“KITTY ALONE”

This is a lovely story, written in 1855, about life on the River Teign, and in Coombeinteignhead in particular.

Gentle Reader – Please spare a moment to think about what is happening on our river.

Recently, thoughtless persons have destroyed the beautiful night-time darkness of the River Teign by installing bright white floodlights that shine all through the night and even before the dawn.

Other thoughtless persons destroy the quietness of the river every day by their thoughtless use of petrol chainsaws without silencers.

You are invited to join the campaign to bring back daytime peace and night-time darkness to our river. These things are precious.

And now we wish you good reading of the story that follows.

D.W.

KITTY ALONE

A STORY OF THREE FIRES [1855]

BY

S. BARING GOULD

AUTHOR OF

“IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA” “THE QUEEN OF LOVE”

“MEHALAH” “CHEAP JACK ZITA” ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

METHUEN & CO.

ESSEX STREET, W.C.

LONDON

v CONTENTS OF VOL. I

CHAP.

I. THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

II. A LUSUS NATURÆ

III. ALL INTO GOLD

IV. THE ATMOSPHERIC RAILWAY

V. ON A MUD-BANK

VI. A CAPTURE

VII. A RELEASE

VIII. AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE

IX. CONVALESCENCE

X. THE NEW SCHOOLMASTER

XI. DISCORDS

XII. DAFFODILS

XIII. THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY

XIV. TO THE FAIR

XV. A REASON FOR EVERYTHING

XVI. THE DANCING BEAR

XVII. INSURED

XVIII. BRAZIL NUTS

CONTENTS OF VOL. II

CHAP.

XIX. SUGGESTIONS OF EVIL

XX. A FACE IN THE WATER

XXI. AN OFFER

XXII. A RACE FOR LIFE

XXIII. BORROWING

XXIV. SHAVINGS

XXV. BORROWING AGAIN

XXVI. SILVER PENINKS

XXVII. TROUBLE

XXVIII. ALTERNATIVES

XXIX. A FRIEND GAINED

XXX. UNDER THE MULBERRY TREE

XXXI. ON MISCHIEF BENT

XXXII. JASON IN THE WAY

XXXIII. ONE CRIME LEADS TO ANOTHER

XXXIV. AND YET ANOTHER

XXXV. UNSUCCESSFUL

XXXVI. ALL IN VAIN

CONTENTS OF VOL. III

CHAP.

XXXVII. THE ANSWER OF CAIN

XXXVIII. WANTED AT LAST

XXXIX. ONE FOR THEE AND TWO FOR ME

XL. A GREAT FEAR

XLI. TAKING SHAPE

XLII. AN UGLY HINT

XLIII. MUCH CRY AND A LITTLE WOOL

XLIV. PUDDICOMBE IN F

XLV. DAYLIGHT

XLVI. A TRIUMPH

XLVII. PARTED

XLVIII. A SHADOW-SHAPE

XLIX. *FLAGRANTE DELICTO*

L. THE THIRD FIRE

LI. THE PASS’N’S PRESCRIPTION

LII. IN COURT

LIII. JASON’S STORY

LIV. *CON AFFETTUOSO CAPRIZIO*

KITTY ALONE

CHAPTER I

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

With a voice like that of a crow, and singing with full lungs also like a crow, came Jason Quarm riding in his donkey-cart to Coombe Cellars.

Jason Quarm was a short, stoutly-built man, with a restless grey eye, with shaggy, long, sandy hair that burst out from beneath a battered beaver hat. He was somewhat lame, wherefore he maintained a donkey, and drove about the country seated cross-legged in the bottom of his cart, only removed from the bottom boards by a wisp of straw, which became dissipated from under him with the joltings of the conveyance. Then Jason would struggle to his knees, take the reins in his teeth, scramble backwards in his cart, rake the straw together again into a heap, reseat himself, and drive on till the exigencies of the case necessitated his going through the same operations once more.

Coombe Cellars, which Jason Quarm approached, was a cluster of roofs perched on low walls, occupying a promontory in the estuary of the Teign, in the south of Devon. A road, or rather a series of ruts, led direct to Coombe Cellars, cut deep in the warm red soil; but they led no farther.

Coombe Cellars was a farmhouse, a depôt of merchandise, an eating-house, a ferry-house, a discharging wharf for barges laden with coal, a lading-place for straw, and hay, and corn that had to be carried away on barges to the stables of Teignmouth and Dawlish. Facing the water was a little terrace or platform, gravelled, on which stood green benches and a green table.

The sun of summer had blistered the green paint on the table, and persons having leisure had amused themselves with picking the skin off these blisters and exposing the white paint underneath, and then, with pen or pencil, exercising their ingenuity in converting these bald patches into human faces, or in scribbling over them their own names and those of the ladies of their heart. Below the platform at low water the ooze was almost solidified with the vast accumulation of cockle and winkle shells thrown over the edge, together with

bits of broken plates, fragments of glass, tobacco-pipes, old handleless knives, and sundry other refuse of a tavern.

Above the platform, against the wall, was painted in large letters, to be read across the estuary—

PASCO PEPPERILL,

HOT COCKLES AND WINKLES,

TEA AND COFFEE ALWAYS READY.

Some wag with his penknife had erased the capital H from "Hot," and had converted the W in "Winkles" into a V, with the object of accommodating the written language to the vernacular. One of the most marvellous of passions seated in the human heart is that hunger after immortality which, indeed, distinguishes man from beast. This deep-seated and awful aspiration had evidently consumed the breasts of all the "'ot cockle and vinkle" eaters on the platform, for there was literally not a spare space of plaster anywhere within reach which was not scrawled over with names by these aspirants after immortality.

Jason Quarm was merciful to his beast. Seeing a last year's teasel by the wall ten yards from Coombe Cellars' door, he drew rein, folded his legs and arms, smiled, and said to his ass—

"There, governor, enjoy yourself."

The teasel was hard as wood, besides being absolutely devoid of nutritious juices, which had been withdrawn six months previously. Neddy would have nothing to say to the teasel.

"You dratted monkey!" shouted Quarm, irritated at the daintiness of the ass. "If you won't eat, then go on." He knelt up in his cart and whacked him with a stick in one hand and the reins in the other. "I'll teach you to be choice. I'll make you swaller a holly-bush. And if there ain't relish enough in that to suit your palate, I'll buy a job lot of old Perninsula bayonets and make you munch them. That'll be chutney, I reckon, to the likes of you."

Then, as he threw his lame leg over the side of the cart, he said, "Steady, old man, and hold your breath whilst I'm descending."

No sooner was he on his feet, than, swelling his breast and stretching his shoulders, with a hand on each hip, he crowed forth—

"There was a frog lived in a well,
Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone!
There was a frog lived in a well,
And a merry mouse lived in a mill,
Kitty alone and I."

The door opened, and a man stood on the step and waved a salutation to Quarm. This man was powerfully built. He had broad shoulders and a short neck. What little neck he possessed was not made the most of, for he habitually drew his head back and rested his chin behind his stock. This same stock or muffler was thick and folded, filling the space left open by the waistcoat, out of which it protruded. It was of blue strewn with white spots, and it gave the appearance as though pearls dropped from the mouth of the wearer and were caught in his muffler before they fell and were lost. The man had thick sandy eyebrows, and very pale eyes. His structure was disproportioned. With such a powerful body, stout nether limbs might have been anticipated for its support. His thighs were, indeed, muscular and heavy, but the legs were slim, and the feet and ankles small. He had the habit of standing with his feet together, and thus presented the shape of a boy's kite.

"Hallo, Pasco—brother-in-law!" shouted Quarm, as he threw the harness off the ass; "look here, and see what I have been a-doing."

He turned the little cart about, and exhibited a plate nailed to the backboard, on which, in gold and red on black, figured, "The Star and Garter Life and Fire Insurance."

"What!" exclaimed Pepperill; "insured Neddy and the cart, have you? That I call chucking good money away, unless you have reasons for thinking Ned will go off in spontaneous combustion."

"Not so, Pasco," laughed Jason; "it is the agency I have got. The Star and Garter knows that I am the sort of man they require, that wanders over the land and has the voice of a nightingale. I shall have a policy taken out for you shortly, Pasco."

"Indeed you shall not."

"Confiscate the donkey if I don't. But I'll not trouble you on this score now. How is the little toad?"

"What—Kate?"

"To be sure, Kitty Alone."

"Come and see. What have you been about this time, Jason?"

"Bless you! I have hit on Golconda. Brimpts."

"Brimpts? What do you mean?"

"Don't you know Brimpts?"

"Never heard of it. In India?"

"No; at Dart-meet, beyond Ashburton."

"And what of Brimpts? Found a diamond mine there?"

"Not that, but oaks, Pasco, oaks! A forest two hundred years old, on Dartmoor. A bit of the primæval forest; two hundred—I bet you—five hundred years old.

It is not in the Forest, but on one of the ancient tenements, and the tenant has fallen into difficulties with the bank, and the bank is selling him up. Timber, bless you! not a shaky stick among the lot; all heart, and hard as iron. A fortune—a fortune, Pasco, is to be picked up at Brimpts. See if I don't pocket a thousand pounds."

"You always see your way to making money, but never get far for'ard along the road that leads to good fortune."

"Because I never have had the opportunity of doing more than see my way. I'm crippled in a leg, and though I can see the road before me, I cannot get along it without an ass. I'm crippled in purse, and though I can discern the way to wealth, I can't take it—once more—without an ass. Brother-in-law, be my Jack, and help me along."

Jason slapped Pasco on the broad shoulders.

"And you make a thousand pounds by the job?"

"So I reckon—a thousand at the least. Come, lend me the money to work the concern, and I'll pay you at ten per cent."

"What do you mean by 'work the concern'?"

"Pasco, I must go before the bank at Exeter with money in my hand, and say, I want those wretched scrubs of oak and holm at Brimpts. Here's a hundred pounds. It's worthless, but I happen to know of a fellow as will put a five pound in my pocket if I get him some knotty oak for a bit of fancy-work he's on. The bank will take it, Pasco. At the bank they will make great eyes, that will say as clear as words, Bless us! we didn't know there was oak grew on Dartmoor. They'll take the money, and conclude the bargain right on end. And then I must have some ready cash to pay for felling."

"Do you think that the bank will sell?"

"Sell? it would sell anything—the soil, the flesh off the moors, the bones, the granite underneath, the water of heaven that there gathers, the air that wafts over it—anything. Of course, it will sell the Brimpts oaks. But, brother-in-law, let me tell you, this is but the first stage in a grand speculative march."

"What next?"

"Let me make my thousand by the Brimpts oaks, and I see waves of gold before me in which I can roll. I'll be generous. Help me to the oaks, and I'll help you to the gold-waves."

"How is all this to be brought about?"

"Out of mud, old boy, mud!"

"Mud will need a lot of turning to get gold out of it."

"Ah! wait till I've tied up Neddy."

Jason Quarm hobbled off with his ass, and turned it loose in a paddock. Then he returned to his brother-in-law, hooked his finger into the button-hole of Pepperill, and said, with a wink—

“Did you never hear of the philosopher’s stone, that converts whatever it touches into gold?”

“I’ve heard some such a tale, but it is all lies.”

“I’ve got it.”

“Never!” Pasco started, and turned round and stared at his brother-in-law in sheer amazement.

“I have it. Here it is,” and he touched his head. “Believe me, Pasco, this is the true philosopher’s stone. With this I find oaks where the owners believed there grew but furze; with this I bid these oaks bud forth and bear bank-notes. And with this same philosopher’s stone I shall transform your Teign estuary mud into golden sovereigns.”

“Come in.”

“I will; and I’ll tell you how I’ll do it, if you will help me to the Brimpts oaks. That is step number one.”

CHAPTER II

A LUSUS NATURÆ

The two men entered the house talking, Quarm lurching against his companion in his uneven progress; uneven, partly because of his lame leg, partly because of his excitement; and when he wished to urge a point in his argument, he enforced it, not only by raised tone of voice and cogency of reasoning, but also by impact of his shoulder against that of Pepperill.

In the room into which they penetrated sat a girl in the bay window knitting. The window was wide and low, for the ceiling was low. It had many panes in it of a greenish hue. It commanded the broad firth of the river Teign. The sun was now on the water, and the glittering water cast a sheen of golden green into the low room and into the face of the knitting girl. It illumined the ceiling, revealed all its cracks, its cobwebs and flies. The brass candlesticks and skillets and copper coffee-pots on the chimney-piece shone in the light reflected from the ceiling.

The girl was tall, with a singularly broad white brow, dark hair, and long lashes that swept her cheek. The face was pale, and when in repose it could not be readily decided whether she were good-looking or plain, but all hesitation

vanished when she raised her great violet eyes, full of colour and sparkling with the light of intelligence.

The moment that Quarm entered she dropped the knitting on which she was engaged; a flash of pleasure, a gleam of colour, mounted to eyes and cheeks; she half rose with timidity and hesitation, but as Quarm continued in eager conversation with Pepperill, and did not notice her, she sank back into her sitting posture, the colour faded from her cheek, her eyes fell, and a quiver of the lips and contraction of the mouth indicated distress and pain.

"How is it possible to turn mud into gold?" asked Pepperill.

"Wait till I have coined my oak and I will do it."

"I can understand oaks. The timber is worth something, and the bark something, and the tops sell for firewood; but mud—mud is mud."

"Well, it is mud. Let me light my pipe. I can't talk without my 'baccy."

Jason put a spill to the fire, seated himself on a stool by the hearth, ignited his pipe, and then, turning his eye about, caught sight of the girl.

"Hallo, little Toad!" said he; "how are you?"

Then, without waiting for an answer, he returned to the mud.

"Look here, Pasco, the mud is good for nothing where it is."

"No. It is a nuisance. It chokes the channel. I had a deal of trouble with the last coal-barge; she sank so deep I thought she'd be smothered and never got in."

"That's just it. You would pay something to have it cleared—dredged right away."

"I don't know about that. The expense would be great."

"You need not pay a half-crown. It isn't India only whose shining fountains roll down their golden sands. It is Devonshire as well, which pours the river Teign clear as crystal out of its Dartmoor reservoir, and which is here ready to empty its treasures into my pockets and yours. But we must dispose of Brimpts oak first."

"I'd like to know how you are going to do anything with mud."

"What is mud but clay in a state of slobber? Now, hearken to me, brother-in-law. I have been where the soil is all clay, clay that would grow nothing but moss and rushes, and was not worth more than five shillings an acre, fit for nothing but for letting young stock run on. That is out Holsworthy way. Well, a man with the philosopher's stone in his head, Goldsworthy Gurney, he cut a canal from Bude harbour right through this arrant clay land. With what result? The barges travel up from Bude laden with sand. The farmers use the sand over their clay fields, and the desert blossoms as the rose. Land that was worth four shillings went up to two pound ten, and in places near the canal to five pounds. The sand on the seashore is worthless. The clay inland is worthless, but the sand and clay married breed moneys, moneys, my boy—golden moneys."

