caught in his sins and punished for them. He had always tried to impress his listeners with the fact that every man is sure to suffer for his sins some day; and he believed what he said, and could not understand why people were so dull as to think they would escape. Pendoggat had discovered long ago that every man regards his neighbours as sinners and himself as a saint. He behaved in exactly the same way himself. He would not be punished, because he always made a point of repenting of his sins. He saved himself by prayer and chapel attendances, and every day would insure his soul against fire by reading the Bible. And yet he thought himself different from other people, and was amazed when they had the effrontery to declare that they too were saved, although neighbour This and neighbour That ought to have known they were most assuredly and everlastingly damned.

The region of the Tavy was cold and clear; a great change from the low-lying city on the Exe and Greedy where there had been mist and drizzle. As Pendoggat rode up from Lydford he noticed white pools and splashes upon the dark tower and roof of St. Michael's church upon its mount, and his heart warmed at the cold sight. It was to him what the note of the cuckoo is to many, a promise, not of spring, but of the wild days when solitude increases and the bogs become blue glaciers. Winter had come and there would soon be the usual November fall of snow. Pendoggat prepared his discourse as he rode up. The night was coming when no man could work, miners least of all. His was not a cold theology by any means. It contained, indeed, little that was not red-hot. The old-fashioned lake of fire, surrounded by attendants in a uniform of tails and hoofs, armed with pitchforks to keep sinners sizzling and turn them occasionally, was good enough for him. Every one would have to be burnt some time, like the gorse in swaling-time, except himself.

Ebenezer was crowded that evening. The week-day services were popular, especially in winter, when the evenings were long, and there was no money for the inn. Chapel upon the moor occupies much the same place in the affections of the parishioners as the music-hall has obtained over the minds of dwellers in big towns; and for much the same reason, everybody likes to be entertained, and praying and hymn-singing are essentially dramatic performances. A warm church or chapel is an attractive place on a winter's evening, when it is dull at home, and there is nothing doing outside. Middle-aged men will always speak lovingly of their village church and its pleasant evening services. They do not remember much about the prayers and hymns; but they have a very clear and tender recollection of the golden-haired girl who used to sit in the next pew but one.

Pezzack did not come in until Pendoggat had finished his discourse. He was a sort of missionary, carrying the gospel over many villages, and his unfortunate habit of tumbling from his bicycle kept many a congregation waiting. He entered at last, with a bruised nose and tender ear, and

took possession of the reading-desk which his friend and partner had been keeping warm for him; and then in his usual ridiculous fashion he undid Pendoggat's good work by preaching of a pleasant land on the other side of this world of woe. Eli had always been an optimist, and now that he was happily married his lack of a proper religious pessimism became more strongly marked than ever. He would never make a really popular minister while he insisted upon looking at the bright side of things. Many of his listeners thought him frivolous when he spoke of happiness after death. They couldn't think wherever he got his strange ideas from. It seemed as if Pezzack wanted to deprive them of that glowing hell which they had learnt to love at their mother's knee.

The congregation melted away quickly to the echo of Eli's blessing, and the friends found themselves alone, to put out the lamps, lock the chapel, and leave everything in order. The minister was elated; they had enjoyed a "blessed hour;" the world was going very well just then; and he longed to clasp Pendoggat by the hand and tell him what a good and generous man he was. He stood near the door, and with the enthusiasm of a minor prophet exclaimed: "'Ow beautiful is this place, Mr. Pendoggat!"

A more hideous interior could hardly have been conceived, only the minister was fortunate enough to know nothing about art. Temples of Nonconformity on Dartmoor, as elsewhere, do not conform to any recognised style of architecture, unless it be that of the wooden made-in-Germany Noah's Ark; but Pezzack was able to regard the wet walls and dreary benches through rose-tinted spectacles; or perhaps his bruised eye lent a kind of glamour to the scene. It was certain, however, that Pezzack had never yet seen men or things accurately. He regarded Pendoggat as a saint, and the chapel as a place of beauty. His eyes were apparently of as little use to him as his judgment. A blind man might have discovered more with his finger-tips.

"You'll never make a preacher, man," said Pendoggat, as the last light went out. "I'd got them worked up, and then you come and let them down again. Your preaching don't bring them to the sinner's bench. It makes them sit tight and think they are saved."

"I can't talk about 'ell. It don't come to me natural," said Eli in his simple fashion.

"Sinners ain't saved by kindness. We've got to scare them. If you don't flog a biting horse he'll bite again. You're too soft with them. You want to get manly."

"I endeavour to do my duty," said Eli fervently. "But I can't talk to them rough when I feel so 'appy."

"Happy, are ye?" muttered Pendoggat, his eyes upon the ground.

"My 'appiness is beyond words. I get up 'appy, and I go to bed 'appy, and I eat 'appy. It's 'eaven on earth, Mr. Pendoggat, and when a man's so 'appy he can't talk about 'ell. I owe it all to you, Mr. Pendoggat."

"The happiness or hell?" said Pendoggat, with a flash of grim humour.

"The wonderful and beautiful 'appiness. My wife and I pray for you every night and morning. We are very comfortable in our little cottage, and when, Mr. Pendoggat," he went on with enthusiasm, "when God sends our first little olive-branch we shall 'ave all that our 'earts can desire. Ah, Mr. Pendoggat, you don't know what a blessed thing it is to be a father."

"You don't either," said the other sharply.

"I feel it coming upon me. I feel the pride and the glory and the honour of it swelling up in my 'eart and making me 'appy with the world and all that therein is. Amen. I can see myself walking about with it, saying: 'Open your eyes, my dear, and look at the proud and 'appy father of your being.' 'Ow beautiful it all is, Mr. Pendoggat!"

Pezzack spoke like a fool. Why such men should swell with pride when they become putative or actual parents is one of the wonders of the universe. Gratification is permissible enough, but not a sense of pride, which implies they have done something marvellous. Pezzack was like a hen cackling because she has laid an egg, and supposing she has accomplished something which entitles her to a chief place among hens, when she has only performed an ordinary function of Nature which she could not possibly have prevented.

"You're too soft," muttered Pendoggat, as they turned away from the gloomy box-shaped chapel and began to ascend the silent road. It was a clear night, the stars were large, and the wind was cold enough to convey the idea of heat. There was enough light for them to see the white track crossed ahead by another narrow road cut out of the black moor. By morning there would be a greyness upon everything, and the heather would be covered with frosted gossamers.

Pezzack was blowing on his big red hands, and stumbling about as if he had been Farmer Chegwiddden. He had never learnt how to walk, and it was getting late to learn. Pendoggat was carrying a huge black Bible, which was almost as cumbersome as Mary's umbrella. He always took it to chapel with him, because it was useful to shake at the doubters and weaker vessels. Big books in sombre bindings generally terrify the young or illiterate, whatever their contents; and a big Bible brandished at a reading-desk suggests a sort of court of appeal to which the preacher is ready to carry his hearers' difficulties.

"I think we are going to get some snow," said Eli, falling back naturally upon the state of the

weather.

"There is a bit on Brentor," said Pendoggat.

"Then there will be some on Ger Tor. I must take my wife out to-morrow to look at it. She does not know Dartmoor. It will be a little pleasure for her."

The Pezzacks were easily amused. The first sprinkle of snow on Ger Tor was worth going out to see, and could be discussed during the long evening.

"It will mean the closing of the mine. There must be a lot of water in it," suggested Eli in a nervous manner, although he was anticipating things rather, seeing that the precious mine had never been opened.

"Afraid you won't get your fifteen shillings a week, are ye?" said Pendoggat, in what was for him a pleasant voice.

"I don't think of that," lied Eli, stumbling along, with his hands flapping like a pair of small wings. "I am in your 'ands, Mr. Pendoggat, so I am safe. But my uncle writes every week and sends me a mining-paper, and wants to know why we don't throw ourselves about a bit. I think he means by that we ought to be at work. My uncle talks slang, Mr. Pendoggat."

"Tell him he's a fool," said Pendoggat curtly.

"I 'ave," said Eli meekly. "At least I suggested it, but I think he misunderstood me. He says that if we don't make a start he will come down and make things 'um a bit. I am sorry my uncle uses such expressions. They use funny phrases in Bromley, Mr. Pendoggat."

"He can come down if he likes, and you can give him a pick and tell him to mine for himself until the commoners catch him," said Pendoggat pleasantly. "We've done with your uncle. He won't subscribe any more money, and I reckon his friends won't either. We've done our part. We've got the money, nothing like so much as we wanted, but still a good bit, and they can have the nickel, or what they think is nickel, and they can come here and work it till the Duchy asks them what they're after, or till the commoners fling them into the Tavy. Write that to your uncle," said Pendoggat, poking his victim in the ribs with his big Bible.

The minister stopped, but his companion went on, so he had to follow, stumbling after him very much as Brightly had followed upon that same road begging for his "duppence."

"What do you mean, Mr. Pendoggat? What do you mean?" he kept on saying.

"You're a happy man," muttered Pendoggat like a mocking bird. "Got a wife, hoping for a child, manager of a mining company, with a rich fool of an uncle. You're a lucky man, Pezzack."

"I'm a 'appy and fortunate man," gasped Eli.

"Every one respects you. They think you're a poor preacher, but they know you're honest. It's a fine thing to be honest. You'll be called to a town some day, and have a big congregation to sit under you if you keep honest."

"I 'ope so. You're walking so fast I don't seem able to keep up with you."

"It's a cold night. Come on, and get warm. How would you feel if people found out you weren't honest? I saw a man sentenced to-day—hard labour, for robbery. How would you feel if you were sentenced for robbery? Gives you a cold feeling, I reckon. Not much chance of a pulpit when you came out. Prison makes a man stink for the rest of his life."

"I can't keep up with you, Mr. Pendoggat, unless I run. I haven't enough breath," panted Eli.

Pendoggat put the Bible under his arm, turned, caught Eli by the wrist and strode on, dragging the clumsy minister after him.

"Mr. Pendoggat, I seem to think some'ow you don't 'ardly know what you are a-doing of." Pezzack was confused and becoming uncertain of grammar.

"You'd stand and freeze. Breathe this wind into you and walk like a man. What would you think, I'm asking ye, if you were found guilty of robbery and sent to prison? Tell me that."

"I can't think no'ow," sobbed Eli, trying to believe that his dear friend and brother had not gone mad.

"Can't think," growled Pendoggat. "See down under! That's where the mine is, your mine, Pezzack, your nickel mine."

"You are 'urting my arm, Mr. Pendoggat, my rheumatic arm. Don't go on so fast if you kindly please, for I don't seem able to do it. Yonder ain't my mine, Mr. Pendoggat. It's yours, but I called it mine because you told me to."

"Your uncle thinks it's yours. So do his friends. All the business has gone through you. What do they think of me? Who do they think I am?"

"Oh, Mr. Pendoggat, I told them you are the manager."

"Your man. Your paid servant. Does it pinch here, Pezzack? 'Tis a bit up here, and the moor's

rough."

"Your 'and pinches, the good right 'and of fellowship," panted Eli.

"Don't the words pinch? Suppose the mine fails, where are you? Your uncle will be down on you, and he'll cast you over. You won't see any of his savings, and there's a wife to keep, and children coming, but you're a happy man. We're all happy on a frosty night like this. Come on!"

"What are you a-saying? I don't seem to get hold of it. Let me stop, Mr. Pendoggat. I want to wipe the sweat off my face."

"Let it bide there. My name don't appear in the mining business. The thing is yours from start to finish, and I'm your man. There will be none more against you if the mine fails, and I'm thrown out of a job. I've got the cash, Pezzack, every penny of it down to the Barton in notes. When are we going to start on the new chapel, minister? We're going to build a new chapel, the finest on the moor. We can't start till the spring. You told your uncle that? The snow's coming. It's in the air now, and I reckon 'tis falling thick on the high tors. We can't build the chapel and get out the nickel while the snow lasts."

Pendoggat was walking at a furious pace, devouring the keen wind, his head bent forward, chin upon his chest, lurching from side to side, dragging the minister like a parent hauling a refractory child.

"He 'ave lost his senses. He don't know what he's doing with me," Eli panted, becoming for the first time indirect.

"We're getting near the top. There will be a fine wind. Do you good, Pezzack. Make a man of you. What do you think of the nickel down under? Pretty good stuff, ain't it? Had it analysed yet? Found out what it's worth a ton? Got permission from the Duchy? I reckon you've done all that. You're a fine business man. You know a good sample of nickel when you see it."

"I left it all to you, Mr. Pendoggat. You know all about it."

Pezzack tried to say more, something about his feet and rheumatic arm and the perspiration which blinded him, but he had no more breath. Pendoggat's fingers were like a handcuff about his wrist.

"Suppose it ain't nickel at all. I never heard of any on Dartmoor. They'll be down on you, Pezzack, for the money, howling at ye like so many wolves, and if you can't pay there's prison. What are you going to say for yourself? You can't drag me into it. If I tell you there ain't a penn'orth of nickel down under you can't touch me. If you had proof against me you couldn't use it, for your own sake. You'd have to keep your mouth shut, for the sake of your wife and the family what's coming. It's a fine thing to have a wife, and a fine thing to be expecting a child, but it's a better thing to be sure of your position. It ain't wise to marry when you're in debt, and when you've got a wife, and are depending upon a man for your living, you can't make an enemy of that man. I reckon we're on top. Bide here a bit and rest yourself."

They were on the summit of one of the big rounded hills. The heather was stiff with frost and seemed to grate against their boots. The weather had changed completely while they had been coming up from the chapel. Already the stars were covered over with dense clouds which were dropping snowflakes. There was nothing in sight, and the only sound was the eternal roar of the Tavy in the distance. Helmen Barton was below. The house was invisible, but the smell of its peat fire ascended. Pendoggat was breathing noisily through his nose, while Pezzack stood before him utterly exhausted, his weak knees trembling and knocking against each other, and his mouth open like a dog.

"Why have you done this to me, Mr. Pendoggat?" he gasped at length.

"To make a man of you. If I have a puppy I make a dog out of him with a whip. When I get hold of a weak man I try to knock the weakness out of him."

"Was it because I didn't talk proper about 'ell?" sobbed the frightened minister.

"Come on," cried Pendoggat roughly. "Let's have a bout, man. It's a fine night for it. Put out your arms. I'll be the making of you yet. Here's to get your blood warm."

He raised his Bible and brought it down on Pezzack's head, crushing his hat in.

Eli stumbled aside, crying out: "Oh, Mr. Pendoggat, you don't know what you're doing. 'Tting me with the 'oly word. Let me go home, Mr. Pendoggat. My wife is waiting for me."

Pendoggat was too far gone to listen. He followed the wretched man, hitting at him with the big book, driving him along the top of the hill with resounding blows. Eli could not escape; he was unable to run, and he was dazed; he kept on stumbling and bleating, until another good blow on the head settled his business and sent him sprawling into the heather.

"Get up, man," shouted Pendoggat. "Get up and make a bout of it;" but Eli went on lying flat, sobbing and panting, and trying to pray for his persecutor.

"Get up, or I'll walk on ye with my nailed boots."

Eli shambled up slowly like some strange quadruped, found his awkward feet, and stood swaying

and moaning before his tormentor, convinced that he was in the hands of a madman, and terribly afraid of losing his life. Pendoggat stood grim and silent, his head down, the Bible tucked reverently beneath his arm, the snow whitening his shoulders. It had become darker in the last few minutes, the clouds were pressing lower, and the sound of the Tavy was more distant than it had been.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," quoted Pendoggat slowly. "'Tis a cheering text for a whist winter's night."

He had finished amusing himself, and now that he was cool again his mind reverted naturally to his religion.

Eli could not say anything. It was as much as he could do to stand upright. His clay-like right hand was pressed to his forehead. He was afraid he would fall down a great many times going home.

"Shake," said Pendoggat in a friendly way. "Give me the good right hand of fellowship, minister."

Eli heard him, comprehended the meaning of the words, and hesitated, partly from inability to act, and partly from unwillingness to respond. He felt he might fall down if he removed the hand from his dazed head. He smiled in a stupid fashion and managed to say: "You 'ave been cruel to me, Mr. Pendoggat. You 'ave used me like a beast."

Pendoggat stepped forward, caught the big cold hand in his, pulled it roughly from the minister's forehead, and shook it heartily. Not content with that, he dragged the poor dazed wretch nearer, threw an arm about his neck, and kissed him on the cheek. Perhaps it was the influence of his Spanish blood which suggested the act. Possibly it was a genuine wave of sorrow and repentance. He did not know himself; but the frightened Maggot only groaned and sobbed, and had no caresses to give in return.

"How good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity," quoted Pendoggat, with the utmost reverence.

CHAPTER XX

ABOUT THE PASSOVER OF THE BRUTE

Mary soon forgave her brother for his failure over the electric light business, and they became as good friends as ever, except when Peter demanded sums of money for services which Mary could not remember he had rendered. Peter had a trick of benefiting himself, and charging the cost to his sister. They were settled for the winter; Peter had turfed up the chinks in the walls, adding a solid plaster of clay; had repaired the thatch of gorse where it had rotted, laying on big stones to prevent the removal of any portion by the gales; and had cut the winter supply of fern. He sent in the bill to Mary, and she had taken it to Master, and Master had put on silver spectacles and golden wisdom and revised the costs so thoroughly, that Peter had to complain he had not received the price of the tobacco smoked during the work of restoration.

Mary still mourned for Old Sal, knowing she would never see "the like o' he again," while Peter cooked his mommet and cursed Pendoggat. Peter was a weak little creature, who could only revenge himself by deeds of witchcraft. He was not muscular like his sister, who would have stood up to any man on Dartmoor, and made some of them sorry for themselves before she had done with them. Mary believed in witchcraft, because she was to a certain extent religious; she had been baptised, for instance, and that was an act of witchcraft pure and simple, as it was intended to protect the child from being overlooked by the devil; but, if any man had insulted her, she would not have made a mommet of him, or driven a nail into his footprint; she would have taken her stick, "as big as two spears and a dag," and whacked him well with it.

The prospect of winter encouraged Peter to turn his mind towards literary pursuits. There were days of storm and long evenings to be occupied; and the little savage considered he might fill those hours with work for which his talents seemed to qualify him, and possibly bequeath to posterity some abiding monument of his genius. Peter had a weekly paper and studied it well. He gathered from it that people still wrote books; apparently every one wrote them, though only about one in every hundred was published. Most people had the manuscripts of their books put away in cupboards, linhays, and old teapots, waiting the favourable moment to bring them forth and astonish the world. This was something of a revelation to Peter. Where was his book! Why had he remained so long a mute inglorious scholar? Possibly the commoners who met him in daily intercourse had their books completed and stored away safely in their barns, and he was certainly as learned as any of them. Peter went off to Master, and opened to him the secret of his mind.

Master was entirely sympathetic. He gave it as his opinion that any one could write a book. When the art of forming letters of the alphabet had been acquired, nothing indeed remained, except pen, ink, and paper; and, as he reminded Peter, Mother Cobley sold ink at one penny the bottle, while pen and paper could be obtained from the same source for an additional twopence. Genius could therefore startle the world at threepence a head.

Peter was profoundly interested. He indicated the big tomes, which Master kept always lying beside him: a copy of the *Arcadia*, a Bible dictionary, a volume of Shakespeare, and a few books of poetry, most of them presents from a former rector long deceased, and suggested that Master was accountable for the lot. The old man beamed through his spectacles, coughed uneasily, and generally assumed that attitude of modesty which is said to be one of the most marked traits of literary men.

"You can spell turnips," Master reminded.

"Sure 'nuff," said Peter. "I can spell harder words than he. I can spell hyacinth, and he'm a proper little brute."

He proceeded to spell the word, making only three mistakes. Master advised him to confine himself for the present to more simple language, and went on to ask what was the style and subject of Peter's proposed undertaking.

"I wants yew to tell me," was the answer.

Master had an idea that genius ought to be inspired from within and not from without, but he merely answered: "Nothing's no trouble, varmer," and suggested that Peter should compose a diary. "'Tis what a man does every day," he explained. "How he gets up, and how he goes to bed, and how he yets his dinner, and how his belly feels."

Peter considered that the idea was brilliant. Such an item as how he drank his beer would certainly prove entertaining, and might very well be original.

"Then he ses things about other volk, and about the weather," Master went on. "He puts down all he can think of, so long as it be decent. Mun't put down anything that bain't decent 'cause that would shock volks."

"Nothing 'bout Varmer Pendoggat and Chegwidden's maid?" the other suggested, in rather a disappointed voice.

"Hark ye, Peter," said Master decidedly, "you had best bide quiet about that. Volks wun't tak' your word against his, and if he purty nigh murders ye no one wun't try to stop 'en. A man bain't guilty till he be found out, and Varmer Pendoggat ain't been found out."

"He can't touch I. Mary wun't let 'en, and I've made a mommet of 'en tu," said the little man.

"Made a mommet, ha' ye? Aw, man, that be an awful thing to du. It be calling in the devil to work for ye, and the devil wun't work wi'out pay, man. He'll come sure 'nuff, and say to yew: 'I wants your soul, Peter. I've a bought 'en wi' that mommet what yew made.' I be main cruel sorry for yew, Peter."

"It be done now," said Peter gloomily.

Master wagged his head until his silver spectacles dropped off his nose, added a little wisdom, then returned to his subject.

"Yew mun write things what you wun't be ashamed to let folk read. When 'tis a wet day yew ses so, and when it be fine you ses it be butiful. When yew gets thoughts yew puts 'em all down."

"What du'ye mean?" asked the aspirant.

"Why, you think as how it be a proper feeling when you'm good, and yew ses so. That be a thought."

"S'pose yew bain't feeling good?" suggested Peter quite naturally.

"Then yew writes about what it feels like to be bad," explained Master. "Yew puts it down this sort o' way: 'I feels bad to-day. I don't mean I feels bad in my body, for that be purty middling, but I feels bad in my soul. It be a cruel pity, and I hopes as how I wun't feel so bad to-morrow.' All them be thoughts, Peter; and that be the way books are written."

"Thank ye kindly, master. It be proper easy," said Peter.

"You'm welcome, varmer. Nothing's no trouble."

Peter bought the articles necessary for fame, and went home. Mary was forking manure, pausing only to spit on her hands; but she stopped for another reason when Peter told her he was going to keep a diary.

"What be yew talking about?" she cried, amazed at such folly. "Us ha' got one as 'tis. What du us want wi' another?"

Peter had to explain that the business of his diary had nothing to do with such base commerce as cream and butter, but consisted in recording the actions of a blameless life upon a pennyworth of paper for the instruction and edification of those who should come after them. Mary grasped her fork, and told him he was mazed.

Peter was not sure that Mary had spoken falsely when he came to test his 'prentice hand. In theory the art of writing was so simple, and consisted in nothing more difficult than setting down what he would otherwise have spoken, adding those gems of thought with which his mind was

occasionally enriched under the ennobling influence of moderate beer. But nothing appeared upon the sheet of paper except dirt. Even the simplest art requires practice. Not every man can milk a cow at the first attempt. After much labour he recorded the statement: "This be a buke, and when 'tis dun 'twill be a dairy. All volks write bukes, and it bain't easy till you'm yused to it." There he stopped for the day. As soon as he left the paper all sorts of ideas crowded into his mind, and he hurried back to put them down, but directly he took up the pen his mind was a blank again. The ideas had been swept away like butterflies on a windy day. Mary called him "a proper old vule," and her thought was probably quite as good as any that were likely to occur to him. "'Tis bravish times us lives in. Us mun keep up wi' em," was Peter's answer.

The next day he tried again, but the difficulties remained. Peter managed to place on record such imperishable facts as there was snow and more would come likely, and he had got up later than usual, and he and Mary were tolerably well, and the fare for the day was turnips and bacon—he wanted to drag in turnips because he could spell the word, and he added a note to inform posterity that he had taught Master how to do so—but nothing came in the way of thoughts, and without them Peter was persuaded his book could not properly be regarded as belonging to the best order of literature. At the end of his second day of creation Peter began to entertain a certain feeling of respect, if not of admiration, for those who made a living with the pen; but on the third day inspiration touched his brain, and he became a literary soul. The old gentleman who shared his house, so called out of courtesy, as it contained only one room, was making more noise than usual, as if the cold had got into his chest. The diarist kept looking up to peer at Grandfather's worn features, wondering what was wrong, and at last the great idea came to him. "Dalled if Gran'vaither bain't a telling to I," he exclaimed; and then he got up and went cautiously across the room, which was the same thing as going from one side of the house to the other, his boots rustling in the fern which covered the floor.

"Be'ye alright, Gran'vaither?" he asked, lapping the old fellow's chest with great respect. He was accustomed to chat with the clock, when alone, as another man higher in the scale of civilisation might have talked to his dog. Peter noticed that it was getting dark around him, although it was still early in the afternoon.

"I be cruel sick," a voice answered.