“That is reasonable enough,” said Pasco Pepperill, “but it don’t apply here. We are on the richest of red soil, that wants no dressing, so full of substance is it in itself. Besides, the mud is nothing but our red soil in a state of paste.”

“It is better. It is richer, more nutritious; but you do not see what is to be done with it, because you have not my head and my eyes. I do not propose to do here what was done at Holsworthy, but to invert the operation.”

“What do you mean?”

“Not to carry the sand to the clay, but the mud to the sand. Do you not know Bovey Heathfield? Do you not know Stover sands? What is there inland but a desert waste of sand-hill and arid flat that is barren as my hand, bearing nothing but a little scrubby thorn and thistle and bramble—sand, that’s not worth half a crown an acre? There is no necessity for us to cut a canal. The canal exists, cut in order that the Hey-tor granite may be conveyed along it to the sea. It has not occurred to the fools that the barges that convey the stone down might come up laden with Teign mud, instead of returning empty. This mud, I tell you, is not merely rich of itself, but it has a superadded richness from seaweed and broken shells. It is fat with eels and worms. Let this be conveyed up the canal to the sandy waste of Heathfield, and the marriage of clay and sand will be as profitable there as that marriage has been at Holsworthy. I would spread this rich mud over the hungry sand, thick as cream, and the land will laugh and sing. Do you take me now, brother-in-law? Do you believe in the philosopher’s stone?”

He touched his head. Pasco Pepperill had clasped his right knee in his hands. He sat nursing it, musing, looking into the fire. Presently he said—

“Yes; very fine for the owners of the sandy land, but how about you and me?”

“We must buy up.”

“But where is the money to come from?”

“Brimpts oak.”

“What! the profit made on this venture?”

“Exactly. Every oak stick is a rung in my ladder. There has been, for hundreds of years, a real forest of oaks, magnificent trees, timber incomparable for hardness—iron is not harder. Who knows about it save myself? The Exeter Bank knows nothing of the property on which it has advanced money. The agent runs over it and takes a hasty glance. He thinks that the trees he sees all up the slopes are thorn bushes or twisted stumps worth nothing, and when he passes is too eager to get away from the moor to stay and observe. I have felt my way. A small offer and money down, and the whole forest is mine. Then I must fell at once, and it is not, I say, calculable what we shall make out of that oak. When we have raked our money together, then we will buy up as much as we can of sandy waste near the canal, and proceed at once to plaster it over with Teign clay. Pasco, our fortune is made!”

Jason kept silence for a while, to allow what he had said to sink into the mind of his brother-in-law.

Then from the adjoining kitchen came a strongly-built, fair woman, very tidy, with light hair and pale blue eyes. She had a decided manner in her movements and in the way in which she spoke. She had been scouring a pan. She held this pan now in one hand. She strode up to the fireplace between the men and said in a peremptory tone—

"What is this? Speculating again? I'll tell you what, Jason, you are bent on ruining us. Here is Pasco as wax in your hands. We've already lost half our land, and that is your doing. I do not wish to be sold out of house and home because of your rash ventures—you risk nothing, it is Pasco and I who have to pay."

"Go to your scouring and cooking," said Jason. "Zerah, that is in your line; leave us men to our proper business."

"I know what comes of your brooding," retorted the woman; "you hatch out naught but disaster. If Pasco turned a deaf ear, I would not mind all your tales, but more is the pity, he listens, and listening in his case means yielding, and yielding, in plain letters, is LOSS."

Instead of answering his sister, Jason looked once more in the direction of the girl, seated in the bay-window. She was absorbed in her thoughts, and seemed not to have been attending to, or to be affected by, the prospects of wealth that had been unfolded by her father. When he had addressed her previously, she had answered, but as he had not attended to her answer, she had relapsed into silence.

She was roused by his strident voice, as he sang out—

> "There was a frog lived in a well
> Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone!
> There was a frog lived in a well,
> And a merry mouse lived in a mill,
> Kitty alone and I."

Now her pale face turned to him with something of appeal.

"How is the little worm?" asked Quarm; "no roses blooming in the cheeks. Wait till I carry you to the moors. There you shall sit and smell the honeybreath of the furze, and as the heather covers the hillsides with raspberry-cream, the flush of life will come into your face. I'm not so sure but that money might be made out of the spicy air of Dartmoor. Why not condense the scent of the furze-bushes, and advertise it as a specific in consumption? I won't say that folks wouldn't buy. Why not extract the mountain heather as a cosmetic? It is worth considering. Why not the juice of whortleberry as a dye for the hair? and pounded bog-peat for a dentifrice? Pasco, my boy, I have ideas. I say, listen to me. This is the way notions come flashing up in my brain."

He had forgotten about his daughter, so enkindled was his imagination by his new schemes.

Once again, discouraged and depressed, the girl dropped her eyes on her work.

The sun shining on the flowing tide filled the bay of the room with rippling light, walls and ceiling were in a quiver, the glisten was in the glass, it was repeated on the floor, it quivered over her dress and her pale face, it sparkled and winked in her knitting-pins. She might have been a mermaid sitting below the water, seen through the restless, undulatory current.

Mrs. Pepperill growled, and struck with her fingers the pan she had been cleaning.

“What is a woman among men but a helpless creature, who cannot prevent the evil she sees coming on? Talk of woman as the inferior vessel! It is she has the common sense, and not man.”

“It was not you who brought Coombe Cellars to me, but I brought you to Coombe Cellars,” retorted her husband. “What is here is mine—the house, the business, the land. You rule in the kitchen, that is your proper place. I rule where I am lord.”

Pasco spoke with pomposity, drawing his chin back into his neck.

“When you married me,” said Zerah, “nothing was to be yours only, all was to be yours and mine. I am your wife, not your housekeeper. I shall watch and guard well against waste, against folly. I cannot always save against both, but I can protest—and I will.”

On hearing the loud tones of Mrs. Pepperill, Kate hastily collected her knitting and ball of worsted and left the room. She was accustomed to passages of arms between Pasco and his wife, to loud and angry voices, but they frightened her, and filled her with disgust. She fled the moment the pitch of the voices was raised and their tones became harsh.

“Look there!” exclaimed Zerah, before the girl had left the room. “There is a child for you. Her father returns, after having been away for a fortnight. She never rises to meet him, she goes on calmly knitting, does not speak a word of welcome, take the smallest notice of him. It was very different with my Wilmot; she would fly to her father—not that he deserved her love; she would dance about him and kiss him. But she had a heart, and was what a girl should be; as for your Kate, brother Jason, I don’t know what to make of her.”

“What is the matter with Kitty?”

“She is not like other girls. Did you not take notice? She was cold and regardless when you arrived, as if you were a stranger—never even put aside her knitting, never gave you a word.”

Zerah was perhaps glad of an excuse for not continuing an angry discussion with her husband before her brother. She was hot; she could now give forth her heat upon the head of the girl.

"I don't think I gave her much chance," said Jason; "you see, I was talking to Pasco about the oaks."

"Give her the chance?" retorted Zerah. "As if my Wilmot would have waited till her father gave her the chance. It is not for the father to dance after his child, but the child should run to its father. I'll tell you what I believe, Jason, and nothing will get me out of the belief. You know how Jane Simmons' boy was born without eyelashes; and how last spring we had a lamb without any tail; and that Bessie Penny hasn't got any lobe of ear at all, only a hole in the side of her head; and Ephraim Tooker has no toe-nails."

"I know all that."

"Very well. I believe—and you'll never shake it out of me—that child of yours was born without a heart."

CHAPTER III

ALL INTO GOLD

Pasco Pepperill was a man slow, heavy, and apparently phlegmatic, and he was married to a woman full of energy, and excitable.

Pasco had inherited Coombe Cellars from his father; he had been looked upon as the greatest catch among the young men of the neighbourhood. It was expected that he would marry well. He had married well, but not exactly in the manner anticipated. Coombe Cellars was a centre of many activities; it was a sort of inn—at all events a place to which water parties came to picnic; it was a farm and a place of merchandise. Pasco had chosen as his wife Zerah Quarm, a publican's daughter, with, indeed, a small sum of money of her own, but with what was to him of far more advantage, a clear, organising head. She was a scrupulously tidy woman, a woman who did everything by system, who had her own interest or that of the house ever in view, and would never waste a farthing.

Had the threads of the business been placed in Zerah's hands, she would have managed all, made money in every department, and kept the affairs of each to itself in her own orderly brain.

But Pepperill did not trust her with the management of his wool, coal, grain, straw and hay business. "Feed the pigs, keep poultry, attend to the guests, make tea, boil cockles—that's what you are here for, Zerah," said Pepperill; "all the rest is my affair, and with that you do not meddle."

The pigs became fat, the poultry laid eggs, visitors came in quantities; Zerah's rashers, tea, cockles were relished and were paid for. Zerah had always a profit to show for her small outlay and much labour.

She resented that she was not allowed an insight into her husband's business; he kept his books to himself, and she mistrusted his ability to balance his accounts. When she discovered that he had disposed of the greater portion of his land, then her indignation was unbounded. It was but too clear that he was going on the high road to ruin, by undertaking businesses for which he was not naturally competent; that by having too many irons in the fire he was spoiling all.

Zerah waited, in bitterness of heart, expecting her husband to explain to her his motives for parting with his land; he had not even deigned to inform her that he had sold it.

She flew at him, at length, with all the vehemence of her character, and poured forth a torrent of angry recrimination. Pasco put his hands into his pockets, looked wonderingly at her out of his great water-blue eyes, spun round like a teetotum, and left the house.

Zerah became conscious, as she cooled, that she had gone too far, that she had used expressions that were irritating and insulting, and which were unjustifiable. On the other hand, Pasco was conscious that he had not behaved rightly towards his wife, not only in not consulting her about the sale, but in not even telling her of it when it was accomplished.

Neither would confess wrong, but after this outbreak Zerah became gentle, and Pasco allowed some sort of self-justification to escape him. He had met with a severe loss, and was obliged to find ready money. Moreover, the farm and the business could not well be carried on simultaneously, one detracted from the other. Henceforth his whole attention would be devoted to commercial transactions.

To some extent the sharpness of Zerah's indignation was blunted by the consciousness that her own brother, Jason, was Pasco's most trusted adviser; that if he had met with losses, it was due to the injudicious speculations into which he had been thrust by Jason.

The governing feature of Pasco was inordinate self-esteem. He believed himself to be intellectually superior to everyone else in the parish, and affected to despise the farmers, because they did not mix with the world, had not their fingers on its arteries like the commercial man. He was proud of his position, proud of his means, and proud of the respect with which he was treated, and which he demanded of everyone. He valued his wife's good qualities, and bragged of them. According to him, his business was extensive, and conducted with the most brilliant success. For many years one great object of pride with him had been his only child—a daughter, Wilmot. As a baby, no child had ever before been born with so much hair. No infant was ever known to cut its teeth with greater ease. No little girl was more amiable, more beautiful; the intelligence the child exhibited was preternatural. When, in course of time, Wilmot grew into a really pretty girl, with very taking if somewhat forward manners, the exultation of the father knew no bounds. Nor was her mother, Zerah, less devoted to the child; and for a long period Wilmot was the bond between husband and wife, the one topic on which they thought alike, the one

object over which they were equally hopeful, ambitious, and proud. Jason, left a widower with one daughter, Katherine, had placed the child with his sister. He had a cottage of his own, small, rarely occupied, as he rambled over the country, looking out for opportunities of picking up money. He had not married again, he had engaged no housekeeper; his daughter was an encumbrance, and had, therefore, been sent to Coombe Cellars, where she was brought up as a companion and foil to Wilmot. Suddenly the beloved child of the Pepperills died, and the hearts of the parents were desolate. That of Zerah became bitter and resentful. Pasco veiled his grief under his phlegm, and made of the funeral a demonstration that might solace his pride. After that he spoke of the numbers who had attended, of the great emotion displayed, of the cost of the funeral, of the entertainment given to the mourners, of the number of black gloves paid for, as something for which he could be thankful and proud. It really was worth having had a daughter whose funeral had cost sixty pounds, and at which the church of Coombe-in-Teignhead had been crammed.

The great link that for fifteen years had held Zerah and Pasco together was broken. They had never really become one, though over their child they had almost become so. The loss of the one object on whom Zerah had set her heart made her more sensitive to annoyance, more inclined to find fault with her husband. Yet it cannot be said that they did not strive to be one in heart; each avoided much that was certain to annoy the other, refrained from doing before the other what was distasteful to the consort; indeed, each went somewhat out of the way to oblige the other, but always with a clumsiness and lack of grace which robbed the transaction of its worth.

Kate had been set back whilst her cousin lived. Nominally the companion, the playfellow of Wilmot, she had actually been her slave, her plaything. Whatever Wilmot had done was regarded as right by her father and mother, and in any difference that took place between the cousins, Kate was invariably pronounced to have been in the wrong, and was forced to yield to Wilmot. The child soon found that no remonstrances of hers were listened to, even when addressed to her father. He had other matters to occupy him than settling differences between children. It was not his place to interfere between the niece and her aunt, for, if the aunt refused to be troubled with her, what could he do with Kate, where dispose her?

Kate had not been long out of the room before her father and uncle also left, that they might talk at their ease, without the intervention of Zerah.

Kate had gone with her knitting to the little stage above the water, and was seated on the wall looking down on the flowing tide that now filled the estuary. Hither also came the two men, and seated themselves at the table, without taking any notice of her.

Kate had been studying the water as it flowed in, covering the mud flats, rising inch by inch over the refuse mass below the platform, and was now washing the roots of the herbage that fringed the bank.

So full was her mind, full, as though in it also the tide had been rising, that, contrary to her wont, she broke silence when the men appeared, and said, “Father! uncle! what makes the tide come and go?”

“The tide comes to bring up the coal-barges, and to carry ’em away with straw,” answered Pasco.

“But, uncle, why does it come and go?”

Pepperill shrugged his shoulders, and vouchsafed no further answer.

“Look there,” said Jason, pointing to an orchard that stretched along the margin of the flood, and which was dense with daffodils. “Look there, Pasco, there is an opportunity let slide.”

“I couldn’t help it. I sold that orchard. I wanted to concentrate—concentrate efforts,” said Pasco.

“I don’t allude to that,” said Quarm. “But as I’ve been through the lanes this March, looking at the orchards and meadows a-blazing with Lent lilies, I’ve had a notion come to me.”

“Them darned daffodils are good for naught.”

“There you are wrong, Pasco. Nothing is good for naught. What we fellows with heads have to do is to find how we may make money out of what to stupids is good for naught.”

“They are beastly things. The cattle won’t touch ’em.”

“But Christians will, and will pay for them. I know that you can sell daffodils in London or Birmingham or Bristol, at a penny a piece.”

“That’s right enough, but London, Birmingham, and Bristol are a long way off.”