Peter cried out and began to shiver. He stared at the window, the panes of which were no longer white, but blue. Something was taking place outside, not a storm, as the moor was unusually silent, and there seemed to be no wind. Peter tried to collect his thoughts into a form suitable for publication. He shivered his way to the other side of the room and wrote laboriously: "Gran'vaither be telling to I. Ses he be cruel sick." Then he had another attack of shivers.

"Who was that a telling to I?" he shouted, the noise of his voice making him bolder.

"'Twas me," came the answer at once; and Peter gulped like a dying fish, but managed to put it down in the diary.

"Who be ye?" he called.

"Old Gran'vaither."

Peter stood in the fern, biting his fingers and sweating. He was trembling too much to write any more. So Grandfather was a living creature after all. He had always supposed that the clock had a sort of existence, not the same as his own, but the kind of life owned by the pixies, and now he was sure of it.

"Why didn't ye tell to I avore?" he asked reproachfully.

Grandfather appeared to regard the question as impertinent, as he gave no answer.

"Yew was making creepy noises last night. I heard ye," Peter went on, waxing bold. "Seemed as if yew was trying to crawl out o' your own belly."

"I was trying to talk," the clock explained.

Peter had some more shivers. It seemed natural enough to hear old Grandfather talking, and he tried to persuade himself it was not the voice which frightened him, but the queer blue light that seemed to be filling the hut. He remembered that pixies always go about with blue lanterns, and he began to believe that the surrounding moor was crowded with the little people out for a frolic at his expense. Then he thought he would go for Mary, but remembered she had gone to Lewside Cottage with dairy produce. That reminded him of the diary. What a wonderful work he would make of it now!

"Gran'vaither," he called.

"Here I be," said the voice.

"I knows yew be there," said Peter, somewhat sharply. The old gentleman was not so intellectual as he could have wished. "I wants to know how yew be telling to I?"

"Same as yew," said Grandfather.

"Yew ain't got no tongue."

"I've got a pendulum," said the clock, with a malevolent sort of titter.

"Yew'm sick?" asked Peter.

"I be that. 'Tis your doing," came the answer.

"I've looked after ye fine, Gran'vaither," said Peter crossly.

"'Tis that there thing on the hearthstone makes me sick," said the voice.

"That be a mommet," said Peter.

"I know 'tis. A mommet of Farmer Pendoggat."

"What du'ye know 'bout Varmer Pendoggat?" asked Peter suspiciously.

"Heard you talk about 'en," Grandfather answered. "Don't ye play wi' witchery, Peter. Smash the mommet up, and throw 'en away." The voice was talking quickly and becoming hoarser. "Undo what you've done if you can, and whatever you du don't ye put 'en in the fire again. If ye du I'll be telling to ye all night and will scare ye proper. I wun't give ye any sleep, Peter."

"You'm an old vule, Gran'vaither," said Peter.

"I'll get the pixies to fetch ye a crock o' gold if you leaves off witching Pendoggat. I'll mak' 'em fetch ye sovereigns, brave golden sovereigns, Peter."

"Where will 'em put the gold?" cried Peter with the utmost greediness.

"Bottom o' the well. Let the bucket down to-night, and when you pulls 'en up in the morning the gold will be in the bucket. If it ain't there to-night, look the night after. But it wun't be no good looking, Peter, if you ain't done what I told ye, and you mun put the broken bits o' mommet by the well, so as the pixies can see 'em."

"I'll du it," chuckled Peter.

"Swear you'll do it?"

"Sure 'nuff I'll du it. You'm a brave old Gran'vaither if yew can fetch a crock o' gold into the well."

"Good-bye, Peter. I wun't be telling to you again just yet."

"Good-bye, Gran'vaither. You'm welcome. I hopes you'll soon be better."

The voice did not come again, and Peter was left in the strange light and eerie silence to recover, which he did slowly, with a feeling that he had undergone a queer dream. It was not long before he was telling himself he had imagined it all. Superstitious little savage as he was, he could hardly believe that Grandfather had been chatting with him as one man might have talked to another. As he went on thinking suspicious features presented themselves to his mind. Grandfather's language had not always been correct. He had not talked like a true Gubbings, but more as a man of better education trying to bring himself down to his listener's mode of speech. Then what interest could he feel in Pendoggat that he should plead for the destruction of the mommet?

Peter addressed a number of questions to Grandfather upon these subjects, but the old clock had not another word to say. That was another suspicious feature; why should the clock be unable to talk then when it had chatted so freely a few minutes before? Peter rubbed his eyes, declared he was mazed, lighted his lamp, and scribbled the wonderful story in his diary until Mary came back.

"Peter," she called at once. "Aw, man, come and look! Us be going to judgment."

Peter rose, overflowing with mysticism, but he too gasped when he got outside and saw the moor and sky. Indigo-tinted clouds were rolling slowly down Tavy Cleave, there was apparently no sky, and through rents in the clouds they could see blocks of granite and patches of black moor hanging as it were in space. In the direction of Ger Tor was a column of dark mist rising from the river. On each side of this column the outlook was clear for a little way before the clouds again blotted out everything. Those clouds in front were beneath their feet, and they could hear the roaring of the invisible river still further down. Overhead there was nothing except a dense blue mist from which the curious light, like the glow of pixy lanterns, seemed to be reflected.

"I ha' never seen the like," said frightened Mary. "None o' the volks ha' ever seen the like on't. Some of 'em be praying down under, and wanting chapel opened. Old Betty Middleweek be scared so proper that her's paying money what her owes. They ses it be judgment coming. There be volks to the village a sotting wi' fingers in their ear-holes so as they wun't hear trumpets. What shall us du if it be judgment, Peter?"

"Us mun hide quiet, and go along wi' the rest. If 'tis judgment us wun't have no burying expenses," said Peter.

"I'd ha' gone in and asked Master if 'twas judgment, if I hadn't been so mazed like. He'd ha' knowed. A brave cruel larned man be Master. What happens to we if they blows on the trumpets?"

"Us goes up to heaven in a whirlpool and has an awful doom," said Peter hazily.

"Us mun go up wi' vull bellies," said practical Mary, marching off to blow at the fire.

Peter followed, walking delicately, hoping that witchcraft would come to an end so soon as he had procured the crock of gold. Inside the hut, surrounded with comforting lamplight, he told his sister all about Grandfather's loquacity. Mary was so astounded that she dropped a piece of peat into the pot and placed a turnip on the fire. "Aw, Peter! Telled to ye same as Master might?" she gasped.

"Ah, told I to break the mommet and he'd give I gold."

Mary sat down, as she could think better that way. She had always regarded Grandfather as a sentient member of the family, but in her wildest moments had never supposed he would arouse himself to preach morality in their own tongue. Things were coming to a pretty pass when clocks began to talk. She would have her geese lecturing her next. She did not want any more men about the place, as one Peter was quite enough. If Grandfather had learnt to talk he would probably proceed to walk; and then he would be like any other man, and go to the village with her brother, and return in the same condition, and be pestering her continually for money. The renaissance of Grandfather was regarded by Mary as a particularly bad sign; and for that reason she decided that it was impossible and Peter had been dreaming.

"You'm a liar," he answered in the vulgar tongue. "'Tis down in my buke."

This was sufficient evidence, and Mary could only wag her head at it. She had a reverence for things that were written in books.

"Be yew going to break the mommet?" she asked; and Peter replied that it was his intention to make yet another clay doll, break it into fragments, and commit the original doll, which was the only one capable of working evil, to the fire as before. Thus he would earn the crock of gold, and obtain vengeance upon Pendoggat also. Pixies were simple folk, who could easily be hoodwinked by astute human beings; and he ventured to propose that the mommet should be baked upon Mary's hearthstone in future, so that Grandfather would see nothing of the operation which had made him sick.

Mary remained an agnostic. She could understand Grandfather when he played impish pranks upon them, but when it came to bold brazen speech she could not believe. Peter had been asleep and imagined it all. They argued the matter until they nearly quarrelled, and then Mary said she was going to look about her brother's residence to try and find out whether any one had been playing a joke upon him. They went outside, and were relieved to discover that a change had taken place in the weather. Evidently judgment was not imminent, Betty Middleweek could cease paying her debts, and the chapel could be closed again. The blue light had faded, the clouds were higher, and had turned to ghostly grey.

"Aw, Peter, 'tis nought but snow," said Mary cheerfully.

"Snow never made Gran'vaither talk avore," Peter reminded her.

Mary looked about her brother's little hut without seeing anything unusual. Then she strode around the walls thereof, and her sharp eyes soon perceived a branch of dry furze lying about a yard away from the side of the cot. She asked Peter if he had dropped it there, and he replied that it might have been there for days. "Wind would ha' took it away," said Mary. "There was wind in the night, but ain't been none since. That's been broke off from the linny."

At the end of the hut was a small shed, its sides made of old packing-cases, its roof and door composed of gorse twisted into hurdles. The back wall of the cot, a contrivance of stones plastered together with clay, was also the end wall of the linhay. Mary went into the linhay, which was used by Peter as a place for storing peat. She soon made a discovery, and called for the lantern. When it was brought she pulled out a loose stone about the centre of the wall, and holding the lantern close to the hole saw at once a black board which looked like panelling, but was the back of the clock-case. Grandfather stood against that wall; and in the middle of the plank was a hole which had been bored recently.

"Go'ye into the hut and ask Gran'vaither how he be," called Mary.

Peter toddled off, got before the old clock, and inquired with solicitude: "How be 'ye, Gran'vaither?"

"Fine, and how be yew?" came the answer.

"Ah," muttered Peter. "That be the way my old Gran'vaither ought to tell."

After that they soon stumbled upon the truth. It had been whispered about the place that Peter was dabbling in witchcraft for Pendoggat's detriment; and Annie Crocker had heard the whisper. To inform her master was an act of ordinary enjoyment. He had sworn at her, professed contempt for Peter and all his dolls, stated his intention of destroying them, or at least of obtaining the legal benefit conferred by certain ancient Acts of Parliament dealing with witches; but in his heart he was horribly afraid. He spent hours watching the huts, and when he saw the inhabitants move away he would go near, hoping to steal the clay doll and destroy it; but Peter's door was always locked. At last he hit upon the plan of frightening the superstitious little man by addressing him through the medium of the clock. He thought he had succeeded. Perhaps he would have done so had Mary's keen eyes not detected the scrap of gorse which his departure had snapped from one of the hurdles which made the door of the linhay. Pendoggat might be a strong man physically, able to bully the weak, or bring a horse to its knees, but his mind was

made of rotten stuff, and it is the strong mind rather than the stalwart body which saves a man when "Ephraim's Pinch" comes. Pendoggat's knees became wobbly whenever he thought of Peter and his clay doll.

When the blue mist had cleared off, snow began to fall in a business-like way, and before the last light had been extinguished in the twin villages the moor was buried. Peter thought he would watch beside the well during the early part of the night, to see the little people dragging up his crock of gold, for he had not altogether abandoned the idea that it had been witchcraft and not Pendoggat which had conferred upon Grandfather the gift of a tongue, but the snow made his plan impossible. He and Mary sat together and talked in a subdued fashion. Peter knitted a pair of stockings for his sister, while Mary mended her brother's boots and hammered snow-nails into the soles. A new mommet had been made, broken up, and its fragments were placed beside the well, while the original doll baked resignedly upon Mary's hearthstone. Pendoggat or pixies the savages were a match for either. It remained calm upon the moor, but the snow continued most of the night with a slight southerly drift, falling in the dense masses which people who live upon mountains have to put up with.

In the morning all was white and dazzling; the big tors had nearly doubled in size, and the sides of Tavy Cleave were bulging as though pregnant with little Tavy Cleaves. It was a glorious day, one of those days when the ordinary healthy person wants to stand on his head or skip about like a young unicorn. The sun was out, the sky was as blue as a baby's eyes, and the clouds were like puffs of cigarette smoke. Peter embraced himself, recorded in his work of creation that it was all very good, then floundered outside and made for the well. He shovelled a foot of snow from the cover, wound up the bucket, caught a glimpse of yellow water, and then of something golden, more precious than water, air, or sunshine, brave yellow pieces of gold, five in number, worth one-hundred-and-twenty pints of beer apiece. They were lying at the bottom of the bucket like a beautiful dream. Peter had come into a fortune; his teeth informed him that the coins were genuine, his tongue sent the glad tidings to Mary, his mind indulged in potent flights of travel and dissipation. He had inherited twelve hundred pints of beer.

"Aw, Peter," Mary was calling. "There ha' been witches abroad to-night."

"They'm welcome," cried Peter.

"Look ye here," Mary went on in a frightened voice. "Look ye here, will ye? Here be a whist sight, I reckon."

Mary was standing near the edge of the cleave, knee-deep in snow, looking down. When Peter floundered up to her side she said nothing, but pointed at the snow in front. Peter's hilarious countenance was changed, and the five sovereigns in his hand became like so many pieces of ice. The snow ahead was marked with footprints, not those of an animal, not those of a man. The marks were those of a biped, cloven like a cow's hoof but much larger, and they travelled in a perfectly straight line across the moor, and behind them the snow was ruffled occasionally as by a tail. Peter began to blubber like a frightened child.

"'Tis him," he muttered.

"Aw ees, 'tis him," said Mary, "Us shouldn't meddle wi' mommets and such. 'Tis sure to bring 'en."

"He must ha' come up over from Widdecombe in the snow," gasped Peter.

"Going beyond?" asked Mary, with a motion of her head.

"Ees," muttered Peter. "Us will see which way he took."

"T'row the gold away, Peter. T'row 'en away," pleaded Mary.

"I wun't," howled Peter. He wouldn't have parted with his six hundred pints of beer for ten thousand devils.

They floundered on beside the weird hoof-prints, never doubting who had caused them. It was not the first visit that the devil, who, as Peter had rightly observed, has his terrestrial country house at Widdecombe, had paid to those parts. His last recorded visit had been to Topsham and its neighbourhood half-a-century before, when he had frightened the people so exceedingly that they dared not venture out of their houses even in daylight. That affair had excited the curiosity of the whole country, and although some of the wisest men of the time tried to find a satisfactory solution of the problem they only ended by increasing the mystery. The attractions of the west country have always proved irresistible to his Satanic Majesty. From his country home at Widdecombe-on-the-Moor he had sallied out repeatedly to fight men with their own carnal weapons. He tried to hinder Francis Drake from building his house with the stones of Buckland Abbey, and nobody at that time wondered why he had taken the Abbey under his special protection, though people have wondered since. It was the devil who, disguised as a simple moorman, invited the ambitious parson and his clerk to supper, and then led them into the sea off Dawlish. There can be no doubt about the truth of that story, because the parson and clerk rocks are still to be seen by any one. It was on Heathfield, near the Tavy, that the old market-woman hid the hare that the devil was hunting in her basket, and declared to the gentleman with the tail she had never seen the creature. It was the devil who spoilt the miraculous qualities of St. Ludgvan's well by very rudely spitting in the water; who jumped into the Lynher with Parson Dando and his dogs; and it was the devil who was subdued temporarily by Parson Flavel of

Mullion; who was dismissed, again temporarily, to the Red Sea by Parson Dodge of Talland because he would insist upon pulling down the walls of the church as fast as they were built; and who was routed from the house that he had built for his friend the local cobbler in Lamorna Cove by famous Parson Corker of Bosava. Mary and Peter knew these stories and plenty of others. They didn't know that a canon authorising exorcism of the devil is still a part of the law of the established Church, and that most people, however highly educated, are little less superstitious than themselves.

The hoof-prints went towards the village, regardless of obstacles. They approached walls, and appeared again upon the other side without disturbing the fresh snow between, a feat which argued either marvellous jumping powers or the possession of wings. Peter and Mary followed them in great fear, until they saw two men ahead engaged in the same occupation, one of them making merry, the other of a sad countenance, the merry man suggesting that a donkey had been that way, the other declaring it was the devil. "Donkeys ain't got split hoofs," he stated; while his companion indicated a spot where the snow was much ruffled and said cheerfully: "'Tis where he swindged his tail."

Nearer the village the white moor was dotted with black figures, all intent upon the weird markings, none doubting who had caused them. The visitant had not passed along the street, but had prowled his way across back gardens, taking hedges and even cottages in his stride. Peter and Mary went on, left the majority of villagers, who were lamenting together as if the visitation was not altogether disagreeable to them, and found themselves presently near Lewside Cottage. Boodles was walking in the snow, hatless, her hands clasped together, her face white and frightened, taking no notice of the hoof-prints which went through the garden, but wandering as if she was trying to find her way somewhere, and had lost herself, and was wondering if she would find any one who would put her on the right road.

"She'm mazed," said Peter. "Mebbe her saw him go through."

"Aw, my dear, what be ye doing?" called Mary. "Nought on your feet, and your stockings vull o' snow. He never come for yew, my dear. He'm a gentleman, and wun't harm a purty maid. Be'ye mazed, my dear?"

"Mary," murmured the child very softly, raising both hands to her radiant head. "Come with me. I'm frightened."

"Us wun't let 'en touch ye," cried Mary valiantly. "I'll tak' my gurt stick to 'en if he tries."

Boodles caught her big hand and held it tightly. She had not even noticed the footprints. She did not know why all the villagers were out, or what they were doing on the moor.

"He won't wake," she said. "I have never known him sleep like this. I called him, and he does not answer. I shook him, and he would not move—and his eggs are hard-boiled by this time."

"Bide here, Peter," said Mary shortly.

Then the big strong hermaphrodite put a brawny arm about the soft shivering little maid, and led her inside the cottage, and up the stairs—how mournful they were, and how they creaked!—and into the quiet little bedroom, with the snow sliding down the window-panes, and the white light glaring upon the bed, where Abel Cain Weevil was lying upon his back, and yet not his back, but its back, for the old man was so very tired that he went on sleeping, though his eggs were hard-boiled and his little girl was terrified. The Brute had passed over in the night, not a very cruel Brute perhaps, and had placed his hand on the old man's mouth and stopped his breathing; and the poor old liar liked it so well he thought he wouldn't wake up again, but would go on sleeping for a long time, so that he would forget the rabbit-traps, and his petitions which nobody would sign, and his letters which had done no good. He had forgotten everything just then, but not Boodles, surely not his little maid, who was sobbing in Mary's savage and tender arms. He could not have forgotten the radiant little girl, and he would go on lying for her in his sleep if necessary, although he had been selfish enough to go away in such a hurry, and leave her—to the lonely life.

CHAPTER XXI

ABOUT WINTER IN REAL LIFE

Old moormen said it was one of the worst winters they could remember, not on account of the cold, but because of the gales and persistent snow. The first fall soon melted, but not entirely; a big splash of white remained on Ger Tor until a second fall came; and when that melted the splash remained, asking for more, and in due time receiving it. People found it hard to get about; some parts of the moor were inaccessible; and the roads were deep in slush when they were not heaped with drifts. It was a bad winter for men and animals; and it made many of the old folk so disgusted with life that they took the opportunity offered them by severe colds to get rid of it altogether.

The villages above the Tavy appeared to be deserted during that dreary time. It was a wonder

how people hid themselves, for the street was empty day after day, and a real human being crossing from one side to the other was a sight to bring faces to the windows. One face was often at a certain window, a frightened little white face, which had forgotten how to laugh even when some old woman slipped up in the slush, and its eyes would look first on one side, then on the other, generally without seeing anything except the bare moor, which was sometimes black, and sometimes white, and always dreary. Boodles was alone in Lewside Cottage, her only companions the mice which she hated, and the eternal winds which made her shiver and had plucked the roses from her cheeks until hardly a pink petal remained. Boodles was feeling as much alone without old Weevil as Brightly was feeling without Ju. Sometimes she thought she might soon have to go out and tramp a portion of the world like him, and claim her share of open air and space, which was all the inheritance to which she was entitled.

To lead a lonely life on Dartmoor is unwholesome at any age; and when one is eighteen and a girl it is a punishment altogether too severe. Boodles had got through the first days fairly well because she was stunned, but when she began to wake up and comprehend how she was placed the horror bred of loneliness and wild winds took hold upon her. The first evil symptom was restlessness. She wandered about the cottage, not doing anything, but feeling she must keep on the move to prevent herself from screaming. She began to talk to herself, softly during the day as if she was rather afraid some one might be listening, and towards evening loudly, partly to assure herself she was safe, partly to drown the tempestuous noises of the wind. Then she fell into the trick of shuddering, of casting quick glances behind, and sometimes she would run into a corner and hide her face, because there were queer shadows in the room, and strange sounds upon the stairs, and the doors shook so, and she seemed to hear a familiar shuffling and a tender voice murmuring: "Boodle-oodle," and she would cover up all the mirrors, dreadfully afraid of seeing a comic old face in them. Sometimes when the wind was roaring its loudest over the moor she would rush up to her bedroom, lock the door, and scream. These were foolish actions, but then she was only eighteen.

It was getting on towards Christmas, and at last there was another moonlit night, full of wind and motion; and soon after Boodles had gone to bed she heard other sounds which frightened her so much she could not scream. She crept out of bed, got to the window, and looked out. A man was trying the door, and when he found it secure he went to the windows. The moonlight fell upon Pendoggat's head and shoulders. Boodles did not know of a rumour suggesting that old Weevil had been a miser, and had saved up a lot of money which was hidden in the cottage, but Pendoggat had heard it. She got back to her bed and fainted with terror, but the man failed to get in. The next day she went to see Mary, and told her what had happened. Mary spat on her hands, which was one of her primitive ways when she felt a desire to chastise any one, and picked up her big stick, "I'll break every bone in his body," she shouted.

Boodles comprehended what a friend and champion she had in this creature, who had much of a woman's tenderness, and all of a man's strength. To some it might have appeared ridiculous to hear Mary's threats, but it was not so. She was fully as strong as Pendoggat, and there was no cowardice in her.

"Aw, my dear," she went on, "yew bain't the little maid what used to come up for eggs and butter. Yew would come up over wi' red cheeks and laughing cruel, and saying to I: 'One egg for luck, Mary,' and I'd give it ye, my dear. If you'd asked I for two or dree I'd ha' given 'em. You'm a white little maid, and as thin getting as thikky stick. Don't ye ha' the decline, my dear. Aw now, don't ye. What will the butiful young gentleman say when he sees you white and thin getting?"

"Don't, Mary," cried Boodles, almost passionately; for she dared not think of Aubrey as a lover. Their love-days had become so impossible and unreal. She had written to him, but had said nothing of Weevil's death, afraid he might think she was appealing to him for help; neither had she signed herself Titania Lascelles, nor told him of her aristocratic relations. The story had appeared unreal somehow the morning after, and the old man's manner and audible whispers had aroused her suspicions. She thought it would be best to wait a little before telling Aubrey.

"What be yew going to du?" asked Mary, busy as ever, punching the dough in her bread-pan.

"I am going to try and hang on till spring, and then see if I can't make a living by taking in boarders," said the child seriously. "Mr. Weevil left a little money, and I have a tiny bit saved up. There will be just enough to pay rent, and keep me, if I am very careful."

"Butter and eggs and such ain't going to cost yew nought," said Mary cheerily, though Peter would have groaned to hear her.

"Oh, thank you, dear old Mary," said Boodles, her eyes glistening; while the bread-maker went at the dough as if she hated it. "I shall do splendidly," Boodles went on. "I have seen the landlord, and he will let me stay on. Directly the fine weather comes I shall put a card in the window, and I expect I shall get heaps of lodgers. I can cook quite well, and I'm a good manager. I ought to be able to make enough one half of the year to keep me the other half. Of course I shall only take ladies."

"Aw ees, don't ye tak' men, my dear. They'm all alike, and you'm a main cruel purty maid, though yew ha' got white and thin. If that young gentleman wi' the butiful face don't come and tak' ye, dalled if I wun't be after 'en wi' my gurt stick," cried Mary, pummelling the dough again.

"I asked you not to mention him," said Boodles miserably.

"I bain't to talk about 'en," cried Mary scornfully. "And yew bain't to think about 'en, I reckon. Aw, my dear, I've a gotten the heart of a woman, and I knows fine what yew thinks about all day, and half the night, though I mun't talk about it. I knows how yew puts out your arms and cries for 'en. Yew don't want a gurt big house like rectory, and yew don't want servants and railway travelling, but yew wants he, yew wants to hold on to 'en, and know he'm yourn, and shut your purty eyes and feel yew bain't lonesome—"

"Oh, Mary!" the child broke in, with something like a scream.

Mary left her pan and came and whitened the little girl's head with her doughy fingers, lending the bright hair a premature greyness.

"It's the loneliness," cried Boodles. "I thought it would not be so bad when I got used to it, but it's worse every day. I have to run on the moor, and make believe there is some one waiting for me when I get home. It's dreadful to feel the solitude when I go in, to find things just as I left them, to hear nothing except mice nibbling under the stairs; and then I have to go and turn on my windy organ, and try and believe I am amusing myself."

"Aw, my dear, yew mustn't talk to I so larned like. You'm as larned as Master," complained Mary.