“You are right there, and as long as this blundering atmospheric line runs we can do nothing. But wait a bit, Pasco, and we shall have steam-power on our South Devon line, and we must be prepared to seize the occasion. I have been reckoning we could pack two hundred and fifty daffodils easily without crushing in a maund. Say the cost of picking be a penny a hundred, and the wear and tear of the hamper another penny, and the carriage come to ninepence, and the profits to the sellers one and eleven-pence ha’penny, that makes three shillings; sold at a penny apiece it is twenty shillings—profit, seventeen and ten; strike off ten for damaged daffies as won’t sell. How many thousand daffodils do you suppose you could get out of that orchard and one or two more nests of these flowers? Twenty-five thousand? A profit of seventeen shillings on two hundred and fifty makes sixty-eight shillings a thousand. Twenty times that is sixty-eight pounds—all got out of daffodils—beastly daffies.”

“Of course,” said Pasco, “I was speaking of them as they are, not as what they might be.”

“Look there,” said Jason, pointing over the glittering flood, “look at the gulls, tens of hundreds of ’em, and no one gives them a thought.”

“They ain’t fit to eat,” observed Pasco. “Dirty creeturs.”

“No, they ain’t, and so no one shoots them. Wait a bit. Trust me. I’ll go up to London and talk it over with a great milliner or dressmaker, and have a fashion brought in. Waistcoats for ladies in winter of gulls’ breasts. They will be more beautiful than satin and warmer than sealskin. It is only for the fashion to be put on wheels and it will run of itself. There is reason, there is convenience, there is beauty in it. How many gulls can we kill? I reckon we can sweep the mouth of the Teign clear of them, and get ten thousand, and if we sell their breasts at five shillings apiece, that is, twenty-five pounds a hundred, and ten thousand makes just two thousand five hundred pounds out of gulls—dirty creeturs!”

“Of course, I said that at present they are no good; not fit to eat. What they may become is another matter.”

Quarm said nothing for a while. His restless eye wandered over the landscape, already green, though the month was March, for the rich red soil under the soft airs from the sea, laden with moisture, grows grass throughout the year. No frosts parch that herbage whose brilliance is set forth by contrast with the Indian-red rocks and soil. The sky was of translucent blue, and in the evening light the inflowing sea, with the slant rays piercing it, was of emerald hue.

“Dear! dear! dear!” sighed Quarm; “will the time ever come, think you, old fellow, that we shall be able to make some use of the sea and sky—capitalise ’em, eh? Squeeze the blue out of the firmament, and extract the green out of the ocean, and use ’em as patent dyes. Wouldn’t there be a run on the colours for ladies’ dresses! What’s the good of all that amount of dye in both where they are? Sheer waste! sheer waste! Now, if we could turn them into money, there’d be some good in them.”

Jason stood up, stretched his arms, and straightened, as far as possible, his crippled leg. Then he hobbled over to the low wall on which his daughter was seated, looking away at the emerald sea, the banks of green shot with golden daffodil, and overarched with the intense blue of the sky, clapped her on the back, and when with a start she turned—

“Hallo, Kate! What, tears! why crying?”

“Oh, father! I hate money.”

“Money! what else is worth living for?”

“Oh, father, will you mow down the daffodils, and shoot down the gulls, and take everything beautiful out of sea and sky? I hate money—you will spoil everything for that.”

“You little fool, Kitty Alone. Not love money? Alone in that among all men and women. A fool in that as in all else, Kitty Alone.”

Then up came Zerah in excitement, and said in loud, harsh tones, “Who is to go after Jan Pooke? Where is Gale? The train is due in ten minutes.”

“I have sent Roger Gale after some hides,” said Pasco.

"We have undertaken to ferry Jan Pooke across, and he arrives by the train just due. Who is to go?"

"Not I," said Pepperill. "I'm busy, Zerah, engaged on commercial matters with Quarm. Besides, I'm too big a man, of too much consequence to ferry a fare. I keep a boat, but am not a boatman."

"Then Kate must go for him. Kate, look smart; ferry across at once, and wait at the hard till Jan Pooke arrives by the .. He has been to Exeter, and I promised that the boat should meet him on his return at the Bishop's Teignton landing."

The girl rose without a word.

"She is not quite up to that?" said her father, with question in his tone.

"Bless you, she's done it scores of times. We don't keep her here to eat, and dress, and be idle."

"But suppose—and the wind is bitter cold."

"Some one *must* go," said Zerah. "Look sharp, Kate."

"Alone?"

"Of course. The man is away. She can row. Kitty must go alone."

CHAPTER IV

THE ATMOSPHERIC RAILWAY

The engineer Brunel was fond of daring and magnificent schemes, carried out at other people's expense. One of these schemes was the construction of the South Devon Railway, running from Exeter to Plymouth, for some portion of its way along the coast, breasting the sea, exposed to the foam of the breaking tide, and worked by atmospheric pressure. Brunel was an admirer of Prout's delightful sketches—Prout, the man who taught the eye of the nineteenth century to observe the picturesque. Brunel, having other folks' money to play with, thought himself justified in providing therewith subjects for sepia and Chinese white studies in the future. Taking as his model Italian churches, with their campaniles, he placed engine-houses for the atmospheric pressure at every station, designed on these models. That they were picturesque no one could deny, that they were vastly costly the shareholders were well aware.

For a while the atmospheric railway was worked from these Italian churches, the campaniles of which contained the exhausting pumps. Then the whole scheme collapsed, when the pumps had completely exhausted the shareholders' pockets.

The system was ingenious, but it should have been tried on a small scale before operations were carried on upon one that was large, and in a manner that was lavish.

The system was this. A tube was laid between the rails, and the carriages ran connected with a piston in the tube. The air was pumped out before the piston, and the pressure of the atmosphere behind was expected to propel piston and carriages attached to it. The principle was that upon which we imbibe sherry-cobbler.

But there was a difficulty, and that was insurmountable. Had the carriages been within the tube they would have swung along readily enough. But they were without and yet connected with the piston within; and it was precisely over this connection that the system broke down. A complex and ingenious scheme was adopted for making the tubes air-tight in spite of the long slit through which slid the coulter that connected the carriages with the piston. The train carried with it a sort of hot flat-iron which it passed over the leather flap bedded in tallow that closed the slit.

But the device was too intricate and too open to disturbance by accident to be successful. Trains ran spasmodically. The coulter, raising the flap, let the air rush into the artificially formed vacuum before it, and so act as a break on the propelling force of the air behind. The flap became displaced. The tallow under a hot sun melted away. The trains when they started were attended on their course by a fizzing noise as of a rocket about to explode, very trying to the nerves. They had a habit of sulking and stopping in the midst of tunnels, or of refusing to start from stations when expected to start. By no means infrequently they arrived at their destination propelled by panting passengers, and the only exhaustion of atmosphere of which anything could be spoken, was that of the lungs of those who had paid for their tickets to be carried along the line, not to shove along the carriages with their shoulders.

At the time when our story opens, this unfortunate venture, so ruinous to many speculators, was in process of demonstrating how unworthy it was of the Italian churches and campaniles that had been erected for its use.

After a while steam locomotives were brought to the stations and held in readiness to fly to the aid of broken-down atmospheric trains. A little later, and the atmospheric engines and tubes were broken up and sold for old iron, and the ecclesiastical edifices that had contained the pumps were let to whoever would rent them, as cider stores or depôts of guano and dissolved bone.

John Pooke, only son of the wealthiest yeoman in the parish of Coombe-in-Teignhead, had been put across the estuary that morning so that he might go by train to Exeter, to be fitted for a suit and suitably hatted for the approaching marriage of his sister. In two or three parishes beside the Teign the old yeoman has held his own from before Tudor days. From century to century the land has passed from father to son. These yeomen families have never extended their estates, and have been careful not to diminish them. The younger sons and the daughters have gone into trade or into service, and have looked with as much

pride to the ancestral farms as can any noble family to its baronial hall. These yeomen are without pretence, do not affect to be what they are not, knowing what they are, and content, and more than content, therewith. There are occasions in which they do make some display, and these are funerals and weddings.

It was considered at the family gathering of the Pooke clan that, at the approaching solemnity of the marriage of the daughter of the house, no village tailor, nay, not even one of the town of Teignmouth, could do justice to the occasion, and that it would be advisable for the son and heir to seek the superior skill of an Exeter tradesman to invest his body in well-fitting and fashionable garments, and an Exeter hatter to provide him with a hat as worn by the leaders of fashion.

John Pooke had been ferried over in the morning, and had requested that the boat might be in waiting for him on his return in the evening by the last train.

Kate had often been sent across on previous occasions. She could handle an oar. The tide was still flowing, and there was absolutely no danger to be anticipated. At no time was there risk, though there might be inconvenience, and the latter only when the tide was ebbing and the mud-banks were becoming exposed. To be stranded on one of these would entail a tedious waiting in mid-river till return of tide, and with the flow the refloating of the ferry-boat.

Kate rowed leisurely across the mouth of the Teign. The evening was closing in. The sun had set behind the green hills to the west; a cold wind blew down the river, sometimes whistling, sometimes with a sob in its breath, and as it swept the tide it crisped it into wavelets.

Now that the sunlight was no longer on or in the water, the latter had lost its exquisite greenness, and had assumed a sombre tint. The time of the year was March; no buds had burst on the trees. The larch plantations were hesitating, putting forth, indeed, their little blood-purple “strawberry baskets”—their marvellous flower, and ready at the first warm shower to flush into emerald green. The limes, the elms, were red at every spray with rising sap. The meadows, however, were of an intense brilliancy of verdure.

At the mouth of the Teign rose the Ness, a very Bardolph’s nose for rubicundity, and the inflowing tide was warm in colour in places where it flowed over a loosely compacted bank of sand or mud. Thus the river was as a piece of shot silk of two tinctures.

Kate was uncertain whether the train had passed or not. The atmospheric railway had none of the bluster of the steam locomotive. No puffs of vapour like white cotton wool rose in the air to forewarn of a coming train, or, after one had passed, to lie along the course and tell for five minutes that the train had gone by. It uttered no whistle, its breaks produced no jar. Its lungs did not pant and roar. It slid along almost without a sound.

Consequently, Kate, knowing that the ferry-boat had been despatched late, almost expected to find John Pooke stamping and growling on the hard. When,

however, she ran the boat aground at the landing-place, she saw that no one was there in expectation.

The girl fastened the little vessel to a ring and went up the river bank in quest of someone who could inform her about the train.

She speedily encountered a labourer with boots red in dust. He, however, could say nothing relative to the down train. After leaving work—"tilling 'taters"—he had been into the public-house at Bishop's Teignton for his half-pint of ale, to wash the red dust down the redder lane; the train might have gone by while he was refreshing himself; but there was also a probability that it had not. Continuing her inquiries, Kate met a woman who assured her that the train had passed. She had seen it, whilst hanging out some clothes; she had been near enough to distinguish the passengers in the carriages.

Whilst this woman was communicating information, another came up who was equally positive in her asseverations that the train had not gone by. She had been looking out for it, so as to set her clock by it. A lively altercation ensued between the women, which developed into personalities; their voices rose in pitch and in volume of tone. A third came up and intervened. A train had indeed passed, but it was an up and not a down train. Thus the first woman was right—she had seen the train and observed the passengers; and the second was right—the down train by which she had set her clock had not gone by. Far from being satisfied at this solution of the difficulty, both women who had been in controversy turned in combined attack upon the third woman who would have reconciled them. What right had she to interfere? who had asked for her opinion? Everyone knew about her—and then ensued personalities. The third woman, hard pressed, covered with abuse, sought escape by turning upon Kate and rating her for having asked impertinent questions. The other two at once joined in, and Kate was driven to fly the combined torrent of abuse and take refuge in her boat. There she could sit and wait the arrival of the fare, and be undisturbed save by her own uneasy thoughts. The wind was rising. It puffed down the river, then held its breath, filled its bellows and puffed more fiercely, more ominously. The evening sky was clouding over, but the clouds were chopped, and threatened a stormy night.

Kate had brought her shawl, and she now wrapped it about her, as she sat waiting in the boat. When the glow passed away, caused by her exertion in rowing and her run from the exasperated women, it left her cold and shivering.

The tide was beyond the full, and was beginning to ebb. This was vexatious. Unless John Pooke arrived speedily, there would be difficulty in traversing the Teign, for the water would warp out rapidly with the wind driving it seawards.

She must exercise patience and wait a little longer. What should she do if the young man did not arrive before the lapse of half an hour? this was a contingency for which she must be prepared. Her aunt Zerah had bidden her remain till Pooke appeared. But if he did not appear before the tide was out, then she would be unable to cross that evening. It would be eminently unsatisfactory to be benighted, and to have to seek shelter on the Bishop's

Teignton side. She had no friends there, and to be rambling about with Pooke in quest of some place where both might be accommodated was what she could not think of. To await the turn of the tide in her boat was a prospect only slightly less agreeable. The wind was from the east, it cut like a knife. She was ill provided for exposure to it in the night. The sun had set and the light was ebbing out of the sky as fast as the water was draining out of the estuary. There was no moon. There would be little starlight, for the clouds as they advanced became compacted into a leaden canopy that obscured the constellations.

Kate looked across the water to Coombe Cellars. Already a light had been kindled there, and from the window it formed a glittering line on the running tide.

She gazed wistfully down the river. All was dark there. She could hear the murmur of the sea behind the Den, a bar of shingle and sand that more than half closed the mouth of the river.

Kate leaned over the side of the boat. The water gulped and curled away; in a quarter of an hour it would be gone. She thrust her boat farther out, as already it was being left high and dry.

She would allow Pooke five minutes longer, ten minutes at the outside; yet she had no watch by which to measure the time. She shrank from being benighted on that side of the river. She shrank from the alternative of a scolding from her aunt should she come across without Pooke.

What if John Pooke were to arrive at the landing-place one minute after she had departed? What if she waited for John Pooke one minute over the moment at which it was possible to cross? Whilst thus tossed in doubt, the train glided by. There were lights in the carriages, a strong light in the driving carriage cast forward along the rails. The train did not travel fast—at a rate not above thirty miles an hour.

Kate heaved a sigh. “At last! Pooke will be here directly. Oh dear! I hope not too late.”

The atmospheric train slipped away into darkness with very little noise, and then the only sound Kate heard was that of the lapping of the water against the sides of the boat, like that produced by a dog drinking.

CHAPTER V

ON A MUD-BANK

“Halloa! Ferry, ho!”

“Here you are, sir.”

"Who is that singing out?"

"It is I—Kate Quarm."

"What—Kitty Alone? Is that what is to be? Over the water together—Kitty Alone and I?"

On the strand, in the gloom, stood a sturdy figure encumbered with a hat-box and a large parcel, so that both hands were engaged.

"Are you John Pooke?"

"To be sure I am."

In another moment the young fellow was beside the boat.

"Here, Kitty Alone! Lend a hand. I'm crippled with these precious parcels. This blessed box-hat has given me trouble. The string came undone, and down it went. I have to carry the concern tucked under my arm; and the parcel's bursting. It's my new suit dying to show itself, and so is getting out of this brown-paper envelope as fast as it may."

"We are very late," said Kate anxiously. "The tide is running out hard, and it is a chance if we get over."

"Right, Kitty. I'll settle the hat-box and the new suit—brass buttons—what d'ye think of that? And straps to my trousers. I shall be fine—a blazer, Kitty—a blazer!"