"I'll tell you about my windy organ," Boodles went on, trying to force a little sunshine through what threatened to be steady rain. "With the wind, doors, and windows, I can play all sorts of marches. With my bedroom window open, and the door shut, the wind plays sad music, a funeral march; but when I shut my window, and open the one in the next room, it is loud and lively, like a military march. If I open the sitting-room window, and the one in the passage up-stairs, and shut all the doors, it is splendid, Mary, a coronation march. I hear the procession sweeping up-stairs, and the clapping of hands, and the crowd going to and fro, murmuring ah-ah-ah. But the best of all is when I open what was old daddy's bedroom window, and sit in my own room with the door shut, for the wind plays a wedding-march then, and I can make it loud or soft by opening and shutting my window. That is the march I play every evening till I get the shivers."

"She'm dafty getting," muttered Mary, understanding nothing of the musical principle of the little girl's amusement. "Don't ye du it, my dear," she went on. "'Twill just be making you mazed, and us will find ye jumping at the walls like a bumbledor on a window."

"I'll try and keep sensible, but there is Christmas, and January, and February. Oh, Mary, I shall never do it," cried Boodles. "I shall be mad before March, which is the proper time for madness."

"Get another maid to come and bide wi' ye," Mary suggested.

"How can I?"

"Mebbe some old dame, who wants a home—" began Mary.

"She would be an expense, and she might get drunk, rob me, beat me, perhaps."

"Her wouldn't," declared Mary, with a glance at her big stick.

"I must go on being alone and making believe," said Boodles.

"Won't the butiful young gentleman come and live wi' ye?" said poor Mary, quite thinking she had found a splendid way out of the difficulty.

"Silly old thing," sighed Boodles, actually smiling. Then she rose to go, and Mary tramped heavily to her dairy. "Tak' eggs and butter wi' ye," she called. "Aw, my dear, yew mun't starve, or you'll get decline. 'Tis cruel to go abroad on an empty stomach."

"I'm not a snake," said Boodles; and at that moment Peter appeared in search of thoughts, heard the conversation, agreed that it was indeed cruel to go abroad on an empty stomach, and went to record the statement in his diary, adding for the sake of a light touch the observation of Boodles that she was not a snake, though Peter could not see the joke.

Mary was a busy creature, but she found time that evening to stalk across the moor and down to Helmen Barton, where she banged at the door like the good champion Ethelred, hero of the Mad Trist, until the noise of her stick upon the door "alarummed and reverberated" throughout the hollow. When Annie appeared she was bidden to inform her master that if he ventured again near Lewside Cottage, or dared to frighten "my little maid," she, Mary, would come again with the stick in her hands, and use his body as she had just used his door. When Mary had spoken she turned to go, but the friendless woman called her, feeling perhaps that she too needed a champion, and Mary turned back.

"Come inside," said Annie in a strange voice, and Mary went, with the statement that she could not remain as the cows were waiting to be milked.

"Been to Lewside Cottage, has he? He'm crazed for money. He'd rob the little maid of her last penny, and pray for her whiles he was doing it," said Annie bitterly.

Mary said nothing, but her anger rose, and she spat noisily upon her hands to get a good grip of the stick.

"I've been wi' 'en twenty years, and don't know 'en yet I thought once he was a man, but I know he bain't. If yew was to shake your fingers at 'en he'd run."

"Yew ha' been drinking, woman," said Mary.

"Ah, I've had a drop. There's nought else to live vor. Twenty years, Mary Tavy, he've had me body and soul, twenty years I've been a slave to 'en, and now he've done wi' me."

"What's that, woman?" cried Mary, lifting her long stick, and poking at Annie's left hand and the gold ring worn upon it.

"That!" cried Annie furiously. "It be a dirty thing, what any man can buy, and any vule of a woman will wear. Ask 'en what it cost, Mary Tavy. A few shilluns, I reckon, the price of a joint o' meat, the price of a pair o' boots. And it ha' bought me for twenty years."

"You'm drunk, woman."

"Ah, purty fine. Wimmin du main dafty things when they'm drunk. Your brother ha' made a mommet of 'en, and like a vule he went and broke it for a bit o' dirty money."

"It bain't broke," said Mary. "Peter made a new mommet, and broke that."

"Glory be to God," cried Annie wildly, plucking out some grey hairs that were falling upon her eyes. "I'll tell 'en. 'Twill work, Mary Tavy. The devil who passed over last month will see to it. He never passed the Barton. He didn't want his own. I never knowed a mommet fail when 'twas made right."

"Du'ye say he bain't your husband?" Mary muttered, looking at the grey hairs in the woman's hand.

"See beyond!" screamed Annie, losing all self-control, pulling Mary to the kitchen window, pointing out. It was a dark cold kitchen, built of granite, with concrete floor. There was nothing to be seen but the big brake of furze, black and tangled, swaying slightly. It was a mighty brake, twenty years untouched, and there were no flowers upon it. The interior was a choked mass of dead growth.

"Why don't ye burn 'en, woman?"

"Ask 'en. It ain't going to be burnt yet—not yet, Mary Tavy." Annie's voice had fallen to a hoarse whisper. She was half-drunk and half-mad. Those twenty years were like twenty mountains piled upon her. "Look at my white hairs, Mary Tavy. I'm getting a bit old like, and I'm for the poorhouse, my dear. Annie Crocker, spinster—that's me. Twenty years I've watched that vuzz before this window rocking to and fro, like a cradle, my dear, rocking 'em to sleep. Yew know what 'tis to live wi' a man. You'm a fool to first, and a vule always I reckon, but such a vule to first that yew don't know' how to stop 'em coming. Yew think of love, Mary Tavy, and you don't care—and there 'em be, my dear, two of 'em, in the middle o' the vuzz."

"Did'st du it?" muttered Mary, standing like a wooden image.

"Me! I was young then, and I loved 'em. He took 'em from me when I was weak and mazed. I had to go through it here alone, twice my dear, alone wi' him, and he said they was dead, but I heard 'em cry, twice, my dear, only I was that weak I couldn't move. 'Twas winter both times, and I lay up over, and heard 'en walking on the stones of the court, and heard 'en let the bucket down, and heard 'en dra' it up—and then I heard 'en cursing o' the vuzz 'cause it pricked 'en, and his hands and face was bloody wi' scratches when he come up. I mind it all, though I was mazed—and I loved 'em, my dear."

"Preaches in chapel tu," said Mary, a sense of inconsistency occurring to her. "You'm a vule, woman, to tell to me like this."

"I've ha' bitten my tongue for twenty years, and I'd ha' bitten it another twenty if he'd used me right. Didn't your brother find 'en wi' Chegwidden's maid? Don't I know he's been wi' she for months, and used she as he've used me? Don't I know he wants to have she here, and turn me out—and spend the price of a pair o' boots on a ring same as this, and buy she wi' that for twenty years?"

Mary turned away. It was already dark, the cows were not milked, and would be lowing for her to ease their udders. Annie was beside herself. The barrier of restraint had fallen, and the pent-up feelings of a generation roared out, like the Tavy with its melted snow, sweeping away everything which was not founded upon a rock.

"Burn it down, woman," said Mary as she went.

"Not till the mommet ha' done its work," screamed Annie. Then she lighted the lantern, and went to the linhay for more cider.

When lonely little Boodles got home she saw at once that the cottage had been entered. The sitting-room window had been forced open, and its catch was broken; but Pendoggat had got nothing for his pains. She had hidden the money-box so cunningly that he had failed to find it; and she was glad then that she had seen him prowling about the cottage the night before. She got some screws and made the window fast. Then she cried and had her supper. After that she went to her bed and sobbed again until her head ached, and then she sat up and scolded herself severely; and as the wind was blowing nicely she turned on the wedding march, and while listening to it prattled to herself—

"You mustn't break down, Boodles. It is much too early to do that, for things have not begun to go really badly for you yet. There's enough money to keep things going till summer, if you do without any new clothes, and by the way you mustn't walk too much or you'll wear your boots out, and next summer you will have a nice lot of old maids here for their health, and make plenty of money out of them for your health. I know you are only crying because it is so lonely, but still you mustn't do it, for it makes you thin and white. You had better go and study the cookery-book, and think of all the nice things you will make for the old maids when you have caught them."

Boodles never allowed herself to speak upon the subject which was always in her mind, and she tried to persuade herself she was not thinking of Aubrey and Weevil's wild story, although she did nothing else. While she was talking of her prospects she was thinking of Aubrey, though she would not admit it. She had tried once to put six puppies into a small cupboard, but as often as she opened the door to put another puppy in those already inside tumbled out. That was exactly the state her mind was in. When she opened it to think of her prospects, Aubrey, Weevil's story, and her unhappy origin, fell out sprawling at once, and were all over the place before she could catch them again; and when she had caught them she couldn't shut them up.

It was absolutely necessary to find something to do, as regulating the volume and sound of the wind by opening or shutting various windows and doors, and turning on what sounded to her like marriage or martial marches, was an unwholesome as well as a monotonous amusement. The child roamed about the cottage with a lamp in her hand, trying to get away from something which was not following. She could not sit down to sew, for her eyes were aching, and she kept starting and pricking her finger. She wandered at last with an idea into what had been Weevil's bedroom. There was an old writing-table there, and she had lately discovered a key with a label attached informing her that it would open the drawers of that table. Boodles locked herself in, lighted two lamps, which was an act of extravagance, but she felt protected somehow by a strong light, and began to dig up the dust and ashes of the old man's early life.

Many people have literary stuff they are ashamed of hiding away under lock and key, which they do not want, and yet do not destroy. Every one has a secret drawer in which incriminating rubbish is preserved, although it may be of an entirely innocent character. They are always going to make a clean sweep, but go on putting it off until death can wait no longer; and sorrowing relations open the drawer, glance at its contents, and mutter hurriedly: "Burn it, and say nothing." To know the real man it is only necessary to turn out his secret drawer when he is dead.

There was not much stored away in the old writing-table. Apparently Weevil had destroyed all that was recent, and kept much that was old. There was sufficient to show Boodles the truth; that the old man had always been Weevil, that his story to her had been a series of lame lies, that his origin had been a humble one. There were letters from friends of his youth, queer missives suggesting jaunts to the Welsh Harp, Hampstead, or Rosherville, and signed: "your old pal, George," or "yours to the mustard-pot. Art." They were humorous letters, written in slang, and they amused Boodles; but after reading them she could not suppose that Weevil had been ever what one would call a gentleman. A mass of such stuff she put aside for the kitchen fire; and then she came upon another bundle, tightly fastened with string, which she cut, and drawing a letter from the packet she opened it and read—

"My own Dearest.

I was so very glad to get your letter and I know you are looking forward to have one from me but I am so sorry Dearest you have had such a bad cold. My Dear I hope to sit on your knees and have my arm around your neck some day. I do love you you are my only sweetheart now and I hope I am only yours. Many thanks for sending me your photo which I should be very sorry to part with it. It makes me feel delighted as I am looking forward to be in your Dear arms some day. I am waiting for the time to pass so we shall be together for ever. I sit by the fire cold nights and have my thoughts in you my Dearest. I knit lace when I have no sewing to do. It was very miserable last Sunday but I went to church in the evening but I much rather would like to have been with you. I wish I could reach you to give you a nice kiss. I am always dreaming about you my Love and it is such miserable weather now I will stop in haste with my best love and kisses to my Dear Boy from your loving and true Minnie."

There was a fat bundle of such letters, written by the same illiterate hand nearly fifty years before, and the foolish old man had kept the rubbish, which had no doubt a sort of wild-flower fragrance once, and had left them at his death. Minnie was evidently a servant girl, hardly Miss Fitzalan of the amazing story, and if the young Weevil of those days had meant it, and had not been indulging in a little back-stairs flirtation, his birth was more humble than Boodles had supposed. He must have meant it, she reasoned, or he would hardly have kept that sentimental rubbish all his life.

Another drawer came open, and the child breathed quickly. It was filled with a parcel of books, and a label upon the topmost one bore the word "Boodles." The truth was in that secret drawer,

there could be no romancing there, the question of her birth was to be settled once and for all, she could read it in those books, then go and tell Mr. Bellamie who she was. The girl's sad eyes softened when she perceived that the heap of diaries was well thumbed. She did not know that the old man had often read himself to sleep with one of them.

The straw, by which she had been, mentally at least, supporting herself since Weevil's death, was quickly snatched away. She saw then, what Mr. Bellamie had seen at once, how that the simple old creature had sought to secure her happiness with lies. The story of the diaries told her little more. It was true she was a bastard; that she had been wrapped in fern, and placed in the porch of the cottage, with a label round her neck like a parcel from the grocer's; that the old man had known as much about her parents as she knew herself. "She cannot be a commoner's child," was written in one of the diaries. "I think she must be the daughter of some domestic servant and a man of gentle birth. She would not be what she is had her father been a labourer or a farmer."

Then followed a list of the girls whom Weevil had suspected; but that was of no interest to Boodles. The old man had nursed her himself. There was a little book, *Hints to Mothers*, in the pile, and at the bottom of the drawer was a scrap of the fern in which she had been wrapped, and the horrible label which had been round her baby neck. She gazed, dry-eyed and fascinated, forgetting her loneliness, her sorrow, forgetting everything except that one overmastering thing, the awful injury which had been done to her innocent little self. Now that she knew the truth she would face it. The wind was playing a funeral march just then.

"I am an illegitimate child," said Boodles. She stepped before the glass, uncovered it, screamed because she thought she had seen that grotesque old face which servant girl Minnie had longed to kiss fifty years back, recovered herself, and looked. "He said I should be perfect if I had a name," she muttered. She was getting a fierce little tiger-cat, and beginning to show her pretty teeth. "Why am I not a humpback, or diseased in some way, or hideous, if I am an illegitimate child? I am as good as any girl. People in Tavistock turn to look at me, and I know they say: 'What a pretty girl!' Am I to say to every one: 'I am an illegitimate child, and therefore I am as black as the devil himself?' Why is a girl as black as the devil just because no clergyman has jabbered some rubbish at her parents? Oh, Boodles, you pretty love-child, don't stand it," she cried.

She flung the towel over the glass, turned to the window, and cast it open to receive the wind. "I am not frightened now. I am wild. Let us have the coronation march, and let me go by while they shout at me, 'bastard.' What have I done? I know that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children, but why should the children stand it? Must they, poor little fools? They must endure disease, but not dishonour. I am not going to stand it. I would go into God's presence, and clench my fists, and say I will not stand it. He allowed me to be born. If matrimony is what people say it is, a sort of sacrament, how is it that children can be born without it?"

The wind rushed into the room so violently that she had to shut the window. The lamp-flames were leaping up the glasses. A different tune began and made the tortured little girl less fierce.

"I won't be wild any more," she said; but an idea had entered her brain, and she gave it expression by murmuring again and again: "Nobody knows, nobody knows. Only he knew, and he is dead."

That was true enough. Only Weevil and her mother knew the truth about her shameful origin. The mother had not been seen that night placing the bundle of fern in the porch. She could not have been seen, as nobody in the neighbourhood knew where Boodles really came from, and the fact that the stories which they had invented about her were entirely false proved their ignorance. Probably nobody knew that her mother had given birth to a child. Boodles thought of that as she walked to and fro murmuring, "Nobody knows." Old Weevil's death might prove to be a blessing in disguise.

"I will not stand it," she kept on saying. "I will not bear the punishment of my father's sin. I will be a liar too—just once, and then I will be truthful for ever. I will make up my own story, and it won't be wild like his. I understand it all now. In this funny old world of sheep-people one follows another, not because the one in front knows anything, but just because he is in front; and when the leader laughs the ones behind laugh too, and when the leader says 'how vile,' the ones behind say 'how vile' too. I suppose we are all sheep-people, and I am only different because I have black wool, and I am on the wrong side of the hedge and can't get among the respectable white baabaas. I won't harm any of them. I will be wicked once, in self-defence, to get this black wool off, and then I'll be a very good white respectable sheep-person ever after. The truth is there," she said, nodding at the little heap of books, "and the truth is going to be burnt."

She gathered up the pile and cremated the lot in the kitchen fire. Then she went to bed with a kind of happiness, because she knew that her doubts were cleared away, and that her future depended upon her ability to fight for herself. Her eyes were fully opened by this time because she had left fairyland and got well out into the lane of real life. She knew that "sheep-people" like the most excellent Bellamies, neatly bound and edged in the very best style of respectability, must regard little bastards as a sort of vermin, which it was only kind to tread upon or sweep decorously out of the way. "I am only going to wriggle in self-defence because they are hurting me," she murmured. "If they will be nice to me I will stop wriggling at once and be good for ever. I wouldn't make an effort if I was ugly or humpbacked. I would curl up and die like a horrid spider. But I know I am really a nice girl and a pretty girl; and if they will only give me the chance I will be a good girl—wicked once, and then good, so very good. I expect you are much better than most girls, Boodles, and you mustn't let them call you beastly names," she said; and

went off to sleep in quite a conceited state of mind.

In the morning there was a letter from Mr. Bellamie, not for Boodles, but for the old man who was dead, and the girl opened it, not knowing who it was from, and learnt a little more of the truth about herself. It was lucky for old Weevil that he was well out of the way. He would probably just as soon have been dead as called upon to answer that letter, though it was kindly enough and delicately expressed and full of artistic touches. Mr. Bellamie adopted a gentle cynicism which would have been too subtle for Weevil's comprehension. He slapped him on the shoulder as it were, chaffing him, reproving him mildly, and saying in effect: "You old rogue, to think that you could fool me with your fairy-tales." He professed to regard the matter as a joke, and then becoming serious, suggested that Weevil would surely see the necessity of keeping Boodles and Aubrey apart in the future. He didn't believe in young men, and Aubrey was a mere boy, entangling themselves with an engagement, and altogether apart from that Boodles, though a pretty and charming girl, was not the partner that he would wish his son to choose. Writing still more plainly, if Aubrey insisted upon marrying the girl it would have to be without his consent. He could not receive Boodles at his house while the mystery of her birth remained unexplained. There was a mystery, he knew, as he had made inquiries. He did not credit what he had been told, but the fact remained that Weevil had increased his suspicions by withholding what he knew. The whole affair was unsatisfactory, and the only satisfactory way out of it would be to keep the young people definitely apart until they had found other interests. Mr. Bellamie concluded by hoping that Weevil was not being troubled by the wild weather and tempestuous winds.

It would have been better for Boodles if she had not opened that letter. For her it was the end of all things. Hardly knowing what she was doing, she put on her hat, went out, down to the Tavy, and into the woods. It was not "our walk," but the place where it had been. The big explosion had cleared the walk away; and there was nothing except December damps and mists, sodden ferns, and piles of half-melted snow. The once upon a time stage was very far away then. It was the end of the story, and there was no happy ever after, no merry dance of fairies to the tune of a wedding march, no flowers nor sunshine. All the pleasant things had gone to sleep, and those things which could not sleep were weeping. Boodles fastened her arms about the trunk of a tree which she recognised, and cried upon it; then she lay upon the fern which carried a few memories and cried upon that; and felt her way to the river and cried into that. She could not increase the moisture. The whole wood was dripping and far more tear-productive than herself. The rivers and ferns could not tell her that it was not the end of the story, but only the end of a chapter; for she was merely eighteen, and the big desert of life was beyond with a green oasis here and there. But fairyland was closed. A big fence of brambles ran all round it, and there was a notice board erected to the effect that Boodles would be prosecuted for trespassing if she went inside, though all other children would be welcome. There was the beech-tree where Aubrey and she had once spent an afternoon carving two hearts skewered upon an arrow, though the hearts looked rather like dumplings and the arrow resembled a spade. They had done their best and made a failure. They had tried to tell a story, and had muddled it all up just because they had been interrupted so often. Why couldn't ogres leave them alone so that they could finish the story properly?

Boodles got back somehow to her home in the wintry solitude, and wrote what she thought was a callous little note to Mr. Bellamie. Perhaps it did not sound so very callous. Short compositions appeal as long ones seldom do.

"Mr. Weevil is dead, and has been buried some time, and I am quite alone. I am sorry I opened your letter. Please forgive me. I did not know who it was from. I am going to try and make a living by letting lodgings when the fine weather comes, and I shall be very grateful if Mrs. Bellamie and you will recommend me. I am a good cook, and could make people comfortable. Perhaps you had better not say I am only eighteen, as people might not like to trust me. It is very cold up here, and the wind is dreadful. I hope you and Mrs. Bellamie are quite well. I promise you I will not write to Aubrey again."

CHAPTER XXII

ABOUT THE PINCH

Only well-to-do people, those who have many changes of raiment and can afford to poke the fire expensively, are happy in the winter. For others there are various degrees of the pinch; lack of fuel pinch, want of food pinch, insufficient clothes pinch, or the pinch of desolation and dreariness. To those who dwell in lonely places winter pays no dividends in the way of amusement, and increases the expense of living at the rate of fifty per cent. No wonder they tumble down in adoration when the sun comes. The smutty god of coal, and the greasy deity of oil are served in winter; there is the lesser divinity of peat also. Each brings round a bag and demands a contribution; and those who cannot pay are pinched remorselessly.

Mrs. Bellamie sat in her drawing-room, and the fire burnt expensively, and she spread her fragile feet towards it, without worshipping because it was too common, and around her were luxuries on the top of luxuries; and yet she was being pinched. It was not the horrid little note, rather blurred and blotted, lying upon her lap which was administering the pinch directly, but the thoughts brought on by that note. Mrs. Bellamie was opening her secret drawer and turning out the rubbish. She was thinking of the past which had been almost forgotten until that small voice had come from Dartmoor. She had only to turn to the window to see the snow-capped tors. The small voice was crying there and saying: "I am only eighteen, and I am going to try and make a living by letting lodgings. I promise you I will not write to Aubrey again." Those words were so many crabs, pinching horribly; and at the bottom of the secret drawer was a story, not written, because the drawer was the lady's mind, and the story was about a little girl whose father had fallen on evil days; a very respectable father, and a proud gentleman who would not confess to his friends that his position had become desperate, but his family knew all about it for they had to be hungry, and a very hard winter came, and the coal-god sent his bag round as usual and they had nothing to put into it. The father said he didn't want a fire. It was neither necessary nor healthy. He preferred to sit in his cold damp study with a greatcoat on and a muffler round his neck, and shiver. As long as there was a bit of cold mutton in the house he didn't care, and he talked about his ancestors who had suffered privations on fields where English battles had been won, and declared that people of leisure had got into a disgraceful way of coddling themselves; but he kept on coughing, and the little girl heard him and it made her miserable. At last she decided to wrap her morals up, and put them away in the secret drawer, and forget all about them until the time of adversity was over. There was a big house close by, belonging to wealthy friends of theirs, and it was shut up for the winter. After dark the little girl climbed over the railing, found her way to the coal-shed, took out some big lumps, and threw them one by one into her father's garden. It made her dreadfully dirty, but she didn't care, for she had put on her oldest clothes. The next day her father found a fire burning in his study, and he didn't seem angry. Indeed, when the little girl looked in, to tell him it was cold mutton time, he was sitting close to it as if he had forgotten all about the ancestors who had been frozen upon battlefields. She did the same wicked thing that night, and the night after; and her father lost his cough and became cheerful again. This robbery of the rich went on for some time, until one night the little girl slipped while climbing the railing and cut her knee badly, which kept her in bed for some days, while she heard her father grumbling because he had no fire; but he didn't grumble for long, because fine weather came, and his circumstances improved, and a young gentleman came along and said he wanted to be a robber too, and went off with the little coal-thief. It was all so long ago that Mrs. Bellamie found herself wondering if it had ever happened; but there was still a small mark upon her knee which seemed to suggest that she ought to have known a good deal about the little girl who had stolen coals during the days of the great pinch.

Some of the wintry mist from Dartmoor had got into the room, and had settled between the lady and the fire, which suddenly became blurred and looked like a scarlet waterfall. Part of the origin of the mist tickled her cheek, and she put up her handkerchief to wipe it away; but the voices went on talking. "I am only eighteen, and I am going to try and make a living by letting lodgings," said the voice from the moor. "Mother, I know I'm young, but I shall never change. I love her with my whole heart." That was a voice from the sea. Mrs. Bellamie rose and went to find her husband. She came upon him engrossed upon the characteristics of Byzantine architecture.

"How are you going to answer this?" she said, dropping the note before him like a cold fall of snow.

"Does it require any answer?" he said, looking up with a frown. "She must struggle on. She is one out of millions struggling, and her case is only more painful to us because we know of it. We will help her as much as we can, indirectly."

"I should like to go and see her. I want to have her here for Christmas," said the lady.

"It would be foolish," said Mr. Bellamie. "It would make her unsettled, and more dissatisfied with her lot. She might also get to look upon this house as her home."

"I am miserable about her. I wish I had never kissed her. She has kissed me every day since," said the lady. "She is always on my mind, and now," she went on, glancing at the note, "I think of her alone, absolutely alone, a child of eighteen, in a dreary cottage upon the moor, among those savage people."

"If you had seen that weird old man—" began her husband.

"He is dead, I have seen her, and she haunts me."