"Do sit down, John; it is but a chance if we get across. You are so late."

"The Atmospheric did it, for one—my hat for the other, tumbling in the darkness out of the box, and in the tunnel too. Fancy if the train had gone over it! I'd have wept tears of blood."

"Do, John Pooke, do sit down and take an oar."

"I'll sit down in a minute, when I've put my box-hat where I nor you can kick it about, and the new suit where the water can't stain it."

"John, you must take an oar."

"Right I am. We'll make her fly—pist!—faster than the blessed Atmospheric, and no sticking half-way."

"I'm not so sure of that."

Kate thrust off. She had altered the pegs, and now she gave John an oar.

"Pull for dear life!" she said; "not a moment is to be lost."

"Yoicks away!" shouted Pooke. "So we swim—Kitty Alone and I."

Kate, more easy now that the boat was started, said, "You asked me my name. I said Kate Quarm."

"Well, but everyone knows you as Kitty Alone."

"And every one knows you as Jan Tottle, but I shouldn't have the face to so call you; and I don't see why you should give me any name than what properly belongs to me."

"Your father always so calls you."

"You are not my father, and have no right to take liberties. My father may call me what he pleases, because he is my father. He is my father—you my penny fare."

"And the penny fare has no rights?"

"He has right to be ferried over, not to be impudent."

Pooke whistled through his teeth.

The girl laboured hard at the oar; Pooke worked more easily. He had not realised at first how uncertain was the passage. The tide went swirling down to the sea with the wind behind it, driving it as a besom.

"I say, Kate Quarm—no, Miss Catherine Quarm. Hang it! how stiff and grand we be! Do you know why I have been to Exeter?"

"I do not, Jan."

"There, you called me Jan. You'll be 'titling me Tottle, next. That gives me a right to call you Kitty."

"Once, but no more; and Kitty only."

"I've been to Exeter to be rigged out for sister Sue's weddin'. My word! it has cost four guineas to make a gentleman of me."

"Can they do that for four guineas?"

"Now don't sneer. Listen. They'd took my measure afore, and they put me in my new suit, brass buttons and everything complete, and a new tie and collars standing to my ears—and a box-hat curling at the sides like the waves of the ocean—and then they told me to walk this way, please sir! So I walked, and what should I see but a gentleman stately as a dook coming towards me, and I took off my hat and said, Your servant, sir! and would have stepped aside. Will you believe me, Kate! it was just myself in a great cheval glass, as they call it. You'll be at the wedding, won't you?—if only to see me in my new suit. I do believe you'll fall down and worship me, and I shall smile down at you and say, Holloa! is that my good friend Kitty Alone? And you'll say, Your very humble servant, sir!"

"That I shall never do, Mr. Pennyfare," laughed Kate, and then, becoming grave, immediately said, "Do pull instead of talking nonsense. We are drifting; look over your shoulder."

"So we are. There is Coombe Cellars light, right away up stream."

"The wind and stream are against us. Pull hard."

Jan Pooke now recognised that he must use his best exertions.

“Hang it!” said he, watching the light; “I don’t want to be carried out to sea.”

“Nor do I. That would be a dear penn’orth.”

Pooke pulled vigorously; looked over his shoulder again and said, “Kate, give up your place to me. I’m worth more than you and me together with one oar apiece.”

She moved the rowlock pins, and Jan took her place with two oars; but the time occupied in effecting the change entailed loss of way, and the boat swept fast down the estuary.

“This is more than a joke,” said Pooke; “we are down opposite Shaldon. I can see the Teignmouth lights. We shall never get across like this.”

“We must.”

“The tide tears between the end of the Den and the farther shore like a mill-race.”

“We must cross or run aground.”

“Kate, can you see the breakers over the bar?”

“No, but I can hear them. They are nothing now, as wind and tide are running off shore. When the tide turns then there will be a roar.”

“I believe we are being carried out. Thunder! I’m not going to be swept into Kingdom Come without having put on box-hat and new suit, and cut a figure here.”

The wind poured down the trough of the Teign valley with such force, that in one blast it seemed to catch the boat and drive it, as it might take up a leaf and send it flying over the surface of a hard road.

The waves were dancing, foaming, uttering their voices about the rocks of the Ness, mumbling and muttering on the bar. If the boat in the darkness were to get into the throat of the current, it would be sucked and carried into the turbulent sea; it might, however, get on the bar and be buffeted and broken by the waves.

“Take an oar,” said Pooke; “we must bring her head round. If we can run behind the Den, we shall be in still water.”

“Or mud,” said Kate, seating herself to pull. “Anything but to be carried out to sea.”

The two young people struggled desperately. They were straining against wind and tide, heading about to get into shallow water, and out of the tearing current.

After a while Kate gasped, “I’m finished!”

Her hair was blown round her head in the gale; with the rapidity of her pulsation, lights flashed before her eyes and waves roared in her ears.

“Don’t give up. Pull away!”

Mechanically she obeyed. In another minute the strain was less, and then—the boat was aground.

“If this be the Den, all right,” said Pooke. “We can get ashore and walk to Teignmouth.” He felt with the oar, standing up in the boat. It sank in mud. “Here’s a pretty pass,” said he. “I thought it bad enough to be stuck in the tunnel when the Atmospheric broke down, but it is worse to be fast in the mud. From the tunnel we could extricate ourselves at once, but here—in this mud, we are fast till flow of tide. Kitty,—I mean Kate,—make up your mind to accept my company for some hours. I can’t help you out, and I can’t get out myself. What is more, no one on shore, even if we could call to them, would be able to assist us. Till the tide turns, we are held as tight as rats in a gin.”

“I wonder,” said the girl, recovering her breath, “what makes the tides ebb and flow.”

“I don’t know, and I don’t care,” said John Pooke; “it is enough for me that they have lodged us here on a mud bank in a March night with an icy east wind blowing. By George! I’ve a mind to have out a summons against the Atmospheric Company.”

“Why so?”

“For putting us in this blessed fix. The train came to a standstill in the tunnel by the Parson and Clerk rock, between Dawlish and Teignmouth. We had to tumble out of the carriages and shove her along into daylight. That is how my band-box got loose; as I got out of the carriage the string gave way and down went the box in the tunnel, and opened, and the hat came out. There was an east wind blowing like the blast of a blacksmith’s bellows through the tunnel, and it caught my new hat and carried it along, as if it were the atmospheric train it had to propel. I had to run after it and catch it, all in the half-dark, and all the while the guard and passengers were yelling at me to help and shove along the train; but I wasn’t going to do that till I had recovered my hat. I must think of sister Sue’s wedding, and the figure I shall cut there, before I consider how to get the train out of a tunnel.”

In spite of discomfort and cold, Kate was constrained to laugh.

“If you or I am the worse for this night in the cold, and if my box-hat has had the nap scratched off, and my new suit gets stained with sea-water, I’ll summons the company, I will. What have you got to keep you warm, Kate?”

“A shawl.”

“Let me feel it.”

Pooke groped in the dark and caught hold of what the girl had cast over her head and shoulders.

“It’s thin enough for a June evening,” said he. “It may keep off dews, but it will not keep out frost. Please goodness, we shall have neither hail nor rain; that would be putting an edge on to our misery.”

Both lapsed into silence. The prospect was cheerless. After about five minutes Kate said, “I wonder why there are twelve hours and a half between tides, and not twelve hours.”

“I am sure I cannot tell,” answered Pooke listlessly; he had his head in his hand.

“You see,” remarked Kate, “if the tides were twelve hours exactly apart, there would always be flow at the same hour.”

“I suppose so.” Pooke spoke languidly, as if going to sleep.

“But that extra half-hour, or something like it, throws them out and makes them shift. Why is it?”

“How can I say? Accident.”

“It cannot be accident, for people can calculate and put in the almanacks when the tides are to be.”

“I suppose so.”

“And then—why are some tides much bigger than others? We are having high tides now.”

Pooke half rose, seated himself again, and said in a tone of desperation, “Look here, Kitty! I ain’t going to be catechised. Rather than that, I’ll jump into the mud and smother. It is bad enough having to sit here in the wind half the night, without having one’s head split with thinking to answer questions. If we are to talk, let it be about something sensible. Shall you be at sister Sue’s wedding?”

“I do not know. That depends on whether aunt will let me go.”

“I want you to see and worship me in my new suit.”

“I may see—I shan’t worship you.”

“I almost bowed down to myself in the cheval glass, I looked so tremendous fine; and if I did that—what will you do?”

“Many a man worships himself whom others don’t think much of.”

“There you are at me again. Fancy—Kate—ducks”—

“And green peas?”

“No—bottle-green. Ducks is what I am going to wear, with straps under my boots—lily-white, and a yellow nankeen waistcoat, and a bottle-green coat with brass buttons,—all here in this parcel,—and the hat. My honour! I never was so fine before. Four guineas—with the hat.”

“Do you call this ‘talking sensible’?” asked Kate.

Again they subsided into silence. It was hard, in the piercing wind, in the darkness, to keep up an interest in any topic.

The cold cut like a razor. The wind moaned over the bulwarks of the ferry-boat. The mud exhaled a dead and unpleasant odour. Gulls fluttered near and

screamed. The clouds overhead parted, and for a while exposed tracts of sky, thick strewn with stars that glittered frostily.

Presently the young man said, “Hang it! you will catch cold. Lie in the bottom of the boat, and I will throw my coat over you.”

“But you will yourself be chilled.”

“I—I am tough as nails. But stay. I know something better. I have my new bottle-green coat, splendid as the day. You shall have that over you.”

“But it may become crumpled.”

“Sister Sue shall iron it again.”

“Or stained.”

“You shan’t die of cold just to save my bottle-green. Lie down. I wish the hat could be made to serve some purpose. There’s no water in the boat?”

“None.”

“And I am glad. It would have gone to my heart like a knife to have had to bale it out with my box-hat.”

Kate was now very chilled. After the exertion, and the consequent heat in which she had been, the reaction had set in, and the blood curdled in her veins. The wind pierced the thin shawl as though it were a cobweb. Pooke folded up his garments to make a pillow for her head, insisted on her lying down, so that the side of the boat might in some measure screen her from the wind, and then he spread his new coat over her.

“There, Kitty. Hang it! we are comrades in ill-luck; so there is a brotherhood of misery between us. Let me call you Kitty, and let me be Jan to you—Tottle if you will.”

“Only when you begin to boast about your new suit”—

“There, Kitty, don’t be hard on me. I must think of something to keep me warm, and what else so warming as the thoughts of the ducks, and nankeen, and bottle-green, and the box-hat. I don’t believe anything else could make me keep up my spirits. Go to sleep, and when I feel the boat lift, I will sing out.”

Kate was touched by the kindness of the soft-headed lad. As she lay in the bottom of the boat without speaking, and he thought she was dozing, he put down his hand and touched the clothes about her. He wished to assure himself that she was well covered.

Kate was not asleep; she was thinking. She had not met with much consideration in the short span of her life. Lying in the boat with her eyes fixed on the stars, her restless mind was working.

Presently, moved by an uncontrollable impulse, she asked, “John, why do some of the stars twinkle and others do not?”

“How should I know? I suppose they were out on a spree when they ought to ha’ been in bed, and now can’t keep their eyes from winking.”

"Some, however, burn quite steadily."

"Them's the good stars, that keep regular hours, and go to bed when they ought. Your eyes'll be winking no end to-morrow."

"John, what becomes of the stars by day?"

"Kitty—Kate, don't ask any more questions, or I shall jump overboard. I can't bear it; I can't indeed. It makes my head ache."

CHAPTER VI

A CAPTURE

Kate Quarm had never felt a mother's love. She could not recall her mother, who had died when she was an infant. Her father, encumbered with a motherless babe, had handed the child over to his sister Zerah, a hard woman, who resented the infliction upon her in addition to the cares and solicitudes of her house. From her aunt Kate received no love. Her uncle paid to her no attention, save when he was provoked to rebuke by some noise made in childish play, or some damage done in childish levity.

Thus Kate had grown up to the verge of womanhood with all her affections buried in her bosom. That dark heart was like a cellar stored with flower bulbs and roots. They are not dead, they send forth bleached and sickly shoots without vigour and incapable of bloom. Hers was a tender, craving nature, one that hungered for love; and as she received none, wherever she turned, to whomsoever she looked, she had become self-contained, reserved, and silent. Her aunt thought her sullen and obstinate.

As already related, Mrs. Pepperill had not been always childless. She had possessed a daughter, Wilmot, who had been the joy and pride of her heart. Wilmot had been a bright, merry girl, with fair hair and forget-me-not blue eyes, and cheeks in which the lily was commingled with the rose. Wilmot was a born coax and coquette; she cajoled her mother to give her what she desired, and she flattered her father into humouring her caprices.

Naturally, the reserved, pale Kate was thrown into shadow by the forward, glowing Wilmot; and the parents daily contrasted their own child with that of the brother, and always to the disadvantage of the latter.

Wilmot had a mischievous spirit, and delighted in teasing and tyrannising over her cousin. Malevolent she was not, but inconsiderate; she was spoiled, and, as a spoiled child, capricious and domineering. She liked—in her fashion, loved—Kate, as she liked and loved a plaything, that she might trifle with and knock about; not as a playfellow, to be considered and conciliated. Association with Wilmot hardly in any degree brightened the existence of Kate; it rather served to cloud it. Petty wrongs, continuous setting back, repeated slights, wounded and crushed a naturally expansive and susceptible nature. Kate hardly ventured to appeal to her father or to her aunt against her cousin, even when that cousin's treatment was most unjust and insupportable; the aunt naturally sided with her own child, and the father heedlessly laughed at Kate's troubles as undeserving of consideration.

Then, suddenly, Wilmot was attacked by fever, which carried her off in three days. The mother was inconsolable. The light went out of her life with the extinction of the vital spark in the bosom of her child.

The death of Wilmot was of no advantage to Kate. She was no longer, indeed, given over to the petty tyranny of her cousin, but she was left exposed to a hardened and embittered aunt, who resented on her the loss of her own child. Into the void heart of Zerah, Kate had no chance of finding access; that void was filled with discontent, verjuice, and acrimony. An unreasonable anger against the child who was not wanted and yet remained, in place of the child who was the apple of her eye, and was taken from her, made itself felt in a thousand ways.

Without being absolutely unkind to her, Zerah was ungracious. She held Kate at arm's length, spoke to her in harsh and peremptory tones, looked at her with contracted pupils and with puckered brow. Filled with resentment against Providence, she made the child feel her disappointment and antagonism. The reserve, the lack of light-heartedness in the child told against her, and Zerah little considered that this temperament was produced by her own ungenerous treatment.

At the time of this story, Kate was of real service in the house. The Pepperills kept no domestic servant; they required none, having Kate, who was made to do whatever was necessary. Her aunt was an energetic and industrious woman, and Kate served under her direction. She assisted in the household washing, in the work of the garden, in the feeding of the poultry, in the kitchen, in all household work; and when folk came to eat cockles and drink tea, Kate was employed as waitress. For all this she got no wage, no thanks, no forbearance, no kind looks, certainly no kind words.

The girl's heart was sealed up, unread, misunderstood by those with whom she was brought into contact. She had made no friends at school, had no comrades in the village; and her father inconsiderately accepted and applied to her a nickname given her at school by her teacher, a certain Mr. Solomon Puddicombe,—a nickname derived from the burden of a foolish folk-song, "Kitty Alone."

Now the girl lay in the bottom of the boat, under Pooke's Exeter tailor-made clothes, shivering. What would her father think of her absence? Would he be anxious, and waiting up for her? Would Aunt Zerah be angry, and give her hard words?

Her eyes peered eagerly at the stars—into that great mystery above.

"They are turning," she said.

"What are turning?" asked Pooke. "Ain't you asleep, as you ought to be?"

"When I was waiting for you at the Hard, I saw them beginning to twinkle."

"What did you see?"

"Yonder, those stars. There are four making a sort of a box, and then three more in a curve."

"That is the Plough."

"Well, it is something like a plough. It is turning about in the sky. When I was waiting for the Atmospheric, I saw it in one way, and now it is all turned about different."

"I daresay it is."

"But why does it turn about?"

"When I've ploughed to one end of a field, I turn the plough so as to run back."

"But this isn't a real plough."

"I know nothing about it," said Pooke desperately; "and, what is more, I won't stand questioning. This is a ferry-boat, not a National School, and you are Kitty Quarm, not Mr. Puddicombe. I haven't anything more of learning to go through the rest of my days, thankful to say."

The night crept along, slow, chilly as a slug; the time seemed interminable. Benumbed by cold, Kate finally dozed without knowing that she was slipping out of consciousness. Sleep she did not—she was in a condition of uneasy terror, shivering with cold, cramped by her position, bruised by the ribs of the boat, with the smell of mud and new cloth in her nose, and with occasionally a brass button touching her cheek, and with its cold stabbing as with a needle. The wind, curling and whistling in the boat as it came over the side, bored into the marrow of the bones, the muscles became hard, the flesh turned to wax.

Kate discovered that she had been unconscious only by the confusion of her intellect when Pooke roused her by a touch, and told her that the boat was afloat. She staggered to her knees, brushed the scattered hair out of her dazed eyes, rose to her feet, and seated herself on the bench. Her wits were as though curdled in her brains. They would not move. Every limb was stiff, every nerve ached. Her teeth chattered; she felt sick and faint. Sleepily she looked around.

No lights were twinkling from the windows on the banks. In every house candles had long ago been extinguished. All the world slept.

The clouds overhead had been brushed away, and the lights of heaven looked down and were reflected in the water. The boat was as it were floating between two heavens besprent with stars, the one above, the other below, and across each was drawn the silvery nebulous Milky Way. The constellation of the Great Bear—the Plough, as Pooke called it—was greatly changed in position since Kate had commented on it. Cassiopēa's silver chair was planted in the great curve of the Milky Way. To the south the hazy tangle of Berenice's Hair was faintly reflected in the inflowing tide.

Although the boat was lifted from the bank, yet it was by no means certain that Coombe Cellars could be reached for at least another half-hour. The tide, that had raced out, seemed to return at a crawl. Nevertheless, it was expedient to restore circulation by the exercise of the arms. Kate assumed one oar, John the other, and began to row; she at first with difficulty, then with ease, as warmth returned and her blood resumed its flow. The swelling tide carried the boat up with it, and the oars were leisurely dipped, breaking the diamonds in the water into a thousand brilliants.

As they approached the reach where lay Coombe-in-Teignhead, John Pooke said: "There is a light burning in your house. They are all up, anxious, watching for you, and in trouble. On my word, will not my father be in a condition of fright and distress concerning me if he hears that I am out? I went off without saying anything to anybody. I intended to be back all right in the evening by the Atmospheric. But there's no telling, father may have been asking after me. Then, as I didn't turn up at supper, he may have sent about making inquiries, and have heard at the Cellars that I'd gone over the water, and given command to be met by the last train. Then they will be in a bad state of mind, father and sister Sue. Hulloa! what is that light? It comes from our place."

John Pooke rested on his oar, and turned.

From behind an orchard a glow, as of fire, was shining. It had broken forth suddenly. The light streamed between the trees, sending fiery arrows shooting over the water, it rose in a halo above the tops of the trees.

"Kate! whatever can it be? That is our orchard. There is our rick-yard behind. It never can be that our ricks are afire, or our house! The house is just beyond. The blaze is at our place—pull hard!"

"It's a chance if there is water enough to carry us ashore."

Then, from above the belt of orchard broke lambent flame, and cast up tufts of ignited matter into the air, to be caught and carried away by the strong wind. Now there lay a fiery path between the ferry-boat and the shore. Pooke seated himself. He was greatly agitated.

"Kate, it is our rick-yard. That chap, Roger, has done it."

The words had hardly escaped him before a boat shot past, and his oar clashed with that of the rower in that boat. As it passed, John saw the face of the man who was rowing, kindled by the orange blaze from the shore. The recognition was instantaneous.

“Redmore, it is you!” Then breathlessly, “Kate, about! we must catch him. He has set our ricks ablaze.”

The boat was headed round, and the young arms bent at the oars, and the little vessel flew in pursuit. The man they were pursuing rowed clumsily, and with all his efforts made little way, so that speedily he was overtaken, and Jan ran the ferry-boat against the other, struck the oar out of the hands of the rower, and flung himself upon the man, and gripped him.

“Kate—hold the boats together.”

Then ensued a furious struggle. Both men were strong. The position in which both were was difficult—Jan Pooke half in one boat, half in the other, but Roger Redmore grasped at the seat in his boat, while holding an oar in his right hand.

The flaring rick sent a yellow light over them. The boats reeled and clashed together, and clashing drifted together with the tide up the river, past Coombe Cellars. Pooke, unable as he was to master his man, cast himself wholly into his adversary’s boat. Redmore had let go the oar, and now staggered to his feet. The men, wrestling, tossed in the rolling boat, fell, were up on their knees, and then down again in the bottom.

“Quick, Kate!” shouted Jan. “I have him! Quick!—the string of my parcel.”

Kate handed him what he desired.

In another moment Pooke was upright. “He is safe,” said he, panting. “I have bound his wrists behind his back. Now—Kate!”

The boats had run ashore, a little way above the Cellars, drifted to the strand by the flowing tide.

“Kate,” said Pooke, jumping out, “you hold that cord—here. I have fastened it round the rowlock. He can’t release himself. Hold him, whilst I run for help. We will have him tried—he shall swing for this! Do you know that, Roger Redmore? What you have done is no joke—it will bring you to the gallows!”

CHAPTER VII

A RELEASE

Kate sat in her boat holding the string that was twisted round the rowlock and that held Roger Redmore’s hands bound behind his back. He was crouched in the bottom of the boat, sunken into a heap, hanging by his hands. Now and then

he made a convulsive effort with his shoulders to release his arms, but was powerless. He could not scramble to his feet, held down as he was behind. He turned his face, and from over Coombe Cellars, where the sky was alight with fire, a glow came on his countenance.

“You be Kitty Alone?” said he.

Kate hardly answered. Her heart was fluttering; her head giddy with alarm and distress, coming after a night’s exposure in the open boat. As yet, no sign of dawn in the east; only the flames from the burning farm-produce lighted up the sky to the south-west, and were reflected in the in-flowing water.

The agricultural riots which had filled the south of England with terror at the close of were, indeed, a thing of the past, but the reminiscence of them lay deep in the hearts of the labourers; and for ten and fifteen years after, at intervals, there were fresh outbreaks of incendiarism. There was, indeed, no fresh organisation of bodies of men going about the country, destroying machinery and firing farms, but in many a district the threat of the firebrand was still employed, and the revenge of a fire among the stacks and barns was so easy, and so difficult to bring home to the incendiary, that it was long before the farmer could feel himself safe. Indeed, nothing but the insurance office prevented this method of obtaining revenge from being had recourse to very frequently. When every dismissed labourer or workman who had met with a sharp reprimand could punish the farmer by thrusting a match among his ricks, fires were common; but when it became well known that an incendiary fire hurt not the farmer, but an insurance company, the malevolent and resentful no longer had recourse to this method of injury.

In the “Swing” riots many men had been hung or transported for the crimes then committed, and the statute against arson passed in the reign of George IV., making such an offence felony, and to be punished capitally, was in force, and not modified till much later. When, therefore, Jan Pooke threatened Redmore with the gallows, he threatened him with what the unhappy man knew would be his fate if convicted.

Kate was acquainted with the story of Roger. He had been a labourer on Mr. Pooke’s farm. He was a morose man, with a sickly wife and delicate children, occupying a cottage on the farm. At Christmas the man had taken a drop too much, and had been insolent to his master. The intoxication might have been forgiven—not so the impertinence. He was at once discharged, and given notice to quit his cottage at Lady Day. For nearly three months the man had been out of work. In winter there is no demand for additional hands; no great undertakings are prosecuted. All the farmers were supplied with workmen, and had some difficulty in the frosty weather in finding occupation for them. None were inclined to take on Roger Redmore. Moreover, the farmers hung together like bees. A man who had offended one, incurred the displeasure of all.

Redmore wandered from one farm to another, seeking for employment, only to meet with refusal everywhere. In a day or two he would be cast forth from his cottage with wife and family. Whither to go he knew not. He had exhausted

what little money he had saved, and had nowhere found work. Kate felt pity for the man. He had transgressed, and his transgression had fallen heavy upon him. He was not an intemperate man; he did not frequent the public-house. Others who drank, and drank hard, remained with their masters, who overlooked their weakness. In the forefront of Roger's offence stood his insolence; and Pooke, the richest yeoman in the place, was proud, and would not forgive a wound to his pride.

As Kate held the string, she felt that the wretched man was shivering. He shook in his boat, and chattered its side against her boat.

"Are you very cold?" asked the girl.

"I'm hungry," he answered sullenly.

"You are trembling."

"I've had nor bite nor crumb for forty-eight hours. That's enough to make a man shake."

"Nothing to eat? Did you not ask for something?"

"I went to the Rectory. Passon Fielding gave me a loaf, but I took it home—wife and little ones were more starving than I, and I cut it up between 'em."

"I think—I almost think I have a piece of bread with me," said Kate. She had, in fact, taken some in her pocket the night before, when she crossed, and had forgotten to eat it, or had no appetite for it. Now she produced the slice.

"I cannot take it," said the bound man. "My hands be tied fast behind me. You must please put it into my mouth; and the Lord bless you for it."

Holding the cord with her right, Kate extended the bread with the other hand to the man, whose face was averted, and thrust it between his lips.

"You must hold your hand to my mouth while I eat," said he. "I wouldn't miss a crumb, and it will fall if you take your hand from me."

Consequently, with her hand full of bread much broken, she fed the unfortunate man, and he ate it out of her palm. He ate greedily till he had consumed the last particle.

It moved Kate to the heart to feel the hungry wretch's lips picking the crumbs out of her palm.

"Oh, Roger!" she said in a tone full of compassion and sorrow, rather than reproach, "why—why did you do it?"

"Do what, Kitty?"

"Oh, burn the stack!"

"I'll tell you why. I couldn't help it. Did you know my Joan? Her was the purtiest little maid in all Coombe. Her's dead now."

"Dead, Roger!"

"Ay, I reckon; died to-night in her mother's lap; died o' want, and cold, and nakedness. Us had no bread till Pass'n gave me that loaf—and no coals, and no blankets, and naught but rags. The little maid has been sick these three weeks. Us can't have no doctor. I've been out o' work three months, and now the parish must bury her. Joan, she wor my very darling, nigh my heart."

He was silent. The boat he was in chattered more vigorously against that of Kate.

"I knowed," he pursued, "I knowed what ha' done it. It wor Farmer Pooke throwed me out of employ—took the bread out o' our mouths. Us had a bit o' candle-end, and I wor down on my knees beside my wife, and little Joan lyin' on her lap; and wife and I neither could speak; us couldn't pray; us just watched the poor little maid passin' away."

He was silent, but Kate heard that he was sobbing. Presently he said, "You've been kind. If you've got a bit o' handkercher or what else, wipe my face with it, will'y. There's something, the dew or the salt water from the oars, splashed over it."

The girl passed her shawl over the man's face.

"Thank'y kindly," he said. Then he drew a long breath and continued his story. "Well, now, when wife and I saw as little Joan were gone home, then her rose up and never said a word, but laid her on our ragged bed; and I—I had the candle-end in my hand, and I put it into the lantern, and I went out. My heart were full o' gall and bitterness, and my head were burning. I know'd well who'd killed our Joan; it were Farmer Pooke as turned me out o' employ all about a bit o' nonsense I said and never meant, and when I wor sober never remembered to ha' said; so, mad wi' sorrow and anger, I—I gone and done it with that there bit o' candle-end."

"Oh, Roger, Roger! you have made matters much worse for yourself, for all."

"I might ha' made it worser still."

"You could not—now. Oh, what will become of you, and what of your poor wife and little ones?"

"For me, as Jan Tottle said, there's the gallows; and I reckon for my Jane and the childer, there's the grave."

"If you had not fired the rick, Roger!"

"I tell you I might ha' done worse than that, and now been a free man."

"I cannot see that."

"Put your hand down by my right thigh. Do you feel nothing there, hanging to the strap round my waist?"

Kate felt a string and a knife, a large knife, as she groped.

"Do you mean this, Roger?"

"Yes, I does. As Jan Tottle wor a-wrastlin' wi' me here in this boat, and trying to overmaster me, the thought came into my head as I might easy take my knife and run it in under his ribs and pierce his heart. Had I done that, he'd ha' falled dead here, and I'd a' gotten scot-free away."

"Roger!"

Kate shrank away in horror.

"I didn't do it, but I might. I'd no quarrel with young Jan. He's good enough. It's the old faygher be the hard and cruel one. I knowed what was afore me, as young Jan twisted and turned and threw me. I must be took to Exeter gaol, and there be hanged by the neck till dead—but I wouldn't stain my hands wi' an innocent lad's blood. I wouldn't have it said of my little childer they was come o' a murderin' villain."

Kate shuddered. Still holding fast the cord that constrained the man, and kept him in his position of helplessness, she drew back from him as far as she could without surrendering her hold.

"I had but to put down my hand and slip open my clasp-knife—and I would have been free, and Jan lying here in his blood."

She hardly breathed. A band as of iron seemed to be about her breast and tightening.

"Kitty," said the man, "you have fed me with bread out of your hand, and with your hand you have wiped the salt tears from my eyes. With that hand will you give me over to the gallows? If you do, my death will lie on you, and those of my Jane and the little ones."

"Roger, I am here in trust."

"I spared Jan. Can you not spare me?"

Kate trembled. She hardly breathed.

"Let me go, and I swear to you—I swear by all those ten thousand eyes o' heaven looking down on us—that I will do for you what you have done for me."

"That is an idle promise," said Kate; "you never can do that."