Perhaps Mrs. Bellamie would not have been haunted if she had never stolen those coals. Adversity breeds charity, and tenderness is the daughter of Dame Want. Love does not fly out of the window when poverty comes in. Only the imp who masquerades as the true god does that. The son of Venus gets between husband and wife and hugs them tighter to warm himself.

"I am a descendant of Richard Bellamie," said her husband, getting his crest up like a proud cockatoo, "father of Alice, *quasi bella et amabilis*, who was mother of Bishop Jewel of famous memory. You, my dear, are a daughter of the Courtenays, *atavis editi re gibus*, and royalty itself can boast of blood no better. Let the whole country become Socialist, the Bellamies and Courtenays will stand aloof."

Mr. Bellamie smiled to himself. There was a classical purity about his utterance which stimulated

his system like a glass of rare wine.

"I know," said the lady. "I am referring to my feelings, nothing else." She was still thinking of the coals, and it seemed to her that a certain portion of her knee began to throb.

"When it comes to affairs of the heart, even the Bellamies and Courtenays are Socialists," she said archly.

Mr. Bellamie did not reply directly to that. He loved his wife, and yet he carried her off, when the days of coal-stealing had been accomplished, as much for her name as anything else.

"My dear, let me understand you," he said. "Do you want Aubrey to marry this nameless girl?"

"I don't know myself what I want," came the answer. "I only know it is horrible to think of the poor brave child living alone and unprotected on the moor. Suppose one of those rough men broke into her cottage?"

This was melodrama, which is bad art, and Mr. Bellamie frowned at it, and changed the subject by saying: "She has promised not to write to Aubrey again."

"While he has absolutely refused to give her up," his wife added. "Directly he comes back he will go to her."

"I can't think where Aubrey gets it from," Mr. Bellamie murmured. "The blood is so entirely unpolluted—but no, in the eighteenth century there was an unfortunate incident, Gretna Green and a chambermaid, or something of the kind. Young men were particularly reckless in that century. If it had not been for that incident Aubrey would never have run after this girl."

"I expect he would," she said.

"Then he is tainted. This terrible new democracy has tarred him with its brush," said her husband. "I suppose the end of it will be he will run off with this girl and bring her back married."

"There is not the slightest fear of that. The girl would not consent."

"Not consent!" cried Mr. Bellamie. "Not consent to marry into our family!"

"My dear, there is such a thing as nobility of character, though we don't see much of it, perhaps. I may be allowed to know something of my sex, and I am certain this girl would never marry Aubrey without our consent."

"Why, then, she's a good girl. I'll do all that I can for her if she is like that," said Mr. Bellamie cheerfully.

"What do you suppose she is doing now? Sobbing herself to death," said his wife.

The full-blooded gentleman stirred uneasily. Bad art again. "You are pleading for her, my dear. Most distinctly you are pleading for her. If you are going to side with Aubrey I will give in, of course. I will write to the secretary of the Socialists' League, if there is such a thing, and beg humbly to be enrolled as a member, and I will also state that if the name of Bellamie is too much for them I shall be pleased to adopt that of Tomkins or Jenkins. I cannot permit pride to stand in my way, seeing that my future daughter-in-law has no name at all, unless it is the highly aristocratic one of Smith-Robinson, the father being Smith and the mother Robinson." He spoke with some heat, employing the weapon of cynicism as a perfectly legitimate form of art.

"Surely you do not suggest she is an illegitimate child," said his wife, with some horror.

"I suggest nothing, my dear, because I know nothing. I have heard all sorts of stories about her—probably lies, like those the old man told me. Understand, please, I cannot see the girl," he went on quickly. "I like her. She is *bella et amabilis*, and if I saw much of her, pity and admiration might make a fool of me. You know me, my dear. I am not heartless, as my words might suggest. I want Aubrey to do well, marry well, rise in his profession. If I went to see the child in her cottage the sight would make me miserable. When I left the old man, after he had choked me with the wildest lot of lies you ever heard, I was sad enough for tears. His heart was so good though his art was so bad. The play upon words was unintentional," he added, with a frown.

Mrs. Bellamie said no more, but the coals continued to trouble her, and at last the fire kindled, and she ordered a carriage and drove up on Dartmoor without telling her husband. It was the week before Christmas, and the road was sprinkled with carts passing up and down filled with good things, and the men who drove them were filled with good things too, which made them desire the centre of the road at any price. The lady's carriage was often kept at a walking pace by these human slugs with their fill of sloe-gin.

Lewside Cottage was found with difficulty, most of the residents appealed to declaring they had never heard of such a place, but the driver found it at last, and brought the carriage up before the little whitewashed house which looked very wet and dreary amid its wintry surroundings. Mrs. Bellamie shivered as she got out and felt the wind with a sharp edge of frost to it. Somebody else was shivering too, but not with cold. Boodles watched from a corner of one of the windows, and when the lady knocked she wanted to go and hide somewhere and pretend she was miles away.

"Perhaps she has come to tell me about old maids for lodgers," she murmured. Then she ran

down, opened the door, and straightway became speechless.

"I have come to see you, my dear," said the lady. The fact was obvious enough to need no comment, but when people are embarrassed, and have to say something, idiotic remarks serve as well as anything. Boodles tried to reply that she perceived the visitor standing before her in the flesh; but her tongue seemed to occupy the whole of her mouth, and she could only smile and flush.

Mrs. Bellamie, finding the conversation left to herself, observed that it was exceedingly cold, while poor Boodles was thinking how hot it was. She knew that her note had brought Mrs. Bellamie, and she was dreadfully afraid the lady was going to be charitable; open her purse and give her half-a-sovereign, or call to the driver to bring in a hamper of food, or perhaps of toys, for Boodles was feeling fearfully young and shy. "If she gives me anything I shall stamp and scream," she thought.

"Are you really living here alone?" said Mrs. Bellamie, which was quite as foolish as her other remarks, as she could not possibly have expected to see people of various sizes and complexions tumbling suddenly from the cupboards. "How very dreary it must be for you—dear."

The last word was not intended to escape. It was on the tip of the lady's tongue, and rolled off before she could stop it. "Dear" alone sounds much more tender without any possessive pronoun attached, and the sound of it made Boodles attempt to swallow something that felt like a lump of clay in her throat. She knew she would have to howl if that lump got any higher and reached the tear mark. She felt that if she opened her mouth she would begin to cry. It was such an awful and a pleasant thing to have a visitor, and Aubrey's mother; and she was thinking already how terrible it would be when the visitor went away.

They went into the little sitting-room. Their breath seemed to fill it with cold steam, for there was no fire, which was a bad thing for Mrs. Bellamie, for she thought at once of the past coal-age and the resemblance of that room to her father's study; and just then Boodles began to cough. It was all over with Mrs. Bellamie. Her secret drawer was wide open, and all that she ought to have been ashamed of was revealed. She was listening again at a certain keyhole, feeling the cold current of air upon her ear, and with it the gentle persistent noise of her proud old father coughing because he hadn't got any fire. She was getting on in life, but her spirit was the same. She would have gone then, and climbed a railing, and stolen coal to give the poor girl a fire.

Boodles looked up with a smile, without in the least knowing that her eyes were hungry for a caress. Mrs. Bellamie bent and kissed her, and Boodles promptly wept.

"My poor child, how can you sit here in the cold? Why don't you have a fire?" said the lady, who seemed bent on saying foolish things that day.

"I—I am so glad to see you," sobbed Boodles, obtaining relief and the use of her tongue. "I would have lighted a fire if I had known you were coming. I only use the kitchen and my bedroom."

"Would you like to show me over the cottage?" said the lady, becoming more sensible.

"It won't take long," said Boodles. "I am sorry for crying. This is Thursday, isn't it? I lose track of the days rather, but the baker comes Wednesdays and Saturdays, and he came yesterday, and it isn't Sunday, so it must be Thursday. Well, I hadn't cried since Tuesday. Yesterday was a day off."

"You poor child," murmured Mrs. Bellamie.

"Sometimes I think I ought to keep a record, a sort of rain-gauge," went on Boodles in quite a lively fashion. It was a part of her idea. She was playing her game of "not standing it," and after all she was telling the truth so far. "Monday, three-hundred drops. Tuesday, one-hundred-and-twenty-and-a-half drops. Wednesday, none. Thursday, not over yet. It's like a prescription. I'm all right now, you made me feel funny, as I've never had a civilised visitor before. It is very good of you to come and discover me."

Then she took the lady over the tiny house, from the kitchen to her bedroom, taking pride in the fact that it was all very neat, and apologising for the emptiness of the larder by saying that she was only one small girl, and she was well able to live upon air, especially as the wind of Dartmoor was notoriously fattening.

"Eating is only one of the habits of civilisation," declared Boodles. "So long as you live alone you never get hungry, but directly you go among other people you want to eat. I have often seen two moormen meet on the road. They didn't want anything while they were alone, but so soon as they caught sight of one another they felt thirsty. May I get you a cup of tea?"

"Well, the sight of you has made me thirsty," said Mrs. Bellamie.

Then they laughed together and felt better.

"Look at this basket," said Boodles, pointing to a familiar battered object covered with a scrap of oilcloth. "It belongs to a poor man who is in prison now. I brought him here because the people were hunting him, and the policeman came and took him for stealing some clothes, though I'm sure he was innocent. Aubrey gave him half-a-crown on Goose Fair Day, and perhaps he bought the clothes with that. Can you buy a suit of clothes for half-a-crown? If you can't, I don't know how these men live. I am keeping the basket for the poor thing, and when they let him out I expect he will come for it."

Boodles alluded to Brightly and his basket since they gave her the opportunity of mentioning Aubrey. She wanted to see if the lady would accept the opening, and explain the real object of her visit; but Mrs. Bellamie, who was still respectable, only said that it was rather shocking to think that Boodles had tried to protect a common thief, and then she thought again of the coals, for the theft of which she had never been punished until then. She ought to have been sent to prison too, although she had done much more good than harm in stealing from a wealthy man to give comfort to a poor one. It had made her tender and soft-hearted also. She would never have felt so deeply for Boodles had it not been for that little hiatus of poverty and crime. Rigid honesty has its vices, and some sins have many virtues. Virtues are unpleasant things to carry about in any quantity, like a pocketful of stones; but little sins are cheery companions while they remain little. Mrs. Bellamie was a much better woman for having been once a thief.

"Is that clock right?" asked the lady. "I told the driver to come for me at five."

Boodles said she hadn't the least idea. There were two clocks, and each told a different story, and she had nothing to check them by. She thought it would be past four as it was getting so dark. She lighted the lamp, and the lady noticed the little hands were getting rather red. When the room was filled with light she noticed more; the girl was quite thin, and she coughed a good deal; nearly all the colour had gone out of her face, and there were lines under her eyes, lines that ought never to be seen at eighteen; her mouth often quivered, and she would start at every sound. Then Mrs. Bellamie heard the wind, and she started too.

"My dear, you cannot, you must not, live here alone," she said, shivering at the idea, and the atmosphere. "It would drive me mad. The loneliness, the wind, and the horrible black moor."

"I have got to put up with it. I have no friends," said Boodles at once. "I don't know whether I shall pull through, as the worst time is ahead, but I must try. You can't think what it is when the wind is really high. Sometimes in the evenings I run about the place, and they chase me from one room to another."

"Not men?" cried the lady in horror.

"Things, thoughts, I don't know what they are. The horrors that come when one is always alone. Some nights I scream loud enough for you to hear in Tavistock. I don't know why it should be a relief to scream, but it is."

"You must get away from here," said Mrs. Bellamie decidedly. "We will arrange something for you. Would you take a position as governess, companion to a lady—"

"No," cried Boodles, as if the visitor had insulted her. "I am not going to prison. I would rather lose my senses here than become a servant. If I was companion to a lady I should take the dear old thing by the shoulders and knock her head against the wall every time she ordered me about. Why should I give up my liberty? You wouldn't. I have got a home of my own, and with lodgers all summer I can keep going."

"You cannot do it. You cannot possibly do it," said Mrs. Bellamie. "Will you come and spend Christmas with us?" she asked impulsively. It was a sudden quiver of the girl's mouth that compelled her to give the invitation.

"Oh, I should love it," cried Boodles. Then she added: "Does Mr. Bellamie wish it?"

The lady became confused, hesitated, and finally had to admit that her husband had not authorised her to speak in his name.

"Then I cannot come. It would have been a great pleasure to me, but of course I couldn't come if he does not want me, and I shouldn't enjoy myself in the least if I thought he had asked me out of charity," she added rather scornfully.

Mrs. Bellamie only smiled and murmured: "Proud little cat."

"Well, I suppose I must be," said Boodles. "Poverty and loneliness sharpen one's feelings, you know. If I was a rich lady I would come and stay at your house, whether Mr. Bellamie wanted me or not. I shouldn't care. But as I am, poor and lonely, and pretty miserable too, I feel I should want to bite and scratch if any one came to do me a favour. Aubrey is not coming home for Christmas then?" she added quickly, and the next instant was scolding herself for alluding to him again. "I mean you wouldn't ask me if he was coming home."

The lady asked abruptly for another cup of tea, not because she desired it or intended to drink it, but because her son was the one subject she wanted to avoid. That was the second time Boodles had made mention of him, and the first time the lady had been worried by a pain in her knee, and now she was haunted by the voice which had spoken so lovingly of the little girl when it declared: "I will never give her up." That little girl was standing with the lamplight on her hair, which was as radiant as ever, and with a longing look in her eyes, which had become sad and dreamy and altogether different from the eyes of fun and laughter which she had worn on Goose Fair Day.

"Oh, Mrs. Bellamie, do say something," Boodles whispered.

The lady began to choke. What could she say that the child would like to hear?

"You know I have given him up, at least my tongue has," the girl went on. "But I want to know if he is going to give me up?"

"I cannot tell you, my dear," the lady murmured, glancing at the clock.

"I think you must know, for he told me he was going to speak to you and his father. My life is quite miserable enough, and I don't want it made worse. It will be much worse if he comes to see me when he returns, and says he is the same as ever, and you are the same as ever. I promise I won't see him again, if he leaves me alone, and I won't marry him without your consent. Does he really love me, Mrs. Bellamie?"

"Yes, my dear," the lady whispered. "Do you think that is the carriage?"

"It is only the wind. Well, I know he does, but I wanted to hear you say it. What am I to do when he comes home? He will ask me to meet him, and if I refuse he will come up here and want to kiss me. What am I to do? I love him. I have loved him since I was a small child. I am not going to tell him I don't love him to please you or any one. I have done a good deal. I will not do that."

"We will beg him not to come and trouble you," said the lady.

"But if he does come?"

"I think, my dear, it will be best for all of us if you ask him not to come again."

That was too much for the little girl. She could hardly be expected to enter into an alliance with Aubrey's parents against herself. She began to breathe quickly, and there was plenty of colour in her cheeks as she replied: "I shall do nothing of the kind. How can you expect me to tell him to go away, and leave me, when I love him? I have got little enough, and only one thing that makes me happy, and you want me to deprive myself of that one thing. If you can deprive me of it you may. But I am not going to torture myself. I have made my promise, and that is all that can be expected from me. Were you never in love when you were eighteen?"

The lady rather thought that at the susceptible age mentioned she fell in love with every one, though the disease was only taken in a mild form and was never dangerous. She had a distinct recollection of falling violently in love with a choir boy, who sang like an angel and looked like one, but she had never spoken to him because he was only the baker's son. She had been rather more than twenty when Mr. Bellamie had fallen in love with her blood, and she had been advised to fall in love with his. She had been quite happy, she loved her husband in a restful kind of way, but of the intense passion which lights up the whole universe with one face and form she knew nothing; she hardly believed that such love existed outside fairy-tales; and in her heart she thought it scarcely decent. She had never kissed her husband before marrying him, and she was very much shocked to think that her son had been kissing Boodles. She would have been still more shocked had she seen them together. She would have regarded their conduct as grossly immoral, when it was actually the purest thing on earth. There is nothing cleaner than a flame of fire.

Mrs. Bellamie tried to turn the conversation from her son. She was uncomfortable and depressed. The surroundings and the atmosphere pinched her, and she felt she would not have a proper sympathy for Boodles until she was back in her luxurious drawing-room with a fire roaring shillings and pence away up the chimney. She would feel inclined to cry for the girl then, but at the present time, surrounded by winds and Weevil furniture, she felt somewhat out of patience with her.

"I came to see if I could do anything for you," she said. "But you are so independent. If I found you a comfortable—"

"Situation," suggested Boodles, when she hesitated.

"I suppose you wouldn't accept it?"

"I should not," said the girl, holding her head up. "The old man who is dead spoilt me for being trodden on. Most girls who go into situations have to grin and pretend they like it, but I should flare up. Thank you all the same," she added stiffly.

Mrs. Bellamie looked at the little rebel again and wished she would be more reasonable. It was a very different Boodles from the merry girl who had come to tea with her in Tavistock. The girl looked years older, and the babyish expression had gone for ever. Every month of that lonely life would leave its mark upon her. December had written itself beneath her eyes, and before long January would be signed upon her forehead, and February perhaps would write upon her mind. Mrs. Bellamie saw the little ring of forget-me-nots, and guessed who had given it her; and then she began to wonder whether it was worth while fighting against Nature. Why not let youth and love have their own sweet way, why not ignore the accident of birth, which had made her a Courtenay and Boodles a blank, why let pride straddle across the way to stop the youngsters from getting into the happy land? Little could be gained from preventing happiness, and much might be lost. That was the influence of the coals, burning again, although the fire was dying lower; and then the influence of prosperity and a restful life did their work, and suggested Boodles in her drawing-room as Aubrey's wife, a pretty sight, a graceful ornament; and outside the people talking, as they can talk when they smell the carrion of scandal.

"Have you no one to look after you?" she asked. "No guardians? Did your—did Mr. Weevil leave no will?"

"He left nothing, except the story of my birth," said Boodles. "I don't know if he left any relations,

but if there are any they are entitled to what he left, as I am no connection of his. It would be dreadful for me if there is any one, and they hear of his death."

"You know the story of your birth then now?" Mrs. Bellamie suggested.

"Yes," said Boodles; "I do."

She tossed her head and stood defiant. She was losing her temper, and had already said what she had not intended to say. Having made up her mind "not to stand it," she had prepared a simple story to tell to Aubrey if he asked for it. Old Weevil had really been her grandfather, and her parents had been obscure people of no better station than himself. She was going to tell a lie, one thorough lie, and then be good for ever. She was going to make herself legitimate, that and nothing more, not a very serious crime, she was merely going to supply herself with a couple of parents and a wedding-service, so that she should not be in the position of Brightly and suffer for the sins of others. But the sight of that cold lady was making Boodles mad. She did not know that Mrs. Bellamie had really a tender feeling for her, and it was only her artistic nature which prevented her from showing it. Boodles did not understand the art which strives to repress all emotion. She did not care about anything just then, being persuaded that both the Bellamies were her enemies, and the lady had come with the idea of trying to make her understand what a miserable little wretch she was, fitted for nothing better than a situation where she would be trampled on. She felt she wanted to disturb that tranquil surface, make the placid lady jump and look frightened. Possibly her mind was not as sound as it should have been. The solitude and the "windy organ," added to her own sorrows, had already made a little mark. One of the first symptoms of insanity is a desire to frighten others. So Boodles put her head back, and laughed a little, and said rather scornfully: "I came upon some diaries that he kept, and they told me all about myself. I will tell you, if you care to hear."

"I should like to know," said Mrs. Bellamie. "But I think that must be the carriage."

"It is," said Boodles, glancing out of the window and seeing unaccustomed lights. "What I have to tell you won't take two minutes. Mine is a very short story. Here it is. One night, eighteen years ago, Mr. Weevil was sitting in this room when he heard a noise at the door. He went out. Nobody was there, but at his feet he found a big bundle of dry bracken. Inside it was a baby, and round its neck was a label on which he read: 'Please take me in, or I shall be drowned to-morrow.' What is the matter, Mrs. Bellamie?"

Boodles had her wish. The lady was regarding her already with fear and horror.

"Don't tell me you were that child," she gasped.

"Why, of course I was. I told you my story was a short one. I have told it you already, for that is all I know about myself, and all Mr. Weevil ever knew about me. But he always thought my father must have been a gentleman."

"The carriage is there, I think?"

"So you see I am what is known as a bastard," Boodles went on, with a laugh. "I don't know the names of my parents. I was thrown out because they didn't want me, and if Mr. Weevil had not taken me in I should have been treated like a kitten or a rat. I am sorry that he did take me in, as I am alone in the world now."

Mrs. Bellamie stood in the doorway, trembling and agitated, her face white and her eyes furious. The coals would not trouble her again. Good Courtenay blood had washed them, and made them as white as her own cheeks.

"You let me kiss you," she murmured.

"Probably I've poisoned you," said the poor child, almost raving.

"My son has made love to you, kissed you, given you a ring."

There was a light in the girl's eyes, unnaturally bright. "If you tried to take this ring from me I would kill you." She was guarding it with a shivering hand. "I know what I am, Mrs. Bellamie. I knew before that look in your eyes told me. I know what a beastly little creature I am, to have a gentleman for a father and some housemaid for a mother. I know it was all my own fault. It must have been the wicked soul in me that made them do what was wrong. I know I deserve to be punished for daring to live. I am young, but I have learnt all that; and now you are teaching me more—you are teaching me that if I had been left at your door you would have sent me to my proper place."

Mrs. Bellamie was outside, and the driver was assisting her towards the carriage, as it was too dark for her to see. Then the wheels jolted away over the rough road, and down the long hill towards luxury and respectability; and the unlit night pressed heavily upon the moor; and Boodles was lying upon her bed, talking to the things unseen.

ABOUT A HOUSE ON THE HIDDEN LANES

Thomasine was sitting in the stone kitchen of Town Rising sewing and trying to think; but the little skeletons of thought that did present themselves were like bad dreams. She had given notice to the Chegwidens and would be leaving in a few days, not because she wanted to go, but because it had become necessary. Town Rising was a moral place, where nothing lower than drunkenness was permitted, and Thomasine was able to comprehend how much better it was to resign than to be turned out. Pendoggat had found a place for her, not a permanent one as he explained, a place where she would receive no wages, where indeed a premium would be required; there she would pay a certain debt to Nature, and then he would come and take her away.

Thomasine was making garments which she smuggled away when any one came to the door. They were ridiculous garments which she could not possibly have worn herself, but perhaps she was making doll's clothes for a charity bazaar, although girls like Thomasine are not usually interested in such things; or she might have been preparing a complete outfit for a certain little person who had benefited her. Pixies of the Tavy are famed for their generosity to servant maids who do their work properly; and the girls have been known to make garments for their benefactors, and spread them out in the kitchen before going to bed, so that the little person could put them on in the night. But the clothes, small though they were, would have been a few sizes too large for pixies, and somewhat too roomy for dolls. Thomasine seemed to be wasting her time and materials; and as a matter of fact she was, although she did not know it because she knew nothing, except that she was not particularly happy.

She was trying to think of matrimony while she sewed. All that she knew about it was that the clergyman mentioned a couple by name publicly three Sundays running, and then they went to church, the girl in her fair-clothes, and the man with a white tie which wouldn't fit his collar, and the clergyman read something which made the man grin and the girl respectable. Time was getting on, it was the dull month of February, and the burden of maternity seemed to be much nearer than the responsibilities of matrimony. Thomasine knew nothing of the place she was going into except that her duties would be light, merely to look after an old woman who would in return render her certain services at a critical time. She did not even know where the place was, for Pendoggat was not going to tell her until the last moment. She had seen young Pugsley the previous Sunday, in a hard hat and a suit of new clothes, the trousers turned up twice in order that a double portion of respectability might rest upon him, with close-cropped head, and a bundle of primroses pinned to his coat. He had stepped up, shaken her by the hand in a friendly way, and told her he was going to be married at Easter. He had got the promise of a cottage, and the ceremony would take place early on Easter Monday, and they were going for their honeymoon to St. Thomas's Fair. Thomasine went back crying, because Pugsley was a good sort of young fellow, and it seemed to her she had missed something, though it was not her fault. She had always wanted to be respectable Mrs. Pugsley, only she had been taken away from the young man, and told not to see him again, and farm-maids have to be obedient.

Thomasine spent the remainder of her time sewing when she was not occupied with household duties, and then the day came when she was to leave. One of the farm-hands drove her to the station, with her box in the cart behind, and her wages in her pocket. She knew by then where she was going; into the loneliness of mid-Devon. She would much rather have gone home, but that was impossible, for the pious cobbler, her father, would have taken her by the shoulders, placed her outside the door, and have turned the key upon her.

If a map be taken, and one leg of a compass placed on the village of Witheridge, the other leg may be extended to a circumference six miles distant, and a wide circle be swept without encountering a railway or cutting more than half-a-dozen good roads, and inside that circle there is not a single town. It is almost unexplored territory, there are no means of transit, and the inhabitants are rough and primitive. Distances there seem great, for the miles are very long ones, and when a call is made to some lonely house the visitor will often be pressed to stay the night, as he would be in Canada or Australia. The map is well sprinkled with names which suggest that the country is thickly populated, but it is not. Many of the names are delusions, more suggestive of the past than the present. A century ago hamlets occupied the sites now covered by a name, but there is nothing left of them to-day except dreary ruins of cob standing in a thicket of brambles or in what was once an apple-orchard. What was formerly the name of a good-sized village is now the title of a farm-house, or one small cottage which would not pay for repairing and must therefore be destroyed when it becomes uninhabitable. It is a sad land to wander through. It suggests a country at the end of its tether which has almost abandoned the struggle for existence, a poverty-stricken country which cannot face the strong-blooded flow of food importations from foreign lands. Even the goods sold in the village shops are of alien manufacture. A hundred little hamlets have given up the struggle in the same number of years, and been wiped, not off the map, but off the land. The country of Devon is like a rosy-cheeked apple which is rotten inside.

This region within the circle is densely wooded, and in parts fertile, though the soil is the heavy dun clay which is difficult to work. It is well-watered, and is only dying because there are no markets for its produce and no railways to carry it. It is a country of lanes, so narrow that only two persons can walk abreast along them, so dirty and ill-kept as to be almost impassable in winter, so dark that it is sometimes difficult to see, and so stuffy and filled with flies in hot weather that any open space comes as a relief. These lanes twist everywhere, and out of them

branch more lanes of the same dirtiness and width; and if they are followed a gate is sure to be reached; and there, in a dark atmosphere, may be seen a low white house with a gloomy orchard on each side, and behind a wilderness of garden, and in front a court containing crumbling barns of cob and a foul pond; and on the other side of the court the lane goes on into more gloomy depths, towards some other dull and lonely dwelling-place in the rotten heart of Devon.

The country would be less sad without these dreary houses which suggest tragedies. Sometimes stories dealing with young women and very young girls reach the newspapers, but not often; the lanes are so dark and twisting, and the houses are so entirely hidden. It is possible to walk along the lanes for miles and to see no human beings; only the ruins of where they lived once, and the decaying houses where they live now. It is like walking through a country of the past.

Along one of these lanes Thomasine was taken in a rickety cart ploughing through glue-like mud, and at one of the gates she alighted. There had been a hamlet once where the brambles spread, and its name, which had become the name of the one small house remaining, was Ashland, though the map calls it something else. The tenant was an elderly woman who appeared to find the greatest difficulty in suiting herself with a servant, as she was changing them constantly. She was always having a fresh one, all young girls, and they invariably looked ill when they went away, which was a sure sign that the house was not healthy, and that Mrs. Fuzzey's temper was a vile one. The woman had no near neighbours, though there were, of course, people scattered round about, but they saw nothing suspicious in the coming and going of so many maids. No girl could be expected to stand more than a month or two of Mrs. Fuzzey and her lonely house, especially as some of the girls she engaged were rather smart and well dressed. No one suspected that the mistress of dark little Ashland of the hidden lanes was there solely in the way of business.

"How be ye, my dear?" said the lady in an amiable fashion to her new servant, client, or patient, or whatever she chose to regard her as, when the driver after his customary joke: "Here's one that will stop vor a month likely," had been dismissed. "You'm a lusty maid what won't give much trouble, I reckon. You'm safe enough wi' me, my dear. Seems you ha' come a bit early like. Well, most of 'em du. They get that scared of it showing. Not this month wi' yew, I reckon. Be it early next?"

"Ees," said Thomasine.

"Well, my dear, I'll be a proper mother to ye. 'Twill du ye good to get abroad a bit. Run out and pick up the eggs, and us will ha' tea. Yonder's the hen-roost."

Mrs. Fuzzey seemed a pleasant body, but it was all in the way of business. She was a stout woman, with a big florid face, and crisp black hair which suggested foreign extraction. She reared poultry successfully, and was quite broken-hearted when a young chicken met an evil fate and perished, which indicated the presence of a vein of tenderness somewhere, in the region of the pocket probably, as she was usually insensible to the suffering of human beings. Still she did not look the sort of woman who might reasonably be expected to end her life upon the scaffold, if success in business made her careless, or if any of her patrons or clients ventured to risk their own safety by giving information against her.

Thomasine was not accustomed to stately interiors and fine furniture, and yet she was astonished at the bareness of the interior of Ashland. Had everything in the place been put up to auction less than five pounds would possibly have bought the lot. There was nothing in the way of luxury, not an article that was unnecessary, except the curtains that hung across the windows for respectability's sake. It was not a home, but a place of business. The mistress had the sense to know she might require to leave in a hurry some day without being allowed time to pack anything, and she saw no advantage in investing her savings in furniture which she would have to leave behind.

The garden was at the back, a dark garden, shadowed and gloomy, like an Eastern cemetery. It made a sort of quadrangle, with the house at one end, a jungle-like coppice with bracken and bramble undergrowth at the other, and an orchard on each side; as an additional protection there was a stone hedge round the three sides. There was only one entry and that was from the house. There had been another, a gate leading in from one of the orchards, but Mrs. Fuzzey had closed it up. She did not want people trespassing in her garden.

Near the hedge at the back, and in front of the dense coppice, was an old well which had not been used for a long time as the water was supposed to be polluted. It had been practically closed up when Mrs. Fuzzey came into residence, but she had opened it for her own purposes. The water supply of the house came from a well in the court, which was fed either by a spring or by the river Yeo which passed close by. The old well was very deep and contained a good deal of water with a scum on it which fortunately could not be seen, and a smell to it which in hot weather became rather pronounced, as it had not been cleared out for ages and was filled with dead bodies of rats—and other things. But the miasma carried no distance, and there was nobody to complain about it except Mrs. Fuzzey, who didn't mind. Ashland was almost as much out of the way as a farm upon the back blocks of Australia. Nobody ever entered the garden except herself and her maid for the time being. It was in a land where the sanitary inspector ceases from troubling. She did her own gardening, planting her potatoes and onions, being a strong woman well able to wield a spade. She had piled a lot of rocks about the well and made quite a pleasant flower garden there. She was fond of flowers, and in the warm weather would take out a chair and sit beside the well, admiring the beauty of the various saxifrages, creepers, and trailing

plants which her efforts had induced to grow. She called it the Grotto. She had penny novelettes sent her regularly, and would devour them greedily as she sat in her garden, being very much addicted to romance and sentiment when it was strong enough; and sometimes she thought it would be agreeable to retire from business and have a husband and family of her own. It was so very dull at Ashland though she was making money. There never had been a Mr. Fuzzey, although she always gave herself the courtesy title of Mrs.

Thomasine got on very well with Mrs. Fuzzey and almost liked her. The girl was taken round the garden and the Grotto was pointed out to her with pride, although there was nothing to be seen except wet rocks, sodden plants, and decayed woodwork; but she was informed it would be a place of great beauty in the spring. Indoors there was cleaning to be done, with cooking, dairy-work, and egg-packing. A tradesman's visit was rare, and when one did come it was on foot along the narrow muddy lane, his cart being left far behind at the corner of some road or bigger lane. The evenings would have been fearfully dreary had Mrs. Fuzzey been less entertaining. The lady made and drank sloe-gin in some quantity; and she gave Thomasine a taste for it, with the result that sometimes they laughed a good deal without apparent cause, and the elderly lady became sentimental and embraced Thomasine, and declared that she loved young women, which was natural enough seeing that she made her living out of them. Then she would read selected portions from her latest novelette and weep with emotion.

"If ever I come to change my business I'll write bukes," she said one night. "I'd like to sot down every day, and write about young volks making love. I feels cruel soft to think on't. Lord love ye, my dear, there bain't nothing like love. Volks may say what 'em likes, but 'tis the only thing worth living vor. I've never had none, my dear, and I'd like it cruel. You'm had plenty, I reckon. Most o' the maids what comes here ha' had a proper butiful plenty on't, and some of 'em ha' talked about it till my eyes was fair drapping. I cries easy," said Mrs. Fuzzey.

Thomasine admitted she had received her share, and rather more than she had wanted.

"Yew can't ha' tu much when it comes the way yew wants it," said the lady. "I'm wonderful fond o' these little bukes 'cause 'em gives yew the real thing. I can't abide 'em when they talks about butiful country, and moons a shining, and such like, but when they gets their arms around each other and starts smacking, then I sots down tight to 'em. I can tak' plenty o' that trade. Sets me all of a quiver it du. I ses to myself: 'Amelia'—that's me, my dear—'just think what some maids get and yew don't.' Then I starts crying, my dear. I be a cruel tender woman."

The conversation was entirely one-sided, because Thomasine had never learnt to talk.

"If ever I got to write one o' these, I'd mind what the maids ha' told me. I'd start wi' love, and I'd end wi' love. I'd ha' nought else. I'd set 'em kissing on the first line, and I'd end 'em, my dear, I'd end 'em proper, fair hugging, my dear," hiccupped Mrs. Fuzzey. The bottle of sloe-gin was getting low, and her spirits were proportionally high. She kissed Thomasine, breathed gin down her back, and lifted up her voice again—

"I loves maids, I du, I loves 'em proper. I loves children tu, innocent little children. I loves 'em all, 'cept when they scream, and then I can't abide 'em. I reckon, my dear, you wouldn't find a tenderer woman than me anywheres. I tells myself sometimes I be tu soft, but I can't help it, my dear."

The old swine slobbered over the girl, half-drunk and half-acting, giving her loud-sounding kisses; and Thomasine did not know that most of the girls who had been placed under Mrs. Fuzzey's protection had been used in the same way as long as they would stand it. People have many peculiar ways of easing the conscience; some confess to a priest, some perform charitable works; others, like Mrs. Fuzzey, assume they are rather too good, though they may be vile. The old harridan posed as a tender-hearted being in love with every living creature; and she had read so many ridiculous love-tales and wept over them, and drunk so many bottles of sloe-gin and wept over them, and listened with lamentations to so many amatory details from the young women who had placed themselves under her charge, that she had pretty well persuaded herself she was a paragon of loving-kindness. Thomasine thought she was; but then Thomasine knew nothing.

It was rare to see a human being cross the court in front of Ashland. If more than one person passed in a day it was a thing to talk about, and sometimes a whole week went by bringing nobody. The policeman who was supposed to patrol the district had possibly never heard of the place, and had he been told to go there would have wanted a guide. Ashland was more isolated at that time than most of the dead hamlets, because the two farm-houses that stood nearest were empty and dropping to pieces.

About half-a-mile beyond the court another dark little lane branched off, and presently it divided into two dark little lanes like rivers of mud flowing between deep banks. They were like the dark corridors of a haunted house; and one of them led to the dead hamlet of Black Hound, now one cob farm-house until lately occupied by Farmer Hookaway who had shot himself the previous autumn; and the other finished up at the dead hamlet of Yeast-beer, which was also one cob farm-house with the thatch sliding off its roof, and this had been tenanted by Farmer Venhay, who had not shot himself but had drowned his bankrupt body in the Yeo. It was a pretty neighbourhood in summer, for the foxgloves were gorgeous, so were the ferns, and the meadow-sweet, irises, ragged-robins and orchids in the marshy fields; but it was sad somehow. It wanted populating. There were too many ruins about, too many abandoned orchards overrun with brambles, too many jagged walls of cob which represented a name upon the map. Once upon a time the folk of

Merry England had danced and revelled there. Their few descendants took life tragically, and sometimes put it off in the same way. There was no music for them to dance to.

The time passed quickly enough for Thomasine, too quickly because she was frightened. She quite understood why she had become Mrs. Fuzzey's assistant for the time being. She comprehended that it is the duty of every girl to remain respectable, and in a vague way she had grasped the code of morality as it is practised in certain places. It was necessary for girls in her condition to go away and hide themselves, either at home, if her parents would permit it, or if not in lodgings provided for the purpose. She would never be seen, and would not have the doctor, because it was not anything serious, generally measles, or a stubborn cold. When everything was over she could appear again, and get strong and well by taking outdoor exercise; and nobody ever knew what had happened, unless the child, which was always born dead, had been disposed of in a particularly clumsy fashion.

As time went on Mrs. Fuzzey became irritable. She said Thomasine would have to pay something extra if she was not quick about her business. Her own affairs were by no means prospering, as she had not received any applications to fill the position of general help when Thomasine had vacated it. The truth of the matter was, as she explained bitterly, girls in country districts were becoming enlightened and imbued with the immoral spirit of the towns, which displayed articles of convenience in the windows of shops professing to be hygienic and surgical drug stores. These things had penetrated to the country, and a knowledge of them had reached even the most out of the way districts. Every small chemist did a large back-room business in such things, and many a girl was taking the precaution of carrying one about in her handkerchief, or when going to church between the leaves of her prayer-book. Mrs. Fuzzey had no hesitation in denouncing the entire system as immoral, and one which conduced towards the destruction of her business which she had built up with so much care and secrecy. The lady had been finding her novelettes dull reading lately. The love interest had not been nearly strong enough for her taste, and she felt that her imagination could have supplied many details that were wanting. In the meantime flowers were springing in the garden, which was on low ground and entirely sheltered from every wind; and one morning Mrs. Fuzzey came in to announce that the Grotto would soon be beautiful, as the white arabis and purple aubrietia were smothered with buds.

Soon after that it happened with Thomasine after the manner of women, and she gave birth to twins, both girls. Mrs. Fuzzey was kindness itself while she attended the girl, but when the first had been followed by the second she began to grumble and said she should require another sovereign. She couldn't work for nothing, and she echoed Brightly's frequently expressed complaint that trade was cruel dull. The infants were removed, and then Thomasine gave birth to a third, a boy this time. Mrs. Fuzzey became really angry, and wanted to know if this sort of thing was likely to continue. She knew all about the legend current around Chulmleigh, of the Countess of Devon who met a labourer carrying a basketful of seven infants, which his wife had just given birth to, down to the river that he might dispose of them like kittens, and she thought it possible that Thomasine might be about to emulate that woman's example. Mrs. Fuzzey was not prepared to deal with infants in such quantity, and she stated she should require an additional five pounds to cover extra work and risk.

"Have ye purty nigh done?" she asked at length.

"Ees," muttered Thomasine faintly.

"About time, I reckon. Well, I'll step under and ha' a drop just to quiet my nerves like."

Mrs. Fuzzey had her drop, then attended to her professional duties, which did not detain her long, had another drop, which kept her engaged some time, and finally returned and asked the girl how she did.

"Proper bad. I reckon I be dying," said Thomasine.

Mrs. Fuzzey laughed her to scorn. "You'm as fresh as a trout. Come through it fine, my dear. You can't say I bain't a tender woman," she went on, the various "drops," and the knowledge that the unpleasant part of her work was over, having rendered her amiable. "I know the trade, I du, and I be so soft and gentle that you didn't feel hardly anything. 'Twas lucky for yew, my dear, they sent yew to me. Any old doctor might ha' killed ye. I reckon I'm just about the handiest at the trade a living, and cruel tender tu. Done a lot o' good in my time, I ha'. Saved many a maid just like I've saved yew."

Mrs. Fuzzey talked as if she regarded herself eminently qualified for decorations and a pension.

"'Tis a pity yew can't claim the bounty," she went on. "But there, it bain't much, only a pound or two, though a little bit be a lot for poor wimmin like yew and me, my dear. 'Twould help yew to pay me, for I can't du all this extra work for nought, wi' times so bad, and maids not coming reg'lar. I can't du it, my dear. Well, I reckon I'll go under and ha' a drop."

Mrs. Fuzzey lived on sloe-gin during such days, feeling she required it to strengthen her nerve, or possibly to ease her abnormal conscience. She finished the bottle before she appeared again.

It remained as peaceful as ever about Ashland. Nobody passed that day, or the day after; and the dark little lanes hidden away like caves were full of mud and water as they always were at that season of the year.

When Thomasine felt better she asked for the infants, and Mrs. Fuzzey, who could not walk

without lurching from side to side, cast up her eyes and her hands, and wondered whatever the girl was talking about.

"Having dree of 'em and thinking they'm alive, the purty little lambs. They was proper booties, my dear. I could ha' kissed 'em I loved 'em so cruel. I never did see babies I loved so much. I'd like to ha' nursed the purty dears, given 'em baths, dressed 'em, made 'em look fine. But what can ye du wi' dead babies, my dear, 'cept get 'em out o' the way?"

"I heard 'em cry," said Thomasine.

"Lord love ye, my dear, you'm that mazed yew could fancy anything. 'Twas just the door creaking as I carried 'em out."

"Where be 'em?" asked Thomasine.

"Safe in the Grotto, my dear. There be a bit o' warm sunshine, and 'tis butiful."

"Was 'em all born dead?"

"All dree," hiccupped Mrs. Fuzzey with the utmost cheerfulness. "'Tis a good thing for yew. What would an unmarried girl du wi' dree babies?"

Thomasine had not considered that point. She could not know that every girl who had occupied that bed before her had asked much the same questions, and had received exactly the same answers. She admitted that it was a good thing, although she had to murmur: "I'd ha' liked to cuddle 'em just once," which was a long speech for Thomasine.

She was thankful her ordeal was over, though she wondered what Pendoggat would say when he heard the children were dead. He had often told her how he should love any child that was theirs. Still he could not refuse to marry her now. She would have to get strong again as soon as she could, because she knew he would be waiting for her.

The next day Mrs. Fuzzey entered in excellent spirits and half-sober. The sun was shining, she said, and the arabis and aubrietia were in flower among the rocks, and "The Grotto be looking just butiful, my dear."

CHAPTER XXIV

ABOUT BANKRUPTS

Swaling-time had come, red patches of fire flickered every night on Dartmoor, and the furze-prickles crackled in the flames. The annual war between man and the prickly shrub was being waged, and the atmosphere was always clouded and tainted with bitter smoke. Every one seemed to be infected with the idea of furze destruction, from the granite-cracker who as he went to his labours would push the match with which he had just lighted his pipe into some thick brake, to the small boys who begged or stole boxes of matches and went out after dark to make the moor fiery. With those huge bonfires flaming it looked as if not a particle of furze would survive; and yet when summer arrived there would be apparently as much as ever; and not a bush would be killed; only burnt to the ground, and the roots still living in the peat would soon send forth green shoots.

People who looked down into the hollow thought Helmen Barton a peaceful place, but they were wrong; there was plenty of passion beneath the surface, and at night often there was noise. It was dark down there; a watcher on the top of the hill might have seen no light, though he could hardly have failed to hear the noise, which was made by a drunken woman railing at a silent man; at least the man appeared to be silent, as his voice did not carry out of the hollow. Possibly he did nothing but mumble.

Annie was degenerating rapidly; cider satisfied her no longer; and she went into the village to procure fiercer liquors. Pendoggat had become more reserved, and there was craftiness in his every movement. He kept his temper somehow and refused to answer the woman's taunts, which made her scream louder. He could stand it; he was nearly ready to go; only one little matter was detaining him, and when that was settled he could let himself out in the night, walk down to Tavistock, and the first train westward or eastward—he did not care which—would carry him away.

Thomasine had left Mrs. Fuzzey's hospitable roof. Pendoggat had seen her, and at once made the discovery that he loved her no longer. The girl had changed so much; she seemed to have lost her blood, her wonderful ripeness, her soft flesh, and her passion-provoking look. She had become thin and quite unattractive. Pendoggat wondered how he could ever have been so wildly in love with her, and he told her so, adding that his conscience would not permit him to take her away with him, and it would be nothing less than a grievous sin if he married her without love. He admitted he had sinned occasionally in the past, and he did not wish to add to the number of his transgressions. The wretched girl implored him to make her a decent woman, as she called it, to keep his promises, to remember all the oaths that he had sworn. People more than suspected the truth; the Chegwidens would not have her back and had refused her a character; her father had

greeted her with an austere countenance, had opened his Bible and read for her benefit a damnatory verse or two from the Revelations of St. John the Divine, and then had shown her the way out, while her mother had locked the door behind her. Her appearance suggested to them how she had been occupied during her retirement. Measles wouldn't go down with them. She had left Ashland too soon, but Mrs. Fuzzey would not keep her any longer. The old witch had kissed and embraced her, had wheedled every penny of her wages out of her, had declared that she loved her as she had never loved anybody else in her life, and had then told her to get out. She had no place to go to. She hung to Pendoggat, and implored him to remember what had passed between them; but he naturally wanted to forget it. He told Thomasine she was a sinful woman, and when she made a scene he lost his temper, and reminded her that a girl could make a living on the streets of Plymouth if she walked them long enough. Afterwards he had a feeling that he had acted without charity, so he went to chapel and repented, and was forgiven in the usual way. Still he decided he could have nothing more to do with Thomasine. His conscience would not permit it.

His thorn in the flesh was Annie, but he let her rave, thinking she would be less dangerous while she barked. The little matter which detained him at the Barton was a mercenary one. He could not leave the furniture for strangers to seize or Annie to profit by. His beasts he had sold already to two different persons, which was not a dishonest act, but merely good business; it was for the two men to settle the question of ownership when they came together. The furniture was not worth much, but he could not leave the place without getting value for it. So he sent for a dealer from Tavistock to come and make him an offer, taking precautions to get Annie out of the way during the time of his visit; but she heard of it, and instinct told her the truth again.

One morning a letter came, Annie saw the name on the flap of the envelope, and knew that it was from the dealer. Probably he had bought what few chattels she possessed and had brought with her when she came to live with Pendoggat. She was silent all the morning; it was a dark day, there had been no sun for some time, and a spell of frost had set in; it was black above and white below, a black unbroken sky and a white sheet of frost. She shivered as she crept about the kitchen, listening for the movements of the master. He did not speak to her; when she passed he put his head lower than ever.

Later in the day it became difficult to see on account of the smoke. Swaling was going on all round, and there was a choking mist over the Barton, even inside as if the house itself was smouldering. Pendoggat could scarcely breathe. He had become horribly afraid of fire since Peter made the mommet, which he had tried to purchase but had failed because the little savage carried too many wits for him. He determined to get away that night, obtaining what money he could from the mercenary dealer as he went through Tavistock. The atmosphere was getting tainted with things stronger than smoke. He had often wondered whether his conscience would permit him to murder Annie, but he was beginning to fear then she might attempt to murder him. He went out into the court with a feeling that he was trying to escape from a burning building; and Annie followed him without a sound. She saw him standing as if dazed, peering into the smoke, clutching at his breast pocket where the capital of the Nickel Mining Company was hidden in the form of notes. He did not know which way to turn that he might escape from the multitude of little clay dolls which seemed to him to be dancing upon the hills. Then he remembered it was chapel evening. He could not go away until he had been to Ebenezer to seek a blessing and absolution, to give Pezzack one more grasp of the good right hand of fellowship, to remind the congregation of the certainty of hell-fire. He did not see Annie until she came up softly and touched him.

"Where be ye going?" she said in a smooth manner, which suggested that she still loved him.

"Nowhere," he muttered, wishing the smoke would clear away and make an opening for his escape.

"That be a long way," she said, with pleasant humour. "'Tis where I've been going the last twenty years. Reckon I be purty nigh there."

He made no reply, only moved away, but she followed, saying: "How about that letter yew had this morning?"

"'Tis my business," he said.

"Yew never did nought that warn't your business. You'm selling up the home. That's what I ses. You'm going away. Who be going wi' ye?"

"Nobody," he muttered.

"Hark to 'en," said Annie in the same smooth voice. "He'm going nowhere wi' nobody. I knows some one who be going wi' yew."

"You're a liar."

"Times I be. I've played a lie for twenty years, and mebbe it comes nat'ral. I reckon I be telling the truth now. When you start some one will be behind yew, and her wun't be dumb neither. Yew took me twenty years ago, and you'm going to tak' me now."

"I'm not going away," he said hoarsely. He was afraid of the woman while she was soft and gentle. He had been so crafty and done nothing to arouse her suspicions; at least he thought so; but he was acquainted only with the bodily parts of women, not with their instincts and their

minds.

"If one of us be a liar it bain't me," said Annie. "What be yew leaving me? When a woman gets past forty her don't want clothes. Her can cover herself wi' her grey hairs, and her don't want a roof over her and food. Only young maids want such. Be I a liar, man?"

"Get back into your kitchen," he muttered, still moving away, but she steadily followed.

"I've been in the kitchen twenty years, and I reckon I want a change," she answered. "A wife bides in the kitchen 'cause her's willing, and a servant 'cause her has to, but I bain't a wife and I bain't a servant, though volks think I be the one, and yew think I be the other. Be ye going, man? I've got a pair o' boots, a bit worn, but they'll du. Reckon I'll get 'em on."

"Get inside and keep your mouth shut," he said roughly.

"I bain't going under. Dartmoor be a free place, and my tongue be my own yet. Hit me, man. Pick up thikky stick and hit me wi' 'en. It wun't be the first time you've hit some one weaker than yourself."