"Who can say what is to be, or is not to be? Let me go, for my wife and poor children's sake."

She did not answer.

"Let me go because I spared Jan Pooke."

She did not move.

"Let me go for the little dead Joan's sake—that when she lies i' the churchyard, they may not say of her, 'Thickey there green mound, wi' them daisies on it, covers a poor maid whose father were hanged.'"

Then Kate let go the string, it ran round the rowlock, and the man scrambled to his feet.

"Cut it with my knife," he said.

She took the swinging knife, opened the blade, and with a stroke cut through the cord that held his wrists.

Then Roger Redmore shook the strings from his hands, and held up his freed arms to heaven, and cried, "The Lord, who sits enthroned above thickey shining stars, reward you and help me to do for you as you ha' done for me. Amen."

He leaped from the boat and was lost in the darkness.

A minute later, and John Pooke, with a party of men among whom was Pasco Pepperill, came up.

"John," said Kate, "he is gone—escaped."

She drew the young man aside. "I will not deceive you—I let him go. He begged hard. He might have killed you. His little Joan is dead."

John Pooke was at first staggered, and inclined to be angry, but he speedily recovered himself. He was a good-natured lad, and he said in a low tone, "Tell no one else. After all, it is best. I shouldn't ha' liked to have appeared against him, and been the occasion of his death."

Kate returned with her uncle to Coombe Cellars.

"I hope my new boat is no worse," said he. "How is it you've been out all night?"

Kate told her story.

"The boat is all right, I suppose. She cost me six pounds."

"Yes; no harm is done to it. I hope aunt has not been anxious about me."

"What, Zerah? Oh, she's in bed. I waited up, and when there was a cry of fire ran out."

"You waited for me, uncle?"

"I had my accounts."

"And father—was he anxious about me?"

"Your father? You come in, and you'll hear his snore all over the house. He's a terrible noisy sleeper."

CHAPTER VIII

AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE

After the fierce north-east wind came one from the south-east, whose wings were laden with moisture, and which cast cold showers over the earth. It is said that a breath from this quarter brings a downpour that continues unintermittently for forty-eight hours. On this occasion, however, the rain was not incessant. The sky lowered when it did not send down its showers, and these latter were cold and unfertilising. “February fill dyke, March dry it up,” is the saying, but March this year was one of rain, and February had been a month of warmth and sunshine, which had forced on all vegetation, which March was cutting with its cruel frosts and beating down with its pitiless rains.

That had come about in Coombe Cellars which might have been anticipated. Kate had been sent across the water with the scantiest provision against cold, and with no instruction as to how to act in the event of delay of the atmospheric train. She was not a strong child, and the bitter cold had cut her to the marrow. On the morning following she was unable to rise, and by night she was in a burning fever.

Kate had an attic room where there was no grate—a room lighted by a tiny window that looked east across the river.

Against the panes the rain pattered, and the water dripped from the eaves upon the window-ledge with the monotonous sound of the death-watch. Hard by was the well-head of a fall-pipe, in which birds had made their nests, and had so choked it that the water, unable to descend by the pipe, squirted and plashed heavily on the slates below.

A candle, brought from the kitchen, stood on the window-shelf guttering in the wind that found its way through the ill-fitting lattice and cracked diamond panes. It cast but an uncertain shimmer over the face of the sick girl.

On the floor stood an iron rushlight-holder, the sides pierced with round holes. In this a feeble rushlight burned slowly.

Beside the bed sat Mrs. Pepperill, and the old rector of Coombe-in-Teignhead stood with bowed head, so as not to knock his crown against the ceiling, looking intently at the girl. Zerah was uneasy. Her conscience reproached her. She had acted inconsiderately, if not wrongly, in sending her niece across the water. She was afraid lest she should be blamed by the parson, and lest her conduct should be commented on by the parish.

She reasoned with herself, without being able thoroughly to still the qualms of her conscience. What cause had she to suppose that the train would not arrive punctually? How could she have foreseen that it would come in so late that it made it impossible for Kate to cross in the then condition of the tide? Had Jan Pooke arrived but ten minutes earlier than he did, then, unquestionably, the boat would have come over, if not at Coombe Cellars, yet somewhat lower down the river. She was not gifted with the prophetic faculty. She had so many things to occupy her mind that she could not provide for every contingency. Should the child die, no blame—no reasonable blame—could attach to her. The fault lay with Mr. Brunel, who had laid down the atmospheric railway; with the engineer at the Teignmouth exhausting-pump, who had not done his duty properly; with

the guard of the train, who had not seen that the rollers for opening and closing the valves did their work properly; with John Pooke, for delaying over his hat that he had let fall; with Jason Quarm, for not offering to ferry the boat in the place of his daughter, instead of staying over the fire with her husband, filling his head with mischievous nonsense about making money out of mud and sinking capital which would never come to the surface again. Finally, the fault lay with Providence, that blind and inconsiderate power, which had robbed her of Wilmot, and now had not retarded the ebb by ten minutes, which might easily have been effected by shifting the direction of the wind to the south-west.

The feeble light flickered in the window, and almost in the same manner did the life of the girl flicker, burning itself away as the candle guttered in the overmuch and irregular heat, now quivering under the in-rush of draught, hissing blue and faint, and ready to expire, then flaring up in exaggerated incandescence. The cheeks flushed, the eyes burned with unnatural light, and the pulse ebbed and flowed.

"Where do the stars go by day?" asked Kate in delirium; "and why does the Plough turn in heaven? Is God's hand on it?"

"My child," said the parson, "God's plough in the earth is the frost, that cuts deep and turns and crumbles the clods ready for the seed; and God's plough on human hearts is great sorrow and sharp disappointment—to make the necessary furrow into which to drop the seeds of faith, and love, and patience."

"She is not speaking to you, sir," said Mrs. Pepperill. "She's talking rambling like. But she's terrible at questions—always."

The clergyman held his hands folded behind his back, and looked intently at the fevered face. The eyes were bright, but not with intelligence. Kate neither recognised him, nor understood what he said.

"I wonder now where the doctor is?" said Zerah. "I reckon he has gone to some patient who can pay a guinea where we pay seven shillings and sixpence. Doctor Mant will be with such twice a day—as we are poor, he will come to us only now and then."

"You judge harshly. You have but just sent for him."

"I did not think Kate was bad enough to need a doctor."

"God is the Great Physician. Put your trust in Him."

"That is what you said when Wilmot was ill. I lost her all the same."

"It was the will of Heaven. God's plough, maybe, was needed."

"In what way did I deserve to be so treated? My beautiful child! my own, very very own child." Zerah's eyes filled, but her lips contracted, making crow-feet at the corners. "I have had left to me instead this cold-hearted creature, my niece, who can in no way make up to me for what I have lost. I've had a sovereign taken from me and a ha'penny left in my hand."

"God has given you this child to love and care for. For His own wise purposes He took away Wilmot, whom you were spoiling with over-much affection and blind admiration. Now He would have you love and cherish the treasure He has left in your hands."

"Treasure?"

"Ay, treasure. Love her."

"Of course I love her! I do my duty by her."

"You have done your duty—of that I have no doubt. But how have you done it? Do you know, Mrs. Pepperill, there are two ways in which everything may be done—as a duty to God, in the spirit of bondage or in the spirit of love? So with regard to the image of God in this innocent and suffering child. You may do your duty perfunctorily or in charity."

"I do it in charity. Her father has not paid a penny for her keep."

"That is not what I mean; charity is the spirit of love. There are two minds in which man may stand before God, to everything, to everyone—there is the servant mind and the filial mind, the duty mind, and the mind of love. And with what mind have you treated this child?" The parson put his hand to Kate's brow and drew back from it the dark hair, sweeping the locks aside with his trembling fingers.

"Look," said he. "What a forehead she has got—what a brow! full, full, full of thought. This is no common head—there is no vulgar brain in this poor little skull."

"Wilmot had a head and brains," said Mrs. Pepperill, "and her forehead was higher and whiter."

Zerah's conscience was stinging her. What the rector said was true, and the consciousness that it was true made her angry.

Would she have sent Wilmot across the water insufficiently protected against the east wind? would she have done this without weighing the chances of the atmospheric railway breaking down? If death were to snatch this child from her, she would ever feel that some responsibility had weighed on her. However much she might shift the blame, some of it must adhere to her.

She had not been kind to the motherless girl. It was true she had not been unkind to her; but then Kate had a right to a share of her heart. She had valued her niece chiefly as a foil to her daughter; and when the latter died, her feelings toward Kate had been dipped in wormwood.

Zerah was not a bad woman, but she was a disappointed woman. She was disappointed in her husband, disappointed in her child. Her heart was not congealed, nor was her conscience dead, but both were in a torpid condition.

Now, as by the glimmer of the swaling candle she looked on the suffering girl, the ice about her heart cracked—a warm gush of pity, an ache of remorse, came upon her; she bowed and kissed the arched brow of her niece.

The rector knelt and prayed in silence. He loved the intelligent child in his Sunday school—the nightingale in his church choir. Zerah obeyed his example.

Then both heard the stair creak, and a heavy tread sounded on the boards.

Mrs. Pepperill looked round, but the irregular tread would have told her who had entered the attic chamber without the testimony of her eyes. She stood up and signed to Jason Quarm to be less noisy in his movements.

"Pshaw!" said he; "it is nothing. Kitty will get over it. You, Zerah, are tough. I am tough. Leather toughness is the characteristic of us Quarms. When she is better, send her to me—to the moor. That will set her up."

The rector rose.

Jason went to the head of the bed and laid his large hand on the sick girl's brow. The coolness of his palm seemed to do her good.

"You see—it comforts the little toad," said her father. "There is nothing to alarm you in the case. Children are like corks. They go under water and are up again—mostly up. Dipping under is temporary—temporary and soon over. Parson, do you want to speculate? I am buying oak dirt cheap—to sell at a tremendous profit. Ten per cent. at the least. What do you say?"

The rector shook his head.

"Well, I shouldn't go away from Coombe with Kitty ill but that I expect to make my fortune and hers. She'll have a dower some day out of the Brimpts oaks."

Then the man stumped out of the room and down the steep stairs.

Jason Quarm was always sanguine.

"Do you think Kate will live?" asked Zerah, who did not share his views.

"I trust so," answered the rector. "If she does, then regard her as a gift from heaven. Once before she was put, a frail and feeble object, into your arms to rear and cherish. You were then too much engrossed in your daughter to give to this child your full attention. Your own Wilmot has been taken away. Now your niece has been almost withdrawn from you. But the hand that holds the issues of life and death spares her; she is committed to you once more—again helpless, frail, and committed to you that you may envelop her in an atmosphere of LOVE."

"I have loved her," said Mrs. Pepperill. "This is the second time, sir, that you have charged me with lack of love towards Kate."

"Wilmot," said the rector, "was one who stormed the heart. She went up against it, with flags flying and martial music, and broke in at the point of the bayonet. Kate's nature is different. She will storm no heart. She sits on the doorstep as a beggar, and does not even knock and solicit admission. Throw open your door, extend your hand, and the timid child will falter in, frightened, yet elate with hope."

"I don't know," said Zerah meditatively. "You'll excuse my saying it, but when a child is heartless"—

"Heartless?—who is heartless?"

"Kate, to be sure."

"Heartless?" repeated the rector. "You are in grievous error. No child is heartless. None of God's creatures are void of love. God is love Himself, and we are all made in the image of the Creator. In all of us is the divine attribute of love. We were made to love and to be loved. It is a necessity of our nature. This poor little spirit—with how much love has it been suckled? With how much has its nakedness been clothed? The cream of your heart's affection was given to your own daughter, and only the whey—thin and somewhat acidulated—offered to the niece. Turn over a new leaf, Mrs. Pepperill. Treat this child in a manner different from that in which she has been treated. I allow frankly that you have not been unkind, unjust, ungracious. But such a soul as this cannot flower in an atmosphere of negatives. You know something about the principle on which the atmospheric railway acts, do you not, Mrs. Pepperill? There is a pump which exhausts the air. Now put a plant, an animal, into a vessel from which the vital air has been withdrawn, and plant or animal will die at once. It has been given nothing deleterious, nothing poisonous has been administered. It dies simply because it has been deprived of that atmosphere in which God ordained that it should live and flourish. My good friend," said the rector, and his voice shook with mingled tenderness of feeling and humour, "if I were to take you up and set you under the exhausting apparatus, and work at the pump, you would gasp—gasp and die."

The woman turned cold and blank at the suggestion.

"If I did that," continued the parson, "the coroner who sat on you would pronounce that you had been murdered by me. I should be sent to the assizes, and should infallibly be hung. Very well: there are other kinds of murder than killing the body. There is the killing of the noble, divine nature in man, and that not by acts of violence only, but by denial of what is essential to its existence. Remember this, Mrs. Pepperill: what the atmosphere is to the lungs, that love is to the heart. God created the lungs to be inflated with air, and the heart to be filled with Love."

CHAPTER IX

CONVALESCENCE

The voice of Pasco was heard shouting up the stairs to his wife. Mrs. Pepperill, glad to escape the lecture, went to the door and called down, “Don’t make such a noise, when the girl is ill.”

“Come, will you, Zerah; there’s some one wants to have a say with you.”

With a curt excuse to the parson, Mrs. Pepperill descended. She found her husband at the foot of the stairs, with his hand on the banister.

“Pasco,” said she, “what do’y think now? The parson has been accusing me of murdering Kate. If she dies, he says he’ll have me up to Exeter Assizes and hung for it. I’ll never set foot in church again, never—I’ll join the Primitive Methodists.”

“As you please,” said her husband. “But go to the door at once. There is John Pooke waiting, and won’t be satisfied till he has had a talk with you about Kate. He wants to know all about Kitty—how she’s doing, whether she’s in danger, if she wants anything that the Pookes can supply. He’s hanging about the door like what they call a morbid fly. He’s in a terrible taking, and won’t be put off with what I can tell.”

“Well, now,” exclaimed Zerah, “here’s an idea! Something may come of that night on a mud-bank after all, and more than she deserves. Oh my! if my Wilmot was alive, and Jan Pooke were to inquire after her! Go up, Pasco, and send that parson away. I won’t speak to him again—abusing of me and calling me names shameful, and he an ordained minister. What in the world are we coming to?”

When the doctor arrived, he pronounced that he would pull Kate through.

Presently the delirium passed away, and on the following morning the light of intelligence returned to her eyes.

“They are still there,” she said eagerly, raising her head and listening.

“What are still there?” asked her aunt.

“The gulls.”

In fact, these animated foam-flakes of the ocean were about in vast numbers, uttering their peculiar cries as they hovered over the mud.

“Of course they are there—why not?”

“Father said he was going to make ladies’ waistcoats of them, and I’ve been fretting and crying—and then, the daffodils”—

“Oh, bother the daffodils and the gulls! They may wait a long while before waistcoats are made of them.”

“It is not of daffodils father was going to make waistcoats. He said he would have all the gulls shot.”

“Never worrit your head about that. The birds can take care of themselves and fly away to sea.”