Pendoggat was losing his temper and seeing red flames in the smoke, though they were not there. If she continued in that soft voice he would strike her, perhaps too hard, and silence her for ever. It was a pity he had not done so before, only his conscience, or fear of the law, had kept him from it. Now she was at his side, pulling at his arm, quite gently, for she was sober and in full possession of her senses, and she was pointing to a side of the Barton where the brake of furze stood, not black, but shrouded in smoke and starched with frost, and she was saying in an amiable voice: "You'm a vule, man. A woman bain't so easy beat. I ses you'm a vule, man, as every man be a vule who gives a woman power over 'en. I bain't a going to follow yew. I can get men to du it vor me. You'm a murderer, man," she said in a caressing way.

Pendoggat shrank away, not so much from her, as from her horrible words. She had insulted him before, but never like that. It was true he had committed indiscretions in the past, sins even, but he had always gone to chapel with the big Bible under his arm, and he had always repented in bitterness of spirit, and he had always been forgiven. It was time indeed for him to break away from such a woman. He could not listen to such vile language. A little more of it, and his conscience would permit him to silence her. He began to walk towards the gate of the court, but she was holding on to him and saying: "You'm in a cruel hurry, man, and it bain't chapel time. Twenty years us ha' lived together as man and wife, and now you'm in a hurry to go. Chegwiddden's maid can bide 'cause yew don't want she. I can bide 'cause I knows yew wun't get far avore they fetch ye back to hear what I got to say about ye. Tak' thikky stick," she said, picking it up from the lifting-stock and pushing it into his hand. "Mebbe 'twill be a help to ye, mak' yew walk a bit faster, and yew can keep policeman off wi' 'en."

He grasped the stick, clenched his teeth, and struck her on the head, across the ear; the first actual blow he had ever given her, and he was only sorry that the stick was so light and small. She screamed once, not so much in anger, as with pain. Her head went dizzy and her ear became red-hot. After the scream she said nothing, but steadying herself went back to the house, into the kitchen, and took down a bottle from the top shelf; while he walked on mumbling towards the gate. The vile creature deserved it because she had called him a murderer. It was not only wicked of her but foolish, because she had no evidence against him, beyond what was hidden in the furze; and those remains would incriminate herself more strongly than him. She never attended to her religious duties, while he was the light and foundation stone of Ebenezer, and nobody could accept her word against his. Still it would be advisable, if possible, to remove every trace of her guilt from that thick brake of furze. To abandon her would be a sufficient punishment. He did not want to get her into more trouble.

Out of the smoke two figures advanced towards the Barton gate; a short round man and a tall lean one. Pendoggat hesitated, and would have turned back, for they were strangers, and he could not know what they wanted him for, but he had been seen, one of the men called him by name, and he could not find a way to escape. He went to them, and the stout man became the retired grocer, uncle of Pezzack, chairman of the Nickel Mining Company, while the other was his friend and a principal shareholder. Neither showed friendliness and both were agitated. They were running after their savings and didn't know where to find them. The grocer would not shake hands, but stood struggling to find words. His had not been a liberal education, and had not included lessons in elocution.

"It's what I call a dirty business," he shouted, then gasped and panted with rage and fast walking, and repeated the expression, adding blasphemy; while the lean man panted also, and stated that he too called the scheme a dirty business, and added that he had come for satisfaction and a full explanation.

Pendoggat was himself again when confronted by these two wise men of Bromley who had been meddling in matters which they didn't understand. The entire company of shareholders would not have terrified him because the nickel mine was Pezzack's affair, not his. People seemed to be in the mood for accusing him of sins which had long ago ceased to weigh upon his conscience. He remarked that he was at a loss to understand why the gentlemen had brought their complaints to him.

"What about that dirty mine?" shouted the grocer, although he did not use the adjective dirty, but something less clean. "What about the nickel that you said was going to make our fortunes?"

"The minister tells me it is there. He's waiting for fine weather to start," said Pendoggat.

"The minister says he knows nothing about it. You put him up to the scheme," said the lean man.

Pendoggat shook his head and looked stupid. He did not seem able to understand that.

"You've got the money. Every penny of it, and we've come to make you fork out," spluttered the grocer.

Pendoggat could not understand that either.

"I've been writing every week, and hearing nothing, except always going to begin and never beginning," went on the fat grocer. "I've been worrying till I couldn't sleep, and till there ain't hardly an ounce o' flesh on my bones. I couldn't stand it no longer, and I says to my friend here, I'm a going down to see what their little game is, and my friend said he was coming too, and it's just about time we did come from what my nephew Eli tells me. Says you found this here mine and put him up to getting money to work it. Says he's given the money to you. Says you've been like a madman, and pulled him up here one night, and pretty near punched his blooming head off."

Pendoggat made up his mind that the grocer was an untruthful and a vulgar person. All that he said was: "I hope the minister hasn't been telling you that."

"Are you going to deny it?" cried the lean man.

"I don't understand you, gentlemen," said Pendoggat. "I'll take you down to the mine if you like. I don't know if nickel is to be found there. The minister says there's plenty, and I believed him."

The grocer was whirling round and round after the manner of a dancing dervish and huzzing like a monstrous bee. He felt that he was losing his savings, and that sort of knowledge makes a man dance. "What do he know about nickel? He's a minister of the Gospel, not a dirty miner," he howled.

"Are you telling us the minister hasn't given you the money?" demanded the other man, who made his living by buying cheap vegetables and turning them out as high-class jam.

"Pezzack never told you that, gentlemen. He's treated me fair enough, and paid my wages regular as working manager, and I'm not going to think he's put that tale on you," Pendoggat answered.

"He did," shouted the grocer, but in a less fiery manner, because he was impressed by the simple countryman. "He told us he'd given you every penny."

"I'll not believe it of him, not till he stands before me, and I hear him say it."

"If you ain't got the blooming oof, who has?" cried the vulgar little chairman.

"Judge for yourself," Pendoggat answered. "Here am I, a poor man, scratching a bit of moor for my living, and pressed so hard that I've just had to sell my beasts, and now I'm selling most of my furniture to meet a debt. I've a letter in my pocket making me an offer, and you can see it if you like. There's the minister living comfortable, and married, gentlemen, married since this business started and since the money came."

"I always wondered what he had to marry on," the grocer muttered.

"Go and ask him. Tell him I'll meet him face to face and answer him word for word. I know nothing about mining. If you put a bit of nickel and a bit of tin before me I couldn't tell one from the other. Stay a bit and I'll come with you. It's near chapel time," said Pendoggat, righteous in his indignation. "I'll meet him in the chapel and answer him there."

"What about that sample you gave me when I came down before? Knocked it off the wall, you did, before me, and that was nickel, for I had it analysed, and paid the chap five bob for doing it."

Pendoggat looked confused and did not have an answer ready. He kicked his boot against the gatepost, and turned away, shaking his head.

"Got him there," muttered the jam-maker.

"Well, I'll tell you," said Pendoggat roughly. "I wouldn't have said a word if the minister had played fair, but if it's true he's gone against me to save himself I'll tell you. He gave me that bit of stuff and told me what I was to do with it. I didn't know what it was, and I don't know now. I did what I was told to do, and got an extra ten shillings for doing it."

The grocer and his friend looked at one another, and the uncle muttered something about the nephew which Eli would have wept to hear. Some one had uttered particularly gross lies to him, and he had an idea Pendoggat was telling the truth. The grocer and jam-maker were men easily deceived by a smooth manner; and Pendoggat's story had impressed them far more than Pezzack's, just because the countryman had a straightforward confession, while the minister rambled and spoke foolishly.

"Gave him ten bob for doing it," whispered the jam-maker, nudging the grocer.

"I'm ready to come with you, gentlemen," said Pendoggat.

It was nearly dark, and by the time they reached the village the chapel doors would be open.

Pendoggat knew he must get away that night because he was afraid of Annie. He had struck her at last, and she had been at the liquor ever since. He could hear her screaming in the house; she might get hold of his gun and blaze at him during the night. It was going to be clear and frosty, a good night for a long walk, and the notes were packed away in his pocket. There was only one duty remaining—the unmasking of Pezzack, who apparently had been trying to blacken his character. Annie would quiet down when she found herself alone. She would not follow him, or give information against him; and if she did the one thing he could outwit her, and if she did the other it would go hard with her. "I'll come with you, gentlemen," he repeated. "The soul that sinneth it shall die. That's a true saying, and it comes from the true word."

"What about my blooming money, though?" muttered the grocer; while his friend was wondering whether an extra halfpenny on jam would recoup him for his losses.

They met no one as they crossed the smoky stretch of moor. It was going to be a hard night, and already the peat felt as unyielding as granite. The grocer slapped his arms across his unwieldy chest, and said it was "a bit parky" in his vulgar way, and longed for his snug jerry-built villa; while his friend agreed that Dartmoor was a place of horror and great darkness, and wished himself back in his gas-scented factory superintending the transformation of carrots into marmalade. They walked in single file along a narrow pony track, Pendoggat leading with his eyes upon his boots.

Pezzack was in the chapel when the little party arrived. He was whiter than ever, not altogether with cold, though Ebenezer was like a damp cave by the sea, but with nervousness, with fear of his rotund uncle and dread of the mysterious Pendoggat. He did not know even then whether Pendoggat was his friend or his enemy. He could not explain the fit of madness which had come upon the man that night they had left the chapel together, and had made him use his wretched self so shamefully; but then he could explain nothing, not even a simple text of Scripture. He could only bleat and flounder, and tumble about hurting himself; but he was still a happy man, he told himself. Partner Pendoggat was a rough creature, almost a brute sometimes, but he would not desert him when the pinch came.

The visitors did not approve of Ebenezer, and expressed themselves to that effect in disdainful whispers. It was altogether unlike the comfortable tabernacle where the grocer thanked God he was not like other men; and as for the jam-maker he was of the Anglican brood, a sidesman of his church, a distributor of hymn-books, a collector of alms, and all the ways of Nonconformity he utterly abhorred. He settled himself in an Established Church attitude, in a corner with his head lolling against the wall and his legs stretched out; while the grocer adopted the devotional pose of Wesleyanism, sitting upright with his hands folded across his watch-chain and his chin upon his chest.

"Brother Pendoggat will lead in prayer," said Eli nervously.

The grocer admitted afterwards that the prayer had been strong, and had overlooked few of those weaknesses to which the flesh occasionally succumbs. He especially admired the phrase alluding to honest and respectable tradesmen who after leading a life of integrity in business were able to retire with a blessing upon their labours and devote the remainder of their lives to good works. He was surprised to find a countryman with such a keen insight into human character. Pendoggat prayed also for pastors and teachers, and especially for those shepherds who led members of their flock astray; while Pezzack grew whiter, and the grocer went on nodding his head like a ridiculous automaton. The jam-maker had wrapped himself up in his greatcoat and gone to sleep, so that he should not be defiled by listening to false doctrine. He was a prosperous man and the handful of sovereigns he had lost in "Wheal Pezzack" did not trouble him much. A few florid advertisements would bring them back again.

The service came to an end, and Pendoggat rose to address the meeting. He asked the people to remain in their places for a few moments, and he turned to Eli, who was still at the reading-desk, and said, with his eyes upon the walls which were sweating moisture—

"You called a meeting here last summer, minister. You said you had found nickel on Dartmoor, and you wanted to start a company to work it."

"No, no," cried Eli, beginning to flap his big hands as if he was learning to fly. He had expected something was going to happen, but not this. "That is not true, Mr. Pendoggat."

"Let him talk," muttered the grocer. "Your time's coming."

"I say you called a meeting, and I came to it," Pendoggat went on. "There are folks here to-night who came to that meeting, and they will remember what happened. You sent round a sample of nickel, and then I got up and said there was no money in the scheme, and I said I would have nothing to do with it, and I told the others they would be fools if they invested anything in it. I ask any one here to get up and say whether that is true or not."

"It was your mine, Mr. Pendoggat. It was your scheme. Oh, Mr. Pendoggat, 'ow can you talk like this, and uncle listening?" cried the miserable Eli.

Up got the old farmer, who had been present at the meeting, and said in his rambling way that Pendoggat had spoken nothing but the truth; and he added, for the benefit of the visitors, what his uncle, who had been a miner in the old days, had told him concerning the various wheals, and the water in them, and the difficulty of working them on account of that water. And when he had

repeated his remarks, so that there might be no misunderstanding, the grocer sent his elbow into the jam-maker's ribs, and whispered in his deplorable phraseology that his nephew had been up to a blooming lot o' dirty tricks and no error; while the jam-maker awoke, with a curt remark about the increasing protuberance of his wife's bones, and found himself in cold lamp-lighted Ebenezer, looking at Eli's countenance which was beginning to exude moisture like the stones of the walls.

"Friends, uncle, and Mr. Pendoggat—" stammered the poor minister, trying to be oratorical; but the grocer only muttered: "Stow your gab and let the man talk."

"After the meeting we stopped behind, and you told me you were going to run the mine, and you asked me in this place if I would be your manager," Pendoggat went on. "I said I would if there wasn't any risk, and then you told me you could get the money from friends, from your uncle in Bromley—"

Eli cut him off with wailings. It was his peculiarity to be unable to speak with coherence when he was excited. He could only gasp and stammer: "It's not true. It's the other way about. I never 'ad nothing to do with it. You are telling 'orrid, shameful lies, Mr. Pendoggat;" but the grocer muttered audibly: "A dirty rascal," while the jam-maker muttered something about penal servitude which made him smile.

"You told me you had an uncle retired from business," said Pendoggat. "A simple old chap you called him, an old fool who would believe anything."

The grocer began to splutter like a squib, while his companion laughed beneath his hand, pleased to hear his friend's weaknesses clearly indicated; and Eli, losing all self-control, came tumbling from the desk and sprawled at his relation's feet, sobbing like the weak fool he was, and saying: "Oh, Mr. Pendoggat, 'ow can you talk so shameful? Oh, uncle, I never did."

The people behind were standing up and pressing forward, shocked to discover that their minister had been standing on such feet of clay. Pendoggat looked at his watch and smiled. He had judged Pezzack accurately; the weak fool was in his hands. The grocer, scarlet to the tip of his nose, caught his nephew by the neck, shook him, and, forgetting everything but his own losses desecrated the chapel by his mercenary shouts: "Where's my money, you rascal? Give me back my money, every penny of it, or I'll turn you out of house and home, and make a beggar of you."

"I 'aven't got it, uncle. I never 'ad a penny of it. I 'anded it over as fast as it come to Mr. Pendoggat, and he 'ave got it now."

This was literally true, as the money was in Pendoggat's pocket, but the grocer had formed his own impressions and these were entirely unfavourable to Eli. He went on shaking his nephew, while the jam-maker in moving his foot kicked the bankrupt, and found the operation so soothing to his nerves that he repeated the act with intention.

"I ain't got none o' the money. I gave it 'im, and he's been keeping wife and me. I thought he was my friend. He've a shook me by the 'and many a time, and we've been like brothers. I didn't never call you a simple old chap, uncle. I love you and respect you. I've always tried to do my duty, and my wife's expecting, uncle."

"You married on my money. Don't tell me you didn't. 'Twas a trick of yours to get married. If you don't pay it back, I'll turn you out, you and your wife, into the street. I'll get a bit of my own back that way, sure as I'm a Christian."

"Ask Jeconiah," sobbed Eli. "I've 'ad no secrets from her. She'll tell you I 'aven't touched a penny of your money 'cept what Mr. Pendoggat gave us."

The jam-maker kicked again, finding a softer spot, and muttered something about one being as bad as the other, and that if he couldn't find a more likely story he had better keep his mouth shut.

Pendoggat stepped forward, took the wretched man by the shoulders, making him shudder, and asked reproachfully: "Why did you tell these gentlemen I have the money?"

"God 'elp you, Mr. Pendoggat," moaned Eli. "You have used me for your own ends, and now you turn against me. I don't understand it. 'Tis cruelty that passes understanding. I will just wait and 'ope. If I am not cleared now I shall be some day, I shall be when we stand together before the judgment seat of God. There will be no money there, Mr. Pendoggat, nothing that corrupteth or maketh a lie, only justice and mercy, and I won't be the one to suffer then."

Had the grocer been less angry he must have been impressed by his nephew's earnestness. As it was he pushed him aside and said—

"I'll get my own back. Pay us our money, or you go to prison. I'll give you till to-morrow, and if I don't have it before evening I'll get a warrant out."

"Oh, 'elp me, Mr. Pendoggat. 'Elp me in the name of friendship, for my poor wife's sake," sobbed Eli.

"I'll forgive you," Pendoggat muttered. "I don't bear you any ill-feeling. Here's my hand on it."

But Eli wanted no more grasps of good fellowship. He buried his big hands between his knees,

and put his simple head down, and wept like a child.

The chapel emptied slowly, and the people stood about the road talking of the great scandal. Some thought the minister innocent, but the majority inclined towards his guilt. All agreed that it would be advisable, for the sake of the chapel's reputation, to ask him to accept another pulpit, which was a polite euphemism for telling him to go to the dogs. They did not like Pendoggat, but they believed he had spoken the truth when they remembered how strongly he had opposed the minister when the scheme of the nickel mine was first suggested. The grocer and jam-maker drove away in a rage and a small cart, to put up for the night in Tavistock; and Pendoggat walked away by himself towards the swaling-fires. His time had come. He had only to put a few things together, and then depart through the frosty night to find a new home. But before going he thought it best to make himself absolutely safe by burning the brake of furze, and burying in some secret spot upon the moor what had been hidden there.

Before morning Pezzack had fled from his uncle's anger. Always a weak man, he could not face the strong; and so he set the seal of guilt upon himself by flight. He was going to work his way out to Canada, and when he succeeded there, if he did, he would send for his wife. They could think of no better plan. His wife went back to her parents, to become their drudge as before, with the burden of a child to nurse added to her lot. It was a dreary ending to their romance; there was no "happy ever after" for them; but then they were both poor things, and the light of imagination had never shone across their paths.

CHAPTER XXV

ABOUT SWALING-FIRES

Peter sat by his hearthstone and repeated with the monotony of a tolling bell—

"There be a lot o' volks in the world, and some be vulish, and some be artful, but me, Peter, be artful."

This was numbered one-hundred-and-seventy, and it was the latest gem from his book of aphorisms; artful meaning in that connection clever, the author having a tendency to use irregular forms of speech. Peter read the thought aloud until most people would have found him tedious; he recited it to every one; he had carried it to Master, and made the old man commit it to memory. Master finally inscribed it, number and all, in his presentation copy of Shakespeare, thinking the sentiment well worthy of being incorporated with the work of the poet, and declared that Peter's literary fame was assured. He added the information that his old pupil was beyond question a philosopher, and Peter agreed, then asked Master for his dictionary. It was an old book, however, and the word was not given, at least not in its proper place, under the letter F; so Peter failed at that time to discover his precise position in the intellectual world.

The diary was certainly advancing, as Peter was already in his second pennyworth of paper, and his bottle of ink was on the ebb. Thoughts had been coming so freely of late that interesting details of the daily life were crowded out. He omitted such confidential details as Mary was dunging the potato-patch, or he had just mended his trousers; he filled his pages instead with ingenious reflections which he supposed, and not without some justification, had possibly not occurred to the minds of thinkers in the past. He neglected biography for philosophy, and the fluency with which such aphorisms as "'Tis better to be happy than good" came from his pen, merely confirmed his earlier impression that the manufacture of literary works was child's play. He would not have allowed that he had been assisted by collaboration, even if the meaning of the word had been explained to him; although most of the sentiments which adorned, or rather which blotted, his pages were distorted versions of remarks which had fallen from the lips of Boodles. His work was entirely original in one respect; the style of spelling was unique.

Boodles did not know that she had developed into an inspiration, and the poor child was certainly far too miserable to care. She came to Ger Cottage every evening in the dimsies, stopped the night with Mary, and went home in the morning. She followed Mary like a dog, knowing that the strong creature would protect her. Her mind would have gone entirely had she stayed at Lewside during those endless winter evenings and the long nights. She owed her life, or at least her reason, to Mary. There was a good heart under that strong creature's rough hide, a heart as soft and tender as Boodles who clung to her. At first the child had refused to leave Lewside Cottage, but when she screamed, "The shadows are getting awful, Mary; they seem to bite me," the stalwart savage picked her up like a baby, finding her much too light, and stalked over the moor deaf to protest. She made up a little bed for Boodles in the corner of her hut, and every night there was the strange sight of Mary bringing the little girl a glass of hot milk to drink before going to sleep, and singing quaint old ballads to her when she couldn't. Mary had got into the way of asking Boodles for a kiss every night; she said it did her good, and no doubt she spoke the truth. It seemed to give her something she had missed.

"But I am ugly now, Mary," said Boodles, in response to her nurse's oft-repeated "purty dear."

"That yew bain't," came the decided answer. "You'm butiful. I never saw ye look nothing like so butiful as yew be now."

"I feel hideous anyhow," said the child. "I don't believe I can look pretty when I feel ugly."

Peter overheard that, put his head on one side in philosophic contemplation, and presently took his pen and wrote: "Bootiful maids what feels ugly still be bootiful. It be contrairy like, but it be true;" and the number of that thought was one-hundred-and-seventy-one.

Mary was not far wrong, for Boodles was quite as attractive as ever. She was more womanly, and had put pathos on her face with the little lines and shadows which impelled love for very pity. Her eyes seemed to have become larger, and her pale frightened face, under the radiant hair which had not changed, was fascinating with its restless changes. There was one thing left to her, and she called it everything. Each week the cold weather went away for a few hours, and warm June came round with a burst of flowers and sunshine, and her heart woke up and sang to her; for Aubrey had not forgotten. He wrote to her, though she kept her promise and did not write to him. Every week the question came: "Why don't you write?" and sometimes she thought the letters were getting colder, and then the stage sunshine was turned off and real thunder rolled. He had written to his parents, but they had told him nothing. They didn't even refer to her in their letters. It seemed to him as if she was dead, and he was getting miserable. But she would not break her promise and write; and if consent had been given she could not tell him the truth, send him out of her life for ever, and end those wonderful mornings when the postman came.

Aubrey loved her still, that gave her everything, and while his love lasted she was still on the green oasis, and could shut her eyes to the desert, scarred with the bodies of those who had tried to cross it and had fallen in the attempt, the bare desert of life without any sweet water of love, which she would have to try and cross without a guide when he came back and she had told him plainly what she was. She thought it would kill her, for love cannot be removed without altering the entire universe; for with love the sun goes, and the flowers go, and all the pleasant nooks; and there is nothing left but the rocks, the moaning of the sea, the fierce and ugly things, and faces that scowl but never smile. The only perfect happiness is the birth of love; the only absolute misery is the death of it; and it is such a tender growth that one careless word may chill it into death.

The three were sitting together in the lamplight, and Peter was giving oral evidence of his inspiration, when there came a knock upon the door, a thing almost without precedent after dark. Boodles shivered because she hated sudden knocks which suggested unpleasant visitors and horrors, while Mary turned from her work and went to the door. Annie was standing there, or staggering rather, a black shawl round her head, her face ghastly.

"Please to come in," said Mary.

Annie lurched in, and gazed about her wildly. She was sober enough to know what she had come for. She stared at them, then upon the hearthstone where the ceremonial of witchcraft was still being observed; while Peter babbled of great thoughts like a running brook. The door was open, and some of the smoke of the swaling-fires entered, and they could hear the crackling of distant flames.

"I reckon yew can tak' 'en off," said Annie hoarsely, pointing to the hearthstone. "He've done his work. All Dartmoor be in flames, and the Barton be in flame tu, I reckon. I flung the lamp into the kitchen and set a match to 'en. Coming wi' me, Mary Tavy? Best come wi' me and see the end on't."

"What would I want to come wi' yew for, woman?" said Mary.

"Where be the old goose yew was so fond of?"

"My Old Sal. He be gone. Mebbe he got stugged, and some old fox come along and took 'en," said Mary.

"Stugged was he? I saw 'en stugged," Annie shouted. "Came across Barton court, he did, and the man took 'en, and twisted the neck of 'en, and flung 'en in the vuzz. 'He be Mary's Old Sal,' I ses, but he only swore."

Mary spat upon her hands.

"He picked up a stick, and hit me on the ear, me, a free woman. I ses to 'en avore, 'If yew lifts your arm at me, Mary knows.'"

"I be coming," said Mary.

"Me tu," said Peter.

There was much for Mary to avenge. Pendoggat had beaten her brother, had terrified Boodles, to say nothing of his attempt to rob her, and now Mary knew he had killed the old goose. She had never ceased to mourn for Old Sal; and Pendoggat had destroyed the leader of her flock out of sheer malice and cruelty. The spirit of the lawless Gubbings entered into Mary as she picked up her staff and made for the door, while Peter shambled after her, a philosopher no longer, but a savage like herself.

But Boodles was crying: "Don't leave me, Mary. The shadows will get big and thick and take hold of me."

"Aw, don't ye be soft, maid," cried Annie.

"Bide here, my dear. Us will lock ye in, and no one shan't touch ye," said Mary.

"He may come this way. I can't stay here, with the light of these fires upon the window. I shall scream all the time."

"Come along wi' us," said Mary. "Come between Peter and me, my dear. Lord love ye, I'd break the head of any one what touched ye."