“But the daffodils cannot get away. He was going to have a scythe and mow them all down and sell them.”

“Wait till folk are fools enough to buy.”

There was much to be done in the house. Mrs. Pepperill was unable to be always in the room with her niece. It was too early in the year for pleasure parties to come up the river in boats for tea or coffee, winkles and cockles, in the open air, but the house itself exacted attention—the cooking, the washing, had to be done. Now that Zerah was deprived of the assistance of her niece, perhaps for the first time did she realise how useful the girl had been to her. By night Kate was left alone; there was no space in the attic chamber for a second bed, nor did her condition require imperatively that some one should be with her all night.

When her consciousness returned, Kate woke in the long darkness, and watched the circular spots of light that danced on the walls and careered over the floor, as the rushlight flickered in the draught between window and door. Above, on the low ceiling, was the circle of light, broad and yellow as the moon, cast by the candle, its rays unimpeded in that direction, but all round was the perforated rim, and through that the rays shot and painted stars—stars at times moving, wheeling, glinting; and Kate, in a half-torpid condition, thought she could make out among them the Plough with its curved tail, and wondered whether it were turning. Then she passed into dreamland, and woke and saw in the spots of light the white pearls of her uncle’s neckcloth, and was puzzled why they did not remain stationary. Whilst vexing her mind with this question she slid away into unconsciousness again, and when next her eyes opened, it was to see an orchard surrounding her, in which were daffodils that flickered, and she marvelled what that great one was above on the ceiling, so much larger than all the rest. Always, whenever with the ebb the gulls came up the river in thousands, and their laugh rang into the little room, it was to Kate as though a waft of sea-air blew over her hot face; and she laughed also, and said to herself, “They are not yet made into waistcoats.”

Occasionally she heard under her window a whistle piping, “There was a frog lived in a well,” and she once asked her aunt if that were father, and why he did not come upstairs to see her.

“Your father is on Dartmoor,” answered Zerah. Then, with a twinkle in her eye, she added, “I reckon it is Jan Pooke. He has taken on terribly about you. He comes every day to inquire.”

Whenever Mrs. Pepperill had a little spare time, she clambered up the steep staircase to see that her niece lacked nothing, to give her food, to make her take medicine, to shake up her bed. And every time that she thus mounted, she muttered, “So, I am killing her with cruelty! The only suitable quarters for me is Exeter gaol; the proper end for me is the gallows! I have put her into one of the atmospheric engine-towers and have pumped the life out of her! And yet, I’m blessed if I’m not run off my legs going up and down these stairs! If I ain’t

a ministering angel to her; if she doesn't cost me pounds in doctor's bills; I don't begrudge it—but I'm a murderess all the same!"

Certain persons are mentally incapable of understanding a simile; a good many are morally unwilling to apply one to themselves. Whether, when it was spoken, Mrs. Pepperill comprehended or not the bearing of the rector's simile relative to the exhausting engine, in the sequel she came to entirely misconceive it, and to distort it into something quite different from what the speaker intended. That was easily effected. She was quite aware that much that the parson had said was true; her conscience tingled under his gentle reproof; but no sooner was that unfortunate simile uttered, than her opportunity came for evading the cogency of his reproach, and for working herself up into resentment against him for having charged her falsely. That is one of the dangers that lurk in the employment of hyperbole, and one of the advantages hyperbole gives to those addressed in reprimand with it. Zerah had sufficient readiness of wit to seize on the opportunity, and use her occasion against the speaker, and in self-vindication.

The rector had not said that Zerah was depriving her niece of vital air; that mattered not—he had said that she was depriving her of what was as essential to life as vital air.

"It is my own blessed self that I am killing," said Mrs. Pepperill; "running up these stairs ten hundred times in the day, my heart jumping furiously, and pumping all the vital air out of my lungs. I'm sure I can't breathe when I get up into Kate's room. And he don't call that love! He ought to be unfrocked by the bishop."

She came into the girl's chamber red in the face and puffing, and went direct to her.

"There, now; I'm bothered if something does not come of it to your advantage and mine, Kate, for I'm tired of having to care about you. Jan Pooke has been here again. That's the second time to-day; of course asking after you. There is no one in the family but Jan and his sister, and she is about to be married. The Pookes have a fine farm and money in the bank. If you manage matters well, you'll cut out that conceited minx, Rose, who has marked him down. Come, you are a precious!"

She stooped to kiss Kate, but the girl suddenly turned her face with a flaming cheek to the wall.

Zerah tossed her head and said to herself, "Love? she won't love! I was about to kiss her, and she would not have it."

Then she got her needlework and seated herself at the window. Kate turned round at once to look at her. She had shrunk from her aunt involuntarily; not from her kiss, but from her words, which wounded her.

A strange child Kate was. If not asking questions with her lips, she was seeking solutions to problems with her eyes. She had fixed her great solemn orbs on her aunt, and they remained on her, not withdrawn for a moment, till Zerah

Pepperill became uneasy, fidgeted in her seat, and said sharply, “Am I a murderess or an atmospheric pump that you stare at me? Can’t you find something else to look at?”

Kate made no reply, but averted her face. Ten minutes later, nevertheless, Zerah felt again that the eyes were on her, studying her features, her expression, noting everything about her, seeming to probe her mind and search out every thought that passed in her head.

“Really, if this is going on, I cannot stay,” she said, rose and folded up the sheet she was hemming. “There’s such a thing as manners. I hate to be looked at—it is as if slugs were crawling over me.”

As Zerah descended, she muttered, “The girl is certainly born without a heart. I would have kissed her but that she turned from me. I wish the parson had seen that!”

The weather changed, the edge was taken off the east wind, the sun had gained power. The rooks were in excitement repairing their nests and wasting sticks about the ground under the trees, making a mess and disorder of untidiness. The labourers begged a day from their masters, that they might set their potatoes; after work hours on the farms they were busy in their gardens.

In spring the sap of health rises in young arteries as in plants, and Kate recovered, not perhaps rapidly, but nevertheless steadily. She continued to be pale, with eyes preternaturally large.

She was able to leave her chamber, and after a day or two assist in light housework.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW SCHOOLMASTER

One day, when her uncle was at home busy about his accounts, which engaged him frequently without greatly enlightening him, but serving rather to involve his mind in confusion, Kate was assisting her aunt in preparing for the early dinner, when a tap at the door announced a caller.

Pasco shouted to the person outside to come in, and a young man entered—tall, with fair hair, and clear, steady grey eyes.

“I am the new schoolmaster,” said he frankly. “I have thought it my duty to come and see you, as you are church-warden and one of the managers of the National School.”

"Quite right; sit down. I have been busy. I am a man of the commercial world. This is our meal-time. I am disengaged from my accounts; you can sit and eat, and we will converse whilst eating."

Mrs. Pepperill entered, and her hard eye rested on the young man.

"The new schoolmaster," she said. "Do you come from these parts?"

"No; I am a stranger to this portion of England."

"That's a misfortune. If you could be born again, and in the west country, it would be a mercy for you. From where do you come?"

"From Hampshire."

"That's right up in the north."

The schoolmaster raised his eyebrows. "Of course—in the south of England."

"It doesn't follow," said Zerah; "by your speech I took you to be foreign."

"And what may your name be," said Pasco, "if I may be so bold as to ask? I have heard it, but it sounded French, and I couldn't recollect it."

"My name is very English—Walter Bramber."

"Never heard anyone so called before. Brambles, and Bramptons, and Branscombes. It don't sound English to our ears. I may as well tell you—sit down, and take a fork—that we liked our last schoolmaster uncommon much. He was just the right sort of man for us; but the rector took against him."

"I thought he was rather given to the"—

"Well, what of that? We have, all of us, our failings. A trout is an uncommon good fish, but it has bones like needles. You have your failings, my wife has hers. I will say this for Mr. Solomon Puddicombe—he never got tight in our parish. When he was out for a spree, he went elsewhere—to Newton, or Teignmouth, and sometimes to Ashburton. He couldn't help it. Some folks have fits, others have bilious attacks. When he wasn't bad, he was very good; the children liked him, the parents liked him. I liked him, and I'm the churchwarden. He had means of his own, beside the school pence and his salary. A man has a right to spend his money as he chooses. If he had got tight on the school pence, I can understand that there might have been some kind of objection; but when it was on his private means, then I don't see that we have anything to do with it. Have you means of your own?"

"I am sorry to say—none."

"We always respect those who have means. If you have none, of course you can't go on the spree anywhere, and oughtn't to do so. It would be wrong and immoral. Take my advice, and call on the old schoolmaster. The parish will be pleased, as it has been terribly put about at the rector giving him his dismissal."

"But—I thought there had been an unhappy scandal; that, in fact, he had been committed to"—

“Well, well, he was locked up,” said Pasco. “There was a cock-fight somewhere up country. Not in this country, but at a place called Waterloo.”

“There is no such place in England,” said Bramber. “Waterloo is in Belgium; it lies about five miles from Brussels.”

“You are a schoolmaster, and ought to know. But of this I am quite sure—it was in England where he got into trouble, and the name of the place was Waterloo.”

“He may have been at some inn called the Waterloo, but positively there is no place in England so designated,” said Bramber.

“I know very well the place was Waterloo, and that Mr. Solomon Puddicombe got into trouble there. We are all liable to troubles. I have lost my daughter. Troubles are sent us; the parson himself has said so. Puddicombe got locked up. You see, cock-fighting is a pursuit to which he was always very partial. You go and call on him, and he’ll sing you his song. It begins—

‘Come all you cock-fighters from far and near,

I’ll sing you a cock match when and where,

On Aspren Moor, as I’ve heard say,

A charcoal black and a bonny bonny grey.’

That is how the song begins. But it is about another cock-fight; not that at Waterloo. Cock-fighting is Mr. Puddicombe’s pursuit. We have all got our pursuits, and why not? There’s a man just outside Newton is wonderful hot upon flowers. His garden is a picture; he makes it blaze with various kinds of the finest coloured—foreign and English plants: that’s his pursuit. Then there is a doctor at Teignmouth who goes out with a net catching butterflies, and he puts ale and treacle on the trees in the evening for catching moths: that’s his pursuit. And our parson likes dabbling with a brush and some paints: that’s his pursuit. And business is mine: that’s my pursuit and my pleasure—and it’s profit too.”

“Sometimes; not often,” threw in Zerah.

“Well, I don’t know what your pursuits be, Mr. Schoolmaster,” said Pepperill. “Let us hope they’re innocent as those of Mr. Puddicombe.”

The young man glanced round him, staggered at his reception, and caught the eye of Kate. She was looking at him intently, and in her look were both interest and pity.

“We won’t argue any more,” said Pasco. “I suppose you can eat starigazy pie?”

“I am ashamed to say I never heard of it.”

“Never heard of it? And you set to teach our children! Zerah, tell Mr. Schoolmaster what starigazy pie is.”

"There is nothing to tell," said Zerah ungraciously. It was her way to be ungracious in all she said and all she did. "It is fish pie—herrings or pilchards—with their heads out of the crust looking upwards. That is what they call star-gazing in the fishes, and, in short, starigazy pie. But if you don't like it, there is our old stag coming on presently."

"Do you know, I shall have made two experiences to-day that are new to me. In the first place, I shall make acquaintance with starigazy pie, that promises to be excellent; and in the next place, I may add that it never has been my luck hitherto to taste venison."

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Pepperill sharply; she thought Bramber was poking fun at her.

"I never have had the chance before of tasting venison—the meat of the rich man's table."

"No means, you know," said Pasco. "Without private means you can't expect to eat chicken."

"Our old stag is hardly chicken," said Zerah. "You see, now we've got a young stag, we didn't want the old one any more."

"Solomon Puddicombe married my second cousin," observed Pepperill. "Her name was Eastlake. Are you single?"

"Yes, that is my forlorn condition."

"Well, look sharp and marry into the parish. It's your only chance. You see, the farmers are all against you. They were partial to Puddicombe, and I hear he is intending to set up a private school. The farmers and better-class folk will send their children to him. They don't approve of their sons and daughters associating with the labourers' children, though they did send some to the National School so long as Solomon Puddicombe was there; but that was because he was so greatly respected."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Puddicombe is still in Coombe-in-Teignhead?"

"Certainly. When he returned from Waterloo, as the place was called where was that cock-fight, and he got into some sort of difficulty, he came back to his own house. He got it through his wife, who was an Eastlake—my cousin. It is his own now, and he has private means, so he intends setting up a school. It will be very select; only well-to-do parents' children will be admitted. When they let Mr. Puddicombe out of gaol at Waterloo, which is somewhere in the Midlands,—leastways in England,—then the people here were for ringing a peal to welcome him home. The parson put the keys in his pocket and went off. They came to me. I am churchwarden, and I knocked open the belfry door. We gave Puddicombe a peal, and the rector wasn't over-pleased. I am churchwarden, and that is something. You see, Mr. Puddicombe has means, and a house he got through my cousin Eastlake. I don't know how the school will be kept up now that the rector has had Puddicombe turned out of it. None of the farmers will subscribe. We have no resident squire. He will have to make up your salary out of his own pocket. He is not married, so he can well afford it. If

he don't consult our feelings, I don't see why we should consider his pocket. None of us wished to lose Solomon Puddicombe; everyone trusted him, and he was greatly respected."

Again the schoolmaster looked round him. A sense of helplessness had come over him. Again his eye encountered that of Kate, and he instinctively understood that this girl felt for him in his difficulties and humiliation, and understood how trying his position was.

"Now for a bit of our old stag," said Pasco.

"Stag?" exclaimed Bramber; "that is fowl!"

"What you call fowl, is stag to us. He crowed till his voice cracked. He may be tough because old, but he's been long boiling."

"Oh, a cock!" Bramber learned that day that a cock in Devonshire is entitled stag.

The meal ended, Pasco Pepperill stood up and said, "Mr. What's-your-name, I daresay you would like to look over my stores. You'll be wanting coals, and I sell coals by the bushel. You drink cider, I daresay; I can provide you with a hogshead—or half, if that will do. If you want to do shopping—I speak against my interests—but Whiteaway deals in groceries; you'll find his shop up the street. If there be anything he hasn't got, and you need to go into Teignmouth, why, this is the ferry, and we charge a penny to put you across, and it is a penny back. If you desire to be polite to friends, and would like to entertain them, there are cockles and winkles, tea or coffee, to be had here, six-pence a head; but if the number were over twenty, we might come to an arrangement at fourpence-ha'penny. And if you desire a conveyance at any time, I have a cob and trap I let out at a shilling a mile, and something for the driver. And if you smoke and drink, I have—I mean, I dare-say I could provide for you tobacco and spirits that—you know—haven't seen the Customs, and are accordingly cheap. And if you should happen to know of a timber merchant who wants a lot of oak, I've dropped over a hundred pounds on some prime stuff I shall sell only to such as know good oak from bad. And if you've any friends in the weaving trade, I do some business in wool, and am getting first-class fleeces from Dartmoor. If you can oblige me in any way like this—well, I daresay I shan't be so prejudiced for Mr. Puddicombe."