Peter left the hut-circles last, securing both doors, and dropping the keys in his baggy pocket. Then they set forth, the smoke over them, the fires on each side, and the white frost like snow upon the ground.

Pendoggat gave a sigh of relief as he descended into the hollow of the Barton and saw nobody, and heard nothing except the crackling of the flames and the furze screaming as the fire rushed through it; for the furze screams when it is burnt like a creature in torment. There was a smell of fire about the house and the heavy stink of paraffin; and in the kitchen he saw the broken lamp, but the fire had gone out; it could not feed upon damp stones. Pendoggat smiled when he saw the kitchen. So Annie was drunk again, which was what he had hoped for, as she was less dangerous in that condition; she could only scream and tumble about, hurting nobody but herself. She would not be able to follow him, and if she picked up his gun she would be more likely to kill herself than him. Probably she was lying in the linhay, or on her bed, hardly conscious, groaning herself to sleep. Everything was in his favour; the whole night was before him, and he had only to finish his work there, then escape through the warm scented smoke. He was feeling sorry for the minister, but the ordeal which Eli had just undergone might prove a blessing, strengthen his character, make a man of him. Annie was not in the house. Perhaps she had gone down to the Tavy to drown herself. Pendoggat shook his head as that idea occurred to him. There could be no hope in the future state for a suicide. Still it was better she should drown herself than obstruct him; and after all she was getting on in years, she would soon be homeless, and would naturally shrink from the workhouse. Pendoggat was not going to judge her harshly, as that would not be right, and she had looked after him well at one time. If she had not been so foolish as to grow elderly, and have grey hairs, he might have remained constant to her.

He had destroyed everything in his secret drawer already, so he had only to collect a few things, burn the furze and tidy up there. He fastened up his things into a bundle before remembering that Annie had a bag which was not likely to be of much use to her, so he went and fetched it and packed his things in that. He brought the bag into the court, went to the linhay for a spade, carried it to the edge of the furze, then discovered he had no matches. He went back towards the house, but as he crossed the court a figure came out of the smoke and laughed at him, the figure of a white-faced woman who seemed pleased to see him; and behind her towered another figure, tall and gaunt, the sort of figure which might have made those weird footprints in the snow; and as the smoke drifted upward there were two others in the background, a little girl wrapped up in a big coat, and gnome-like Peter with big beard and turned-up nose like an old man of the moor.

Annie said nothing, but only laughed, as a woman will when she feels satisfied. She staggered to one side, and Mary came forward. There was no laughter on her wooden face, and no drunken stupor over her body. She dropped the big stick and it clattered upon the stones of the court. The swaling-fires were all round, and they gave light enough, a weird kind of light which tinted the smoke and made the walls of the Barton red.

"Aw, man," cried Mary. "You killed my Old Sal, and I be come to pay ye vor't."

Pendoggat went white when he heard that. He could not stand before the wiry creature who seemed to represent no sex, but the cruel principle of natural strength. The trap had snapped upon him and he felt its iron teeth. He had caught others and enjoyed watching their struggles, and now he was caught himself and others were enjoying his struggles. A few yards cut him off from the moor, but there was no way out except by the gate of the court, and Mary was before him. He wondered if Brightly had felt like that when he was running for his liberty with the hand of every man against him.

"I never knew the old bird was yours," he muttered; and added: "I'll pay you for him;" but Annie watched him, saw his face, and laughed louder.

Mary made an ungainly movement, a sort of lurch as if to collect her strength, then she caught him by the neck. He struggled free and she had him round the body, twisting him like a willow-stick; a big hand came upon his throat and he felt as if water was rushing over his head. He could hear Annie's mad laughter and her jeering voice: "You'm a strong man, they ses. Why don't ye get away? She'm only a woman. Why don't ye throw her off, man?" He began to fight at that, struggling and hitting wildly, but Mary had a certain science as well as strength. She knew an animal's weak points. She struck at them with a fist like a lump of granite, and when he retaliated by hitting her on the face her savage blood seemed to rise before her eyes, and she drove him about the court until his face was bloody. Boodles turned away then, and went to the side of the house between the wall and the brake of furze, half-sick, trying not to give way. She had never felt so horribly alone. Mary, her friend and protector, was a wild beast of the moor, the savage principle of the cruel Nature which was crushing her. The red light of the fire fell upon her radiant head, which resembled it, as if she had been intended to punish Pendoggat, and not

Mary, because her head was like fire just as his nature was like furze. All the time she could hear Annie's furious laughter and her mocking voice: "Why don't ye stand up to she, man? Tak' your stick and hit she on the head till she'm mazed. Hit she on the ear, man, same as you hit me. Yew twisted the old goosie's neck easy enough. Why don't ye du the like to she?"

"Aw, man, I reckon I've paid ye," gasped Mary.

"Two or dree more vor I," shouted little Peter, jumping about the court in riotous joy.

Mary was satisfied. She flung the man aside, still holding him by the collar of the coat, which was an old one, as he was too miserly to buy a better. The fabric parted at the seam, and as he fell the coat came asunder and half remained in Mary's hand, the sleeve rending off with the violence of her strength. It was the part containing the pocket which was bulging, and when Mary threw it away Annie snatched it up and tore out the contents, a letter or two, some papers, and the precious roll of notes, which Pendoggat had played for with all his cunning, had ruined the minister for, and finally had won; only Annie was too dazed and mad to know what she was holding. She staggered to the furze, holding the packet above her head, and flung it as far as she could; and it fell in the centre and settled down there invisible among the frosted prickles.

Pendoggat watched as he stood half-dazed against the well, wiping the blood from his face, and again thanked his stars which remained propitious. His soul had been thrown into the furze, but he could regain it. Annie's madness had saved him. Had she been more sane and sober she might have discovered what it was she had taken. Nobody knew he had the money even then. His punishment was over. He deserved it for being perhaps unnecessarily hard upon the minister; and now he was not only a free man, but the sin had been wiped away, because he had been punished for it and had suffered for it. The disgrace was nothing, as he would never be seen there again. He edged away towards the furze, and no one stood in his way. He caught up the spade, which he had placed there, and began to hack at the big bushes, trying to make a passage. The swaling-fires above were dying down and the red light was fading from the hollow.

"Ah, go in there, man. Go in," muttered Annie, becoming quiet when she saw what he was after.

Pendoggat had lost his senses, as men will when their money is taken from them. Had he waited a little, until Mary had gone, and he had got rid of Annie for a time, he might have started for Tavistock presently with nothing lost except honour which was of no value. But he could not wait; he was dazed by Mary's blows; and all the time he fancied he saw that precious packet which contained his future stuck in the furze; and if he could not see it he knew it was there and he must get at it. He went on hacking at the bushes, burrowing his way in, without feeling the prickles; while Mary picked up her stick, turned to Peter, and said she was going home. Then she looked for Boodles, but the girl was not there, and when she started round Annie was not there either. She and Peter were alone in the court, and the furze beyond was convulsed as though a beast had fallen there and was trying to flounder its way out.

"He'm mazed, sure 'nuff," said Peter, in a happy voice. The blows which Pendoggat had dealt him were avenged. Peter forgot just then the power of witchcraft which he had invoked by the arts that were in him. Neither he nor Mary remembered the mommet, but Annie had not forgotten. She thought of the little clay doll squatting in the glowing peat, and she seemed to see the fantastic object shaking its head at her and saying: "Who is on my side?" Annie went into the house for something, then passed round the wall, and came upon Boodles standing at the other end of the furze brake, rubbing the frost off the white grass stalks.

"Is it all over?" asked the child.

"Aw ees, it be done. You'm cold, my dear," whispered Annie hoarsely. "Tak' this, my dear, and warm yourself. You've been out swaling, I reckon."

She pushed a box of matches into the girl's hand.

"He wun't have it burnt just to spite me. Makes the kitchen so cruel dark I can't see from one side to t'other. Now be the time, for he'm mazed and can't stop us. Sot a match here, my dear."

"It's so close to the house," said Boodles.

"The house can't burn. 'Tis stone and slates. I don't want 'en to think I did it," said Annie cunningly. "Quick, my dear. Mary be calling ye."

Boodles loved swaling expeditions. In the past, furze-burning had been almost her only outdoor pleasure; and, though she was unhappy then, she was very young and the sense of enjoyment remained. That huge brake would make the most glorious blaze she had ever seen. Dropping to her knees she struck a match, hearing Annie gasp once, and then the fire touched the tinder-like masses of dead growth, there was a splutter caused by the frost, a flame darted up, then down, and up again higher; and then there was a roar, and the brake before her became in an instant like an open furnace and she jumped back to save her face and hair.

"Oh, it's splendid," she cried.

Annie was leaning against the wall screaming, sheltering her face, perhaps from the heat, perhaps from what she might see.

"It's done. My God, it's done, and nothing can put it out."

Somewhere in those flames a man's voice was shouting horribly. The fire seemed to sweep through with the rapidity of light, but nothing else could be heard except the roaring and the screaming and hissing as the big bushes melted away. Mary came running round, and Annie screamed at her—

"I never done it. I never put the match to 'en."

"Aw, my dear, what have ye done?"

"I am swaling. Did you ever see such a blaze?" cried innocent Boodles.

"Her don't know," screamed Annie. Then she staggered into the court and fell fainting.

"The man's in the vuzz," Mary shouted.

All the sounds had ceased, and already the great flames were going out, leaving a red smoulder of ashes and big scarlet stems. It seemed to be getting very dark. Boodles did not realise what she had done, and Mary said no more; but Peter shuffled round, understanding it all perfectly, though not in the least ashamed.

"'Twas just the mommet," he explained. "Her had to du it 'cause her couldn't help it."

Presently they trod over the fiery ground and dragged the body out, without clothes, without hair, without sight; without money also, for the roll of notes had melted away in one touch of those terrible flames. He looked dead, but, like the furze which seemed to be annihilated, he lived. The heart was beating in the man's body, and the roots were alive in the glowing soil. Both would rise again, the one into a fierce prickly shrub; the other into a man destined for the charity of others, scarred, maimed, and blind. There was to be no escape for Pendoggat, no new life for him. Boodles of the fiery head had fulfilled her destiny; had burnt out one malignant moorland growth which had caught so many in its thorns; and had rendered it harmless for ever.

CHAPTER XXVI

ABOUT 'DUPPENCE'

Down the hill from St. Mary Tavy to Brentor came Brightly, most irrepressible of unwanted things, his basket on his arm, feeding on air and sunshine. It was early spring, there were pleasant odours and a fine blue sky, all good and gratuitous. Brightly had been discharged from prison as a man of no reputation, to be avoided by some and trampled on by others. His one idea was to get back to business; rabbit-skins ought to have accumulated, he thought, during the months of his confinement; there would be a rich harvest awaiting him, which might mean the pony and cart at last, with prosperity and a potato-patch to cheer his closing days. He went for his basket, and it was not until it was slung upon his arm and he had bent himself into the old half-hoop shape to carry it over the moor, that he comprehended its emptiness. Formerly his stomach was empty and the basket was full; now both were empty; and the crushing difficulty of starting afresh without capital was with him again.

Brightly determined to subsist for a little on charity, but he soon made the discovery that Samaritanism was no longer included among the Christian virtues. People refused to do business with him on a benevolent basis. They slammed the doors in his face, and called him unpleasant names. They reminded him he had been in prison, as if he had forgotten it; and some of them added an opinion that he had got off far too cheaply. Others said if he came there again they would set the dog on him. Brightly soon became very hungry, and almost longed for the comforts of prison. It had been no easy matter to make a sort of living during those days when he thought himself honest. Now that he knew he was a criminal it appeared impossible.

Brightly was in danger of becoming an atheist. He stopped his hymn-singing; verses descriptive of the wonderful dairy were no longer found in his mouth, nor did he use the jingling refrain which concludes: "Jesu, Master, us belongs to yew." What was the use of belonging to some one who did nothing for him? Wise men have puzzled over that question, so it was not surprising if it bewildered poor foolish Brightly. He had been told in the prison that if he prayed for anything it would be granted; and his informer had added it was obviously his duty to pray for honesty. Brightly did nothing of the kind; he prayed for the pony and cart, throwing himself heart and soul into the business, as he had plenty of time. Instead of being a purveyor of rabbit-skins he became a praying machine. He considered that if there was any truth in the theory that prayers are answered, he ought to find the pony and cart awaiting him at the door of the prison. He did see one as he came out, but it could not have been intended for him, as the name upon the board was not A. Brightly, and near it was a man looking like a sweep who would probably have resisted Brightly's claims with every prospect of success. His teacher would have said the prayer was not answered because it was not a proper one, but that would not have helped Brightly in the least.

The little man went down the hill sniffing at the sweet wind, but conscious that it was not invigorating as it used to be. The truth of the matter was he was getting tired of life. He had become feeble, his cough was worse, and his eyes troubled him so much that he had to stop often, take off his spectacles, and rub them. But he couldn't rub the darkness away. The eyes

were getting bigger than ever because he strained them so, trying to find the road. Sometimes he found himself sinking in a bog; his eyes had never played him such a trick before he became a criminal. As he walked he would look back and whistle or say: "Us will pitch presently." He was always forgetting that Ju had ceased to exist; and when he sat down to rest he would talk to her or stroke the heather beside him.

He entered the village of Brentor, but trade remained "cruel dull," so he gave it up and tramped along the road towards the church on the tor. As he went an idea came to him. He must give up the old stretch and try a new one. He might take the eastern side of the moor, Moreton to Ashburton, with the villages between, taking in Widdecombe where the devil dwelt. His old road had been dominated in a sense by St. Michael's Church upon its mount, but the connection had proved of no service to him, and the devil might be a better patron. He could get across to the other side in two days, and perhaps he would find there some one who would give him half-a-crown and set him up in business again.

Brightly was not entirely without capital, for Boodles had given him twopence with his basket, saying she was sorry it was so little, but she too was poor. That was another blow to Brightly; the angel had her limitations, and seemed to have lost her power of working wonders for the time. She too looked ill and miserable, and when celestial beings suffered what chance was there for him? Brightly was not going to invest that twopence in the rabbit-skin business, nor did he regard it as the nucleus round which the fund for his pony and cart would gather. He wrapped it up in many changes of paper, vowing not to touch it until he should require food. The time had almost come, he thought, when he should want food, not to stimulate his body, but to cease its action entirely. The twopence was set aside for his funeral as it were, or rather for the rat-poison which would make the funeral necessary. It amused Brightly to think that people would have to spend money upon him when he was dead, though they refused to give him anything while he was living.

He left Brentor behind and went along the winding road; and the sun came out so pleasantly he wondered if the gods or human beings would be offended if he whistled. He decided to remain silent, as the constable might be in hiding behind one of the furze-bushes, and he would be sent back to prison for making obscene noises. He knew every yard of the country, though he could see so little of it. Higher up was a big slab of granite, flat and smooth like an altar-tomb, upon which he had often sat and watched the tower of St. Michael's juggling with the big ball of the setting sun. He went up there, and it was not until his boot touched the flat stone that he discovered it was already occupied. A woman was sitting on it. Brightly apologised most humbly for his intrusion, for walking along the road, and for cumbering the face of the earth. He was always meeting people, and he felt he had no right to do so.

"You'm welcome," said the woman.

Then Brightly opened his nearly useless eyes wider and found that she was Thomasine, the young woman who had been so good to him and Ju, and had fed them when they were starving, and helped them on the way to Tavistock. He had always associated Thomasine with a well-stocked kitchen and food in abundance. She had become mixed up in his mind with Jerusalem, and he had thought of her as presiding over the milk and honey, and ladling them out in large quantities at the back door to hungry men and dogs. And there she was sitting on the big stone looking miserable, with her clothes bedraggled and boots muddy. Brightly began to think hard and to reason with himself. He was not the only miserable creature after all; there were other human things belonging to the neuter gender besides himself. Even the angel was miserable and had confessed to poverty; and not a scrap of food surrounded the former Lady Bountiful of Town Rising. Brightly was in Thomasine's debt, and he was prepared to pay what he owed as well as he could. He was willing to share his twopence with Thomasine; she should have an equal portion of the rat-poison if she was hungry for it; and they could wash the meal down with sweet water from the moor. As for Thomasine, the little dried-up fragment which had once represented a mind responded to Brightly's presence and she recognised a friend.

"I be in trouble," she said.

Brightly was glad to hear it, though he did not say so. It was good to find a partner who would enter into an alliance with him against the fat constable, the Bench of Magistrates, and all the wigs and ermine of oppression. Here was another Ju, a human being this time, and perhaps she too had been sentenced to be destroyed because she was savage, and was trying to hide from the constable and the crowd. Brightly was prepared to show her all sorts of secret places where she would be safe.

"Be yew a criminal tu?" he asked.

Thomasine was not sure, but thought she must be.

"I be one. I be the worst criminal on Dartmoor," said Brightly, trying to draw himself up and look conceited. He had never done any good in his business, but as a criminal he was entitled to regard himself as a complete success.

"I ain't got no friends. My volks wun't ha' me to home, and I've lost my character," said Thomasine.

"I never had no friends, nor volks, nor yet character," said Brightly.

"You'm the man what went to prison for robbing Varmer Chegwidde," she said, using her memory with some success.

"Dree months wi' hard labour," said Brightly proudly.

"Yew never done it. I know who done it. 'Twas Varmer Pendoggat," she said.

"I thought mebbe I might ha' done it and never knowed," explained Brightly. "Why didn't 'em tak' he then?"

"No one knows 'cept me, and I only guesses. He was wi' I just avore I heard master galloping over the moor, and he mun ha' passed master lying in the road. 'Twas no good me speaking. They wouldn't ha' took my word, and he'd ha' killed I if I'd spoke. 'Tis through he I be here now."

Adversity had sharpened Thomasine's tongue. She could not remember when she had last made such a lengthy speech.

"Where be yew going?" asked Brightly.

"Nowheres," said the girl. "Where be yew?"

"Anywhere," said Brightly, which meant the same thing. "Shall us get on?" he added.

Thomasine accepted the invitation, rose from the stone, and they walked on, up the road and the steep tor, and came out at last beside the church with its tiny burying-place of granite and its weather-beaten gravestones. They sat down to rest upon the edge of the precipice, and Thomasine wanted to know why they had come there.

"I wun't never be here again. I used to come up here to whistle and sing, and now I be come to look out for the last time," said Brightly. "I reckon I'll try t'other side o' the moor. Mebbe volks bain't so cruel wicked there."

"I reckon 'em be," said Thomasine.

"Du ye reckon they'll know I be a criminal?"

"Sure 'nuff. Policeman will tell 'em."

"My cough be cruel bad got, and I can't hardly see. If I can't mak' a living what be I to du?" asked Brightly.

This was much too difficult a question for Thomasine, and she did not attempt to answer it.

"B'est hungry?" she asked.

"I've ha' been hungry for years and years, 'cept when I was in prison, and then I was hungry for air," said Brightly.

"Got any money?"

"Duppence."

"I ain't got nothing," she said.

"Shall us get on?" said the restless little man. He felt business calling him, though he could do nothing with his empty basket.

They went back the way they had come, through Brentor village, and towards Lydford, Brightly walking on one side of the road and Thomasine upon the other. The only remark the girl made was: "This bain't the way to Plymouth;" and Brightly replied: "It bain't the place for yew." He had some knowledge of the world, and knew that it could not be well for a girl without home or friends or character to walk about the streets of a big town.

They stopped at Lydford, and Thomasine went to a cottage where people dwelt whom she had known in the days of respectability, and they gave her food which she brought out and shared with her companion. They went to the foot of the cascade in the gorge and ate their meal to the subdued murmur of the long white veil of water sliding down the face of the precipice. They were alone in the gorge, where the Gubbingses had once dwelt, as the place is deserted during the early months of the year.

"Have ye got a home?" asked Thomasine.

"Ees, a proper old cave to Belstone Cleave."

"What be I to du?" she murmured.

"Come wi' I," said Brightly gallantly. "I be going home."

The girl tried to think, but soon gave up in despair. She was barely twenty-three, and her life seemed done already. Her parents had shut the door upon her, and erased her name from the book of life—the family Bible which retained the record of those who were respectable—not so much because she had done wrong as because the man who had led her astray would not marry her. It was quaint logic, but the world reasons that way. She was ready to go with Brightly because he was friendly and she required friendship badly; she hardly looked upon him as a man; he was such a poor incomplete thing; if a man, without the power of sinning like a man. She

would go with him to the cave in the cleave, and cook for him, if there was anything to be cooked, with the old frying-pan with a bottom like a sieve.

"Ees, I've got a butiful home," muttered ridiculous Brightly with pride.

He was regarding Thomasine as the reincarnation of Ju. The little dog had come back to him in the form of a woman. He could talk to her, tell her trade was dull, and he was hungry; could whistle, and sing for her amusement, and pat her gently when she rested upon the heather. She could reply to him in a manner that was better than tail-wagging. Ju had come to the cave gladly and found it homelike, so why not Thomasine? He would not be called on to pay seven-and-sixpence a year for her; but on the other hand she was so big, larger than himself in fact, and he was afraid she would want a lot of food. Brightly became prouder every minute. He had a woman of his own and "duppence" wrapped up in bits of paper. He would not touch his hat to the next man he met on the road. He would stare him in the face and say: "How be ye?" just as if he had been a man himself.

"Shall us get on?" he said again.

They went on and reached windy Bridestowe that night. Brightly, who knew every building upon that part of the moor, found a shelter for Thomasine in a peat-linhay, and a resting-place for himself in a farmyard. They started off early in the morning, and Brightly produced eggs with the half-apologetic and half-proud explanation: "Us be criminals." He had stolen them. Up to the time of his conviction he had never been a thief, but since leaving prison he had felt it was necessary to live up to his reputation as a desperate character, and so he took anything he could find. Under the oil-cloth of his basket was a feathered fowl, and Thomasine was informed there would be a good supper for her that evening.

"Yew stoled 'en?" exclaimed the girl.

"Volks wun't give I nothing," said Brightly. "They ses 'you'm a thief,' and 'tis no use being called a thief if yew bain't. Yew fed me and Ju when us was starving, and now I be going to feed yew."

They reached the cave, and Brightly produced all his possessions with pride, explaining to his housekeeper that a fire must not be lighted until after dark lest the commoners should see the smoke. The girl shivered at the wretched prospect, but resigned herself; and that night she told Brightly her story, and he told her all about his ambitions, and about the pony and cart which would not come in spite of the vain repetitions which he called prayers.

Miserable days followed. The spell of fine weather ceased and frost returned; with it a biting wind which swept across the moor and got into the cave, the outside of which became a pretty piece of architecture with icicles hanging from the rock to the ground like bars of cold steel through which the prisoners gazed into the depths of the gorge. Brightly had become a real criminal at last; and the basket, which had been the symbol of honesty, was then a receiver of stolen goods. He sallied out every day to rob fowl-houses and dairies; to gather articles of clothing from hedges and furze-bushes where they had been put out to dry. His eyes had been opened by necessity and justice; dishonesty was the only way in business; had he practised it from the start he would have obtained all those good things which he had always desired; the cottage and potato-patch, the pony and cart; perhaps his asthma and blindness would have been stayed as well. It would have been better for Brightly had he died in prison; he was living too long, and had become a moral failure, a complete failure now in every sense.

One Sunday evening they crept out of their hole in the gorge and went to Sticklepath. Thomasine wanted to hear the pure gospel preached again, and she persuaded Brightly to come with her to the big chapel in the middle of the village that he might have his frosted soul warmed by listening to a realistic account of the place "down under" towards which he was hurrying. A strange preacher arose in the pulpit, an old white-bearded man near the end of his days, and he preached from the text: "I have been young, and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." He seemed a pious old man, although he could not have been observant, or perhaps he had gone about with his eyes shut, as the psalmist must have done; but he was eloquent, and his words thundered upon the congregation like Dartmoor rain upon a tin roof.

When they left the chapel Thomasine was weeping, and Brightly seemed to have become quite blind. Still he could not understand things. He had been righteous, as he had comprehended it, slipping into a church or chapel as often as he dared, and singing "Jerusalem the Golden" at every opportunity. Yet he had been forsaken and had begged his bread; Ju had been taken from him; he had been cast into prison. Who could explain these things? Perhaps he had not endured long enough; if he had held out another year the pony and cart might have been brought to him driven by the angel; but he could not hold out when people would not permit him to do business, and when he was starving. It was too late then to go back and tread the old road, for he had fallen at last, become dishonest in act; and if he went on in his wicked ways the policeman would run him down again; and if he reverted to honesty the poorhouse would claim him. There was only one way out. He must buy a ticket for Jerusalem. It would only cost twopence.

They returned to the cave, and Thomasine went on crying. She said she could stand it no longer. The moor was black with storm clouds, a thaw had set in, and water was trickling everywhere. Brightly sat huddled up and moaning. His eyes were nearly useless, and rheumatism racked his poor limbs. He knew that the decree had been given against him, he had been found guilty in the higher court, judgment had been signed against "A. Brightly. Rabbit-skin merchant. Abode

Nowhere."

"Us mun get on," he said firmly.

"I can't bide here," sobbed Thomasine.

"Us will walk to-morrow," said Brightly.

"I'll go to Plymouth," she said.

"Live honest;" he begged. "Don't ye go to the dirty trade."

"I wun't," she cried. "I'll live clean if they'll let me. No one knows me there, and I'll get some job mebbe."

"I ha' been young, and now I be getting old," said Brightly. "I ha' been righteous tu, and I ha' begged, and I ha' prayed, and got nought."

"What be yew going to du?" she asked.

"I be coming wi' yew as far as Okehampton. I'll set ye on the road to Plymouth."

"Wun't ye come tu?"

"'Twould kill me," said Brightly. "I be that blind I'd get run over, and my asthma be got so cruel bad I wouldn't be able to breathe. I reckon I'll stop on Dartmoor."

"You'll live honest?" she said.

"I wun't tak' what bain't mine no more," Brightly promised.

In the morning they set out. It was raining, but they did not notice that. They crossed the Taw river, passed through Belstone, and struck into the lane which would bring them down to the Okehampton road. They had not gone far before they came upon a pony and cart fastened to a gate, belonging to the washerwoman, but the cart was empty and there was no one in sight. It carried a lamp, and a board was at the side revealing the owner's name, and the bottom was covered with fern. Brightly brought his pinched face near the cart, stopped to regard this revelation of his life-long dream, and then he succumbed to the great temptation. He unfastened the pony, climbed into the cart, and drove in majesty up the lane.

"What be yew doing?" cried Thomasine in great fear. "It bain't yourn."

Brightly did not hear her. He knew at last what it was like to jog along the lane in a little pony-cart, and for five precious minutes he was in dreamland. In that short space of time he completed the allotted span of human existence. He was returning to the little cottage in the midst of the potato-patch, after a day of successful work. The cart behind was piled high with rabbit-skins, and in her own little corner Ju was sitting, fat and content. Brightly put up his ridiculous head and whistled "Jerusalem the Golden" for the last time. Then he got down, tied up the pony to another gatepost, and tramped through the mud with Thomasine.

In the town they passed a window where a notice was displayed: "Men wanted," and the girl drew his attention to it, but Brightly only coughed. The dream had faded and he had returned to realism. Men were wanted to dig foundations, build houses, work in stone, hairy-armed men who could lift granite, not a poor creeping thing who had hardly the strength to strangle a fluttering fowl.

They went through the town, up the long hill on the other side, and near a quarry of red stone they stopped.

"It be the way to Plymouth," Brightly said.

"Thankye kindly," said Thomasine. "Be yew going back?"

"Ees; I be going back," he answered.

"Be yew going far?"

"A bit o' the way towards Meldon."

"Yew ha' got no money," she said pityingly.

"I ha' got duppence," he reminded her.

"You'll live honest?" she said again.

"It wun't be long. I ha' a sort o' choking feeling," he said, putting a raw hand to his throat.

"Be ye going down under?" Thomasine was looking over the hedge and between the bare trees. Some way below, beside the river, she could just see the workhouse.

"I be a going to walk towards Meldon, and sot by the river. If the pains get bad I'll fall in mebbe."

"No," she cried. "Don't ye du that."

"Us mun get on," said Brightly, mindful of business. "I wish ye good-bye."

They shook hands, and Thomasine began to cry again. She did not like the idea of walking along a lonely road all the way to distant Plymouth. "Thankye kindly," she sobbed.

"You'm welcome," said Brightly.

They parted, and the little man shuffled back to the town. Upon the bridge which spans the Okement he stopped, and took out the little packet which contained the "duppence." It was a wonderful sum of money, after all, if it would procure for him admission to the celestial dairy, where he could feast, and listen to, an organ playing, and see people dancing; and perhaps Ju would be sitting at his feet, wagging her tail, looking up, and enjoying it all too. It would be better than the wet cave, better than the workhouse, better than going back to prison. He would have to be quick, or they might discover how he had attempted to steal the pony and cart. He seemed to have become quite blind suddenly, and his heart was thumping against his side. He had to feel his way along towards the chemist's, which was the ticket office where he could obtain his twopenny pass into Palestine. There would be no stop on the journey, and they would be certain to let him in. Already he seemed to hear some one like Boodles saying: "Please to step inside, Mr. Brightly. Have a drop o' milk, will ye?" And there was another Boodles coming towards him with the pleasant words: "Be this your little dog, mister? Her's been whining vor ye cruel."

Brightly held the precious "duppence" for his fare tightly in his raw hand. He was smiling as he entered the chemist's shop.

CHAPTER XXVII

ABOUT REGENERATION AND RENUNCIATION

Sad-eyed little Boodles stood in the porch of Lewside Cottage holding a letter which the postman had just left. She did not know who it was from, nor did she care, as there was no foreign stamp on the envelope, and the postmark was only unromantic Devonport. Aubrey had not written for a month, and she knew the reason. His parents had told him the truth about her, and he was so horrified that he couldn't even send her a line on a naked postcard as a sort of farewell. Still it was better to have no letter than a cruel one; if he could not write kindly she was glad he didn't write at all.

What was supposed to be spring had come round again, and something which used to be the sun was shining, and the woods beside the Tavy were carpeted with patches of blue and yellow which "once upon a time" had been called bluebells and primroses. The ogre had done his work of transformation thoroughly, leaving nothing unchanged. During those days Boodles went about the house so quietly that she wondered sometimes if she was much better than a shadow; she seemed to have lost the power of making pleasant noises; and when she caught sight of herself in the glass as she moved about her bedroom she would say: "There it is again—the ghost!" She told her friends of the hut-circles that the cottage was haunted, and Mary exclaimed: "Aw, my dear, I'll be round wi' my big stick," while Peter rebuked his sister for her folly, pondered the matter deeply, and at last told Boodles he should come in his own good time to "exercise the ghost" with various spells. Peter had fallen into the pernicious habit of using strange words, as he had purchased a cheap dictionary, and made constant use of it. He was developing other evil traits of authorship, having added to his ordinary costume of no collar and leather apron a yard of flimsy material about his neck in the form of a flowing tie. Master had told him philosophers wore such things, and Peter was also contemplating the purchase of a pair of spectacles, not because he required them, but Master declared that no man could possibly appear philosophic unless he regarded men and matters through gold-rimmed circles of glass. Every evening Peter approached Boodles with the utterance: "I be coming. I be coming to-morrow to exercise the ghost." She reminded him of the clock which he had been going to clean for two years, and added: "I'm the ghost," which brought upon her the fierce denunciation of Mary, who still maintained Boodles to be the "most butiful maid that ever was," and now that her Old Sal was no more the most perfect of all living creatures; while Peter went away, not like his apostolic namesake to weep bitterly, but to indite illegible aphorism number three-hundred-and-one dealing with the sad truism that men of wisdom do not receive a proper tribute of respect from the young and foolish.

Boodles was afraid of her mysterious letter and did not open it for some time. It might be from some relation of Weevil's, claiming what property he had left; or from her unknown mother concerning the obligations upon daughters to support their parents. At last she pulled the envelope apart, glanced timidly at the signature, and her dread departed, or became lost in astonishment, when the most extraordinary name caught her eye: "yours faithfully, Yerbua Eimalleb."

Boodles had a little fun left in her, not much, but enough to let her laugh sometimes. She plunged into the letter, to discover that Miss Eimalleb had only recently come to England, she wanted lodgings on Dartmoor, and having heard of Miss Weevil she was writing to know if she could accommodate her. "I believe you prefer old ladies," Boodles read. "I am not old, indeed I am quite young, and shall be glad to be a companion to you, but I am not well off, so I cannot come unless your charges are very moderate. I have only about £80 a year left me by an aunt, though my

parents are still living."

"Oh, you darling!" cried Boodles. Then she sat down and began to think. Here was a young girl wanting to come and live with her, and willing to pay; a girl to be her companion and friend, who would go about with her everywhere, help her, comfort her, work with her—what a splendid prospect it was! They would cling together like two sisters, and the winds would not trouble, and the shadows would not terrify, any more; and she could laugh at the windy moonlit nights. The gods were being good to her at last, perhaps because she had been truthful and had not told Mrs. Bellamie the lie she had invented. They had taken the great thing from her because it was obviously impossible that she should have it. Aubrey was gone from her for ever, but surely this was the next best thing; a girl friend to live with her, perhaps to enter into partnership with her. Boodles felt she could face the big desert with a friend to help her, and a companion to depend upon. Love was not for her, but she would have the next best thing, which is friendship.

The letter was certainly a remarkable one, the writer's candour being no less extraordinary than her name. It was obvious she was a foreigner, but the signature gave Boodles no clue as to her nationality until she recalled a certain book on Eastern travel which she had once read, where a Persian name—or at least she thought it was Persian—very much like Eimalleb had occurred.

"I hope she's not a nigger," Boodles sighed, as her ethnical knowledge was slight and she had no idea what a Persian girl would be like. "Ethiopians have black faces, I'm sure. And she's certain to be a heathen. What fun it will be! She will wake me at some unearthly hour and say: 'Come on, Boodles, we must hurry up to the top of Gar Tor and worship the sun.' I hope she won't have a lot of husbands, though," she went on with a frown. "Don't they do that? Oh no, it's the men have a lot of wives, and they are not Persians, but Mohammedans. I am sure Persians worship fire. Persian cats do, I know. She will kneel before the grate and say her prayers to the coals."

Boodles was getting excited. The prospect of a companion was bringing smiles to her face and colour to her cheeks. One young maid would be decidedly more congenial to her than a covey of old ones. She would give up her own bedroom to the Persian girl, and when the cottage was nicely crammed with unquestionable old maids they could sleep together. She was sure her friend wouldn't mind, because she seemed so nice.

"She must be an impulsive, warm-hearted girl," Boodles murmured. "Telling me, a perfect stranger, about her private affairs." Then she plunged again into the letter, which was full of astonishing sentences. "Could you meet me on Friday morning at eleven o'clock in Tavy woods?" she read. "There is a gate at the Tavistock side and I would meet you close to that. You are sure to know me, as it is not likely there will be any one else about. I shall wear grey flannel and a plain straw hat. I understand you are not elderly. I think you will like me."

"I shall love you," cried Boodles with much decision, laughing joyously at the concluding sentences. "She understands I am not elderly, but I expect she will be astonished when she sees what a very young thing I am. Perhaps I had better make myself look older, wear a rusty black frock trimmed with lace, and a huge flat brooch at my throat, and a bonnet—Boodles, a little black bonnet with a lot of shaking things on it."

She ran indoors, singing for the first time since Weevil's death, and sat down to answer the wonderful letter as primly as she could. "I will be at the gate of the wood Friday morning," she wrote. Shall I say weather permitting or God willing? she thought. No, I shall be there anyhow. "I will come whatever happens," she went on, in defiance of gods and thunderbolts. "I am rather a small girl with lots of golden hair, and like you I am quite young. I feel certain I shall like you." This note she fastened up, and addressed to Miss Y. Eimalleb, again exclaiming: "What a name!" at the Post Office, Devonport.

When the fit of high spirits had exhausted itself she became unhappy again. It was unfortunate that the foreign girl with the wonderful name should have asked her to come to that gate where she and Aubrey had parted for ever, the gate which was just outside fairyland. All that childish nonsense was over, and the story had finished that day they roamed about the wood, and the gate had closed with unnecessary noise and violence behind them; but still it would be hard for her to wait there, not for Aubrey, but for a stranger. Her new friend would be coming from Tavistock, she supposed, meeting her halfway, just as Aubrey had done. It was quite natural she should do so, but Boodles wished she had appointed any other meeting-place. It cheered her a little to think that the Bellamies had cast aside enough of their respectability to recommend her, as she did not know how the young foreigner could have heard of her except through them. "She cannot be quite a lady, or they would never have sent her to me," was the girl's natural inference. "Perhaps they think foreigners don't count. I do hope she will have a nice English girl's face. If she is a nigger I shall scream and run away."

She carried the good news to Ger Cottage, but the savages both expressed their disapproval. Peter, who had travelled to distant lands, such as Exeter and Plymouth, told Boodles that foreigners, by which he meant dwellers in the next parish, were fearful folk with no regard whatever for strangers. Peter did not know anything about Persia, but when Boodles talked about the East he supposed she meant that mythical land of dragons and fairies called Somerset, which was the uttermost limit of his horizon in that direction; and he declared that the folk there were savage and unscrupulous, and spoke a language which no intelligent person could understand. Peter implored Boodles to have nothing to do with such people. While Mary, who had not travelled, except in one memorable instance from Lydford to Tavistock, said regretfully: "It bain't a maid yew wants, my dear, but the butiful young gentleman." Mary was much too outspoken,

and was always making Boodles wretched with her blundering attempts at happy suggestions.

When Peter was shown the astonishing signature, and had obtained the mastery over it letter by letter, he nearly strangled himself with his abnormal tie, and expressed an opinion that the stranger was coming from absolutely unheard-of places, from the paint-clad aborigines of some land beyond Somerset, although his geography did not extend beyond that county.

"Her's a heathen," he cried, without any regard for the fact that he was himself no better. "Her will worship idols."

"Aw, my dear, don't ye ha' nought to du wi' she," begged Mary.

"I think Persians worship the sun," said Boodles doubtfully.

"Aw, bain't 'em dafty?" said Mary scornfully, though she too was a sun-worshipper without being aware of it.

"Her will be a canister tu," said Peter lugubriously.

"What be that?" asked Mary, who did not profess to know things.

"Her will et she, and then mebbe her will come on and et we," explained Peter, with needless apprehension, as the most ravenous cannibal would certainly have turned vegetarian before feasting upon him.

Boodles was always rude enough to correct Peter's most obvious errors, though he was so much older than herself, and she did so then, with the usual result that he went away muttering for his dictionary. He looked up cannon-ball, and of course discovered that he had been quite right and she was hopelessly in the wrong. Then he looked up canister, and found that it was a box for holding tea; and when he turned to tea he discovered it was sometimes made of beef, and beef was meat, and meat is what human beings are composed of; and canister was, therefore, a box for containing meat. He had been perfectly right, and the presumption of young maids was intolerable.

When Boodles got back to the village she saw the people standing about the street in groups as if they were expecting some one of importance to pass that way. She looked about but could see nothing; the people were almost silent; they did not laugh and spoke only in whispers. She felt as if some calamity was impending, so she hurried indoors and kept away from the windows, as it was rather a bright day for her and she did not want it spoilt; but presently a rumbling sound made her look out, and soon she was shuddering. A black closed vehicle, like a hearse, passed, drawn by two horses; and white-faced grey-haired Annie was seated beside the driver; and then Boodles knew what the people were standing about for. It was to see the vehicle go through on its way down to the workhouse infirmary. Boodles went very white, drew back, and hid her face in her hands. She thought Annie had turned her head and seen her at the window.

"Those flames will haunt me all my life," she whispered. "I shall see them jumping about my bed, and hear them roaring—but it wasn't my fault. He must have been a brute. How awful it would have been for me if he had died there."

Had she known all the evil that Pendoggat had done she would have felt less guilty and less sorry. She could only comfort herself with the knowledge that it had been Annie rather than herself who had started those terrible and uncontrollable flames. She would not be troubled with either of them again, apart from memory, for the workhouse had received them; one would remain there, crippled and blind, the other would doubtless go on into the world, and try to earn a livelihood for a few years before returning there again in the twilight of her days.

That night there was moonlight but no wind, and Boodles awoke in horror, fancying she heard for the second time that rumbling beneath her window, and screamed when she found and felt her body enveloped in flames. She sprang up to discover that she had been frightened by her own glowing hair. She was so sleepy before tumbling into bed that she had neglected to plait it, and it was all over the sheets like fire. "I shall always get these horrors while I am alone," she cried; and then she thought again of the wonderful letter, and the foreign girl with the amazing name whom she was to meet at the gate of the wood on Friday morning, and an intense longing for that strange girl came over her, and she cried aloud to the pale and equally lonely moon: "I hope she is nice. I will pray for her to be nice. The very first thing I shall ask her will be if I may sleep with her."

Friday, day of regeneration, came clothed in a white mist, and found the girl asking herself: "Shall I try and make myself look older?" She peeped out, saw the moor shining, and thought she would be natural, and go out upon it young and fresh; dressed in white to suit the mist, like a little bride; and, having decided, she was soon trying to make herself look as sweet as possible. When she had finished, slanting the bedroom glass to take in as much of the picture as it would, she was fairly well satisfied, and was just beginning to sing the old song, "I'm only a baby," when she stopped herself severely with the rebuke that she was only a common person trying to let lodgings.

All the spring flowers lifted up their heads and laughed at the lodging-house keeper when she appeared among them—they were really spring flowers that morning—and the real sun smiled, and real singing-birds mocked the little girl in white as she tripped towards the woods, because it appeared to them quite ridiculous that Boodles should relinquish her claims to childhood. The

book of fairy-tales had been shut up and put away, thought she; but somehow the young spring things about her would not admit that.

Everything in the woods was wide awake and laughing; not crying any more, and saying, lisping, murmuring, whispering: "Here's the happy-ever-after little girl." It was the proper ending of the story, the ending that the gods had written in their manuscript and the compositor-ogres had tried to mar in their wicked way. How could any story end unhappily on such a morning? The yellow patches in the woods were not artificial blobs of colour but real primroses, and the blue patches were bluebells, and the white patches were wind-flowers with warm mist hanging to them; and Boodles was not a mere girl any longer, but the presiding fairy of them all going out to find another fairy to play with. It was not the best ending perhaps, but it was the second best. So she went down to the woods and met another fairy, and they played together happily ever after. The furze, in genial generous mood, showered its blossoms at her feet and said: "Here is gold for you, fairy girl." The Tavy roared on cheerily, and a little cataract said to a conceited whirlpool too young to know how giddy it was: "Isn't that the goddess Flora crossing by the stepping-stones?" And the flowers said: "We are going to have a fine day." Boodles was ascending in the romantic scale. She had started as a lodging-house keeper; then she had become quite a young girl; from that to the fairy stage was only one step; and then at a single bound she became the goddess of flowers; and she went along "our walk" with sunshine for hair, and wind-flowers for eyes, and primroses for skin; and the world seemed very sweet and fresh as if the wonderful work of creation had only been finished that morning at nine o'clock punctually, and Boodles was just going through to see that the gardener had done his work properly.

Life at eighteen is glorious and imaginative; sorrows cannot quench its flame. One hour of real happiness makes the young soul sing again, as one burst of sunshine purges a haunted house of all its horror. Boodles was down by Tavy side to bathe in the flowers and wash off the past and the beastly origin of things; the black time of winter, the awful loneliness, the windy nights. She was going to meet a friend, a companion, somebody who would frighten the dark hours away. The past was to vanish, not as if it had never been, but because it really never had been. The story was to begin all over again, as the other one had been conceived so badly that nobody could stand it. The once upon a time stage had come again, and the ogres had agreed not to interfere this time. Boodles baptised herself in dew, and rose from the ceremony only a few hours old. The child's name was Flora; no connection of the poor little thing which had been flung out to perish because nobody wanted it except silly old Weevil, who hated to see animals hurt. Weevil belonged to the other story too, the rejected story, and therefore he had never existed. Nobody had wanted Boodles, which was natural enough, as she was merely a wretched illegitimate brat; but every one wanted Flora. The world would be a dreary place without its flowers. Flora could laugh Mr. Bellamie to scorn; for the sun was her father and the warm earth her mother; and nobody would stop to look at the flowers while she was going by with them all upon her face.

At last Boodles looked up. She had been sitting on the warm peat just outside the gate until all Nature struck eleven; and the warmth and fragrance of the wood had made her sleepy. Dreams are the natural accompaniment of sleep, and she was dreaming then; for the expected figure was close to her, the figure in grey flannel and a plain straw hat; not elderly certainly, not much older than herself; and it was true enough she would have liked that figure if it had only been real.

"Go away," she murmured, rather frightened. "Please go away."

There was something dreadfully wrong. It was a nice girl's face that she saw, at least she had often called it so, and it was not black, and the owner of that face was assuredly going to like her very much indeed, although it was hardly a case of love at first sight; for the girl had failed to keep her appointment, the foreign girl with the amazing name was not there, the Persian girl who was to adore the sun and the coals of Lewside Cottage was evidently a deceiver of the baser sort. She had not come, and instead she had sent some one who could not fail to recognise the little girl waiting at the gate of the wood, who was calling her fond names, and actually kissing her, just as if the story was going to end, not in the second best way, but in the most blissful manner possible, with a dance of fairies on Tavy banks and a wedding-march. It was Aubrey who had come to the gate of the wood.

"I wish you wouldn't," said Boodles rather sleepily. "I am waiting here for a girl."

Then something appeared before her eyes which woke her up; the letter which she had written to Devonport; and she heard a voice saying very close to her ear, so close indeed that the lips were touching it—

"I wrote it, darling. I was afraid you would not come unless I deceived you a little. But I signed it with my own name."

"Yerbua Eimalleb—what nonsense!" she sighed.

"It is only Aubrey Bellamie written backwards."

"Oh, you must not. How could you? It made me so happy. I thought at last I should have a friend, to drive the loneliness away—and now, it is all dark again and miserable. You are sending me back to the creeping, crawling shadows."

"I have given up the Navy. I have given up my people, and everything, for the one thing, the best thing, for you," Aubrey said.

Boodles put her head down, as if the wind had snapped her slender neck, and he kissed the hair just as he had done at different periods of her life, when she was a very small girl and the radiance was hanging down, and when she was rather a bigger girl and the radiance was up—and now. It was the best kiss of all, a man's kiss, the kiss which regenerated her and renounced all else.

"You don't know what you are saying. I am an illegitimate child. You must not give up anything for me."

Boodles had forgotten that it was the beginning of a new story. His great act of renunciation staggered her. Everything, birth, name, prospects, respectability, for her. She could not let him, but how was she to resist? She threw the sleep off, and said almost fiercely—

"You must not. The time may come when you will be sorry. I shall be a weight upon you, dragging you down. You might become ashamed of me."

"Darling, I have been true to you all my life. I will be true for the rest of it."

"I promised your parents I would not."

"You promised me, year after year, that you would."

Boodles tried to smile. She would have to be false to some one.

"I have left my father's house, and I am not going back," Aubrey went on.

"It will be terrible for them," she murmured.

"It would be worse for you and for me. They have known nothing but happiness all their lives. It is their turn to have a little trouble. They are bringing it upon themselves. I have told them I shall not go back until they are willing to receive my wife."

"They will never do that. Oh, Aubrey, you must not marry me. I shall spoil your life."

"If I lost you it would be spoilt. I am being selfish after all," he said. "And if you were left alone what would you do?"

Boodles said nothing, but the Tavy went roaring by, answering the question for her.

"I am going to take you away, darling." He was holding her tightly, and she did not resist much, perhaps because she felt she ought to give up a little to him as he was giving up so much for her. "We will be married at once, and live in a tiny home. I have got it already, at Carbis Bay, looking over St. Ives at the sea, a lovely place where the sun shines. We will have our own boat and go fishing—"

"And drown ourselves sometimes," added happy Boodles.

"Not till we quarrel, and that will be never."

"Look, Aubrey!" she cried, lifting herself, pointing between the bars of the gate into the wood. "There is our walk in a blue mist."

The atmosphere of the wood was the colour of bluebells, which stretched in a magic carpet as far as they could see.

"Let us go in," he said.

"Not yet. Not unless I—Oh, Aubrey, if we go in it will be all over. Do I deserve it? Those winter evenings, the loneliness, the winds," she murmured.

"It is all over," he said firmly, with a man's seriousness. "We have to start life now, for I have nobody but you—my little sweetheart, my wife of the radiant head, and the golden skin—"

"And the freckles," she said, looking down, without a smile.

"They have faded. You are so thin, sweet. You have been indoors too much, out of the sun."

"There wasn't any sun; not until to-day," she whispered.

"You see, darling, we are alone together."

"It is what we wanted always, to be alone. Oh, my boy, I must—I must spoil your life, because I have got you in my heart and you won't go out. You never would leave me alone," she said, looking up with the childlike expression which had come back to her.

Aubrey swung the gate open and she went to him. They kissed as they went through, and the gate slammed behind with a pleasant sound. They were inside, surrounded by the blue mist. It seemed to them very warm in there. They went on hand in hand, not speaking just then, not laughing as in the old days; for their eyes were opened, and they understood that life is not a fairy-tale, but a winding path between rocks and cruel furze; and only here and there occurs the Garden of Happiness; only here and there in the whole long path; but the gardens are there, and every one may walk in them if they can only find the way in.

"I think you are such a nice boy, Aubrey," said a small voice in sweet school-girl tones. The little girl was feeling ridiculously young and shy again. It seemed absurd to think that she was going to be a bride so soon.

They were walking upon the magic carpet of bluebells. The work of regeneration was finished at last; and the world was only a few hours old.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FURZE THE CRUEL ***

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