Pasco Pepperill conducted the schoolmaster about his premises in an ostentatious manner, showed him his stores, his stable, the platform on which tea and coffee, winkles and cockles were served. He named the prices he had paid, and gave the new-comer to understand that he was a man who had plenty of money at his disposal.

Then an idea occurred to Pasco. Perhaps this schoolmaster might help him with his accounts. He himself could not disentangle them and balance his books. He was shy of letting anyone else see them; but this Bramber was a complete stranger, a man whom he could reduce to dependence on himself; he had no private means, no friends in the place; he had given the man a dinner, and might make of him a very serviceable slave.

“Look here,” said Pepperill in a haughty tone, “Mr. Schoolmaster, I suppose you know something of accounts and book-keeping?”

“Certainly I do.”

“I shouldn’t mind now and then paying you a trifle, giving you a meal, and favouring you with my support—I am churchwarden, and consequently on the committee of the National School. Me and the bishop, and the archdeacon and rector, and Whiteaway as well. I mean, I’ll stand at your back, if you will oblige me now and then, and hold your tongue.”

“I will do anything I can to oblige you,” said Bramber. “And as to holding my tongue, what is it you desire of me?”

“Merely to help me with my accounts. My time is so occupied, and I do business in so many ways, that my books get somewhat puzzling—I mean to a man who is taken up with business.”

“I am entirely at your service.”

“But—you understand—I don’t want my affairs talked about. People say I have plenty of money, that I’m a man who picks it up everywhere; but I don’t desire that they should know how much I have, and what my speculations are, and what they bring in.”

“I can hold my tongue.”

“Would you look at my books now?”

“Certainly.”

Accordingly, Walter Bramber re-entered the house, and was given the books in a private sitting-room, and worked away at them for a couple of hours. The confusion was great: Pepperill might have had a genius for business, but this was not manifest in his books. Presently Pasco came in.

“Well,” said he, “make ’em out, eh?”

“You must excuse my saying it,” said Bramber; “but—if these are all—your affairs are in a very unsatisfactory condition.”

“Unsatisfactory? oh, pshaw! Of course, I have other resources; there’s the Brimpts forest of oaks. There’s—oh, lots; winkles and cockles, tea and coffee not entered.”

“Sixpence a head; over twenty, fourpence ha’penny,” said Walter Bramber drily.

“Oh, lots—lots of other things. I haven’t entered all.”

“I sincerely hope it is so.”

“It is so, on my word.”

“Because—you seem to me to be losing seriously on every count.”

"Losing? You don't know creditor from debtor account. That comes of education; it is never of use. Nothing like business for teaching a man. I don't believe in your book-learning."

"I'll come again to-morrow and go more carefully into the accounts."

"Oh, thank you, not necessary. It is clear to me you do not understand my system—and mistake sides." Pasco became red and angry. "Look here, Mr. Schoolmaster, let me give you a word. You don't belong to the labourers—you won't be able to make friends of them. You don't belong to the gentry; there are none here—so you need not think of their society. You don't belong to the middle class—you are not a farmer, or a tradesman, or a merchant; so they will have nothing to do with you. You make my accounts all right, and the balance on the right side; give up your foolish book-keeping as learned at college, and set my accounts right by common sense, and I'll see what I can do to get you taken up by some respectable people. And, one thing more. Don't go contradicting men of property, and saying that there was no cock-fighting at Waterloo, because there was; and people don't like contradictions. When I broke open the belfry door that the ringers might give Mr. Puddicombe a peal, I let the world see I wasn't going to be priest-ridden; and we are not going to be schoolmaster-ridden neither, and told our accounts are wrong, and that Waterloo, where the cock-fight was, is not in England."

CHAPTER XI

DISCORDS

Walter Bramber left Coombe Cellars greatly discouraged. He had unintentionally ruffled the plumes of the churchwarden by disputing his knowledge of the situation of Waterloo, and mainly by discovering that his affairs were in something worse than confusion, that they wore a complexion which indicated the approach of bankruptcy. And Pasco Pepperill was one of the magnates of the village, and full of consciousness that he was a great man.

Bramber walked to the little village shop belonging to Whiteaway, the second churchwarden, who was also on the committee of management, and trustee for the school under the National Society.

Here also his reception was not cordial. It was intimated to him that his presence in the village and tenure of the mastership of the school would be tolerated only on condition that he supplied himself with groceries, draperies, boots, and lollipops from Whiteaway's shop. He walked to his lodgings.

Such were the men with whom he was thrown. From two instances he generalised. They were to be gained through their interests. Unless he got one set of things at one store and another set at another, the two mighty men who

ruled Coombe-in-Teignhead would turn their faces against him, and make his residence in the place intolerable.

As he walked slowly along the little street, he encountered a cluster of children, talking and romping together, composed of boys and girls of all ages. Directly they saw him, they became silent, and stood with eyes and mouths open contemplating him. Bramber heard one boy whisper to the next—

“That’s the new teacher—ain’t he a duffer?”

He nodded, and addressed a few kindly words to the children; expressed his hope that they would soon be well acquainted and become fast friends. To which no response was accorded. But no sooner was he past than the whole crew burst into a loud guffaw, which set the blood rushing into the young man’s face.

A moment later a stone was hurled, and hit him on the back. He turned in anger, and saw the whole pack disappear behind a cottage and down a side lane. He considered a moment whether to pursue and capture the offender, but believing that he would have great difficulty in discovering him, even if he caught the whole gang, he deemed it expedient to swallow the affront.

On reaching his lodgings, Bramber unpacked his few goods; and as he did this, his heart ached for his Hampshire home. Old associations were connected with the trifles he took out of his box, linked with the irrevocable past, some sad, others sunny. Then he seated himself at his window and sank into a brown study.

Young, generous, he had come to this nook of the West full of enthusiasm for his task, eager to advance education, to lift the children out of the slough of ignorance and prejudice in which their fathers and forefathers had been content to live. That his efforts would meet with ready and enthusiastic support, would be gratefully hailed by parents and children alike, by rich and by poor, he had not doubted.

“There is no darkness but ignorance,” said the fool in “Twelfth Night”; and who would not rejoice to be himself lifted out of shadows into light, and to see his children advanced to a higher and better walk than had been possible for himself?

But his hopes were suddenly and at once damped. He was a fish out of water. A youth with a certain amount of culture, and with a mind thirsting after knowledge, he was pitchforked into a village where culture was not valued, where the only books seen were, “The Norwood Gipsy’s Dream-Book” and “The Forty Thieves,” exposed in the grocer’s window. He had been accustomed to associate with friends who had an interest in history, travels, politics, scenery, poetry, and art; and here in this backwater no one, so far as he could see, had interest in anything save what would fill his pocket or his paunch. Sad and temporarily discouraged, he took his violin and began to play. This instrument was to be to him in exile companion, friend, and confidant. Presently he heard a male voice downstairs talking loudly to his landlady. He

stayed his bow, and in another moment a stout and florid man stumbled up the staircase.

"How do'y, schoolmaister?" said this visitor, extending a big and moist hand. "I'm Jonas Southcott, landlord of the Lamb and Flag. As I was passing, I heard your fiddle squeak. You're just the chap us wants. Peter Adams as played first fiddle at church is dead; he was the man for you—he could turn you off a country dance, a hornpipe, or a reel."

"What, in church?"

"No, not exact-*ly* that. At our little hops at the Lamb and Flag; and on Sunday he was wonderful at an anthem or a psalm. We want someone who can take his place. You please to come and be sociable when the young folks want a dance. What can you play—'Moll in the Wad,' 'The Devil among the Tailors,' 'Oil of Barley,' 'Johnny, come tie my cravat'? These were some of Peter Adams's tunes. And on Sunday you should have heard him in Jackson's 'Tee-dum,' or at Christmas in 'While shepherds watched.' It was something worth going to church for."

"I hardly know what to say," gasped Walter Bramber. "I am but newly arrived, and have not as yet shaken into my place."

"This is practising night. The instruments will all be in my parlour this evening at half-past six. If you like to come and be sociable, and have a glass of spirits and water, and try your hand at Jackson's 'Tee-dum,' I reckon the orchestra will be uncommon gratified."

"You are very good, but"—

"And when the practice is over, we'll whip in some young folks and have a dance, and if you'll fiddle some of them tunes—'Moll in the Wad,' or 'The Parson among the Peas,' or 'The Devil among the Tailors,' you'll get intimate with young and old alike. Then, also, you can keep your eyes open, and pick out a clean, comely maiden, and keep company with her, and walk her out on Sundays—and so look to settling among us. You have a head-wind and a strong tide against you. The old master was *such* a favourite, and so greatly respected, that I doubt, unless you make an effort, you won't go down here."

"This evening you must excuse me; I'm very tired."

"Well, this was kindly intended. I thought to put you on good terms with the parish at once. Perhaps you're shy of playing Jackson's 'Tee-dum' till you've tried it over privately. I'll see if I can borrow you the notes. Jackson's 'Tee-dum'"—

"I presume you mean the 'Te Deum.'"

"We always call it 'Tee-dum' here, and if you give it any other name, no one will understand you. We are English, not French or Chinese, in Coombe-in-Teignhead."

The landlord of the Lamb and Flag descended the stairs, and Bramber, fearing lest he should have given offence, accompanied him to the street door. His

landlady was a widow. When Jonas Southcott was out of the house, she beckoned to Walter Bramber, and said—

"I be main glad you ain't going to the practice to-night, for I have axed Jane Cann in to tea."

"Who is Jane Cann?"

"Her teaches sewing and the infants in the National School. I thought you'd best become acquainted in a friendly way at the outset. She used to keep a dame's school herself, and a very good school it was. But when the parson set up the new National School, he did not want exactly to offend folk, and to take the bread out of Jane Cann's mouth,—you know she's akin to me, and to several in the place,—so he appointed her to the infants. Her's a nice respectable young woman, but her had a bit o' a misfortune as a child; falled and hurt her back, and so is rather crooked and short. Her may be a trifle older than you, but folk do say that is always best so; for when the wife is young"—

"Goodness preserve us! you don't suppose I am going to marry her because she is the sewing-mistress?"

"You might do worse. Folk are sure to talk anyhow, and it's best to give 'em some grounds for their talk. You see, she and you must walk together going to school and coming away, and she lives close by here. As I was saying, people say that when the wife is much younger than her husband there comes a long family, and the man is old and past work when some of the youngest are still no better than babies."

Bramber felt a chill down his spinal marrow, as though iced water were trickling there.

"I speak against my own interest," continued the widow, "but it does seem a pity that you should not put your salaries together and occupy one house. She gets twenty pounds a year. If you was to marry her, you'd be twenty pounds the richer. 'Twas unfortunate, though, about that cricket ball."

"What about a cricket ball?"

"Why, Jane Cann was looking on at a cricket match among the boys, and a ball came by accident and hit her on the side of her head, so that she's hard o' hearing in her right ear. You'll please to sit by her on the left, and then she can hear well enough. Jane Cann is my cousin, and I'd like to do her a good turn, and as she's maybe about seven years older than you, you need not fear a long family."

"Preserve me!" gasped the schoolmaster.

"I'll set you a stool on her left side, and give her a high chair, then you'll be about on a level with her hearing ear."

"I—I am going out to tea," said Bramber, snatching up his hat to fly the cottage; but was arrested at the door by a burly farmer who entered.

“This is Mr. Prowse of Wonnacot,” said the widow to Bramber. Then to the farmer, “This, sir, is the new teacher, who is going to lodge with me.”

“I’ve heard of him from Southcott,” said Prowse. “I’ve been told you play the fiddle. Perhaps you know also how to finger the pianer. My girls, Susanna and Eliza, are tremendously eager to learn the pianer, and I thought that after school hours you might drop in at my little place—Wonnacot—and give the young ladies lessons. I’d take it as a favour, and as I am a not inconsiderable subscriber to the National School, and”—

The widow, in a tone of admiration, threw in an aside to Bramber—“He subscribes half a sovereign.”

The farmer inflated his chest, smiled, raised himself in his boots, and, thrusting his right hand into his pocket, rattled some money. He had heard the aside, as it was intended that he should.

“I may say,” continued Mr. Prowse, “that I am a bulwark and a buttress of the National School, and as such I lay claim to the services of the teacher; and if, after hours, he can hop over to my little place and give my girls an hour three times a week, then”—he raised his chin and smiled down on the schoolmaster—“then I shall not begrudge my subscription.”

“It is true,” said Bramber, “that I can play a little on the piano, but—I am not sure that I am competent to give lessons. Moreover, I doubt if I shall have the time at my disposal. I am still young, and must prosecute my studies.”

“If you expect to remain here in comfort,” said the farmer testily, “you’ll have to do what you are asked. You don’t expect me to subscribe to the National School and get no advantage out of it?”

Thus it was—some made demands on the time, some on the purse, and others desired to dispose of the person of the new-comer.

To escape meeting the crooked sewing-mistress, deaf of the right ear, Walter ran into the street, and walked through the village.

A labourer came up to him.

“I want a word with you, Mr. Schoolmaister,” said he. “My boy goes to the National School, and I gives you fair warning, if you touches him with your hand or a stick, I’ll have the law of you.”

“But suppose he be disobedient, rude, disorderly?”

“My boy is not to be punished. He is well enough if let alone.”

“But—do you send him to school to be let alone?”

“I send him to school to be out of the way when my missus is washing or doing needlework.”

A little farther on his way, a woman arrested Walter Bramber, and said, “You be the new teacher, be you not? Please, I’ve five childer in your school and three at home. Some of the scholars bain’t clean as they should be. I can’t have

my childer come home bringing with them what they oughtn't, and never carried to school from my house. So will'y, now, just see to 'em every day, as they be all right, afore you let 'em leave school, and I'll thank'y for it kindly."

Presently a mason returning from his work saluted Bramber.

"Look here, schoolmaister! I want you to take special pains wi' my children and get 'em on like blazes. If they don't seem to get forward in a week or two, I shall take 'em away and send them to Mr. Puddicombe, who is going to open a private school."

Then another man came up, halted, and, catching hold of the lappet of Bramber's coat, said, "My name is Tooker. I'm not a churchman, but I have several children at your school. I won't have them taught the Church Catechism. I'm a Particular Baptist, and I won't have no childer of mine taught to say what their godfather and godmother promised and vowed for them—for they ain't had no godfathers nor godmothers, and ain't a-going to have none. You can't mistake my childer. One has got a red head, another is yaller, and the third is a sort of whitey-brown—and has sunspots, and a mole between the shoulder-blades, and the boy never had no toe-nails. So mind—no catechism for them."

"And there is something," said again another, "upon which I want to lay down what I think. I wish you to teach readin' and writin' in a rational manner."

"I hope to do that."

"Ah! but you've been too much at college, and crammed wi' book-larnin'. Why should you teach childer, and fret their little heads about the H, when it's a thing of no concern whatever. Mr. Puddicombe, he was the reasonable man. Sez he, 'Raisin puddin' is good, and duffy puddin' wi'out raisins is good—so is it with the English language—it's good all round, and the H's are just the raisins; you can put 'em in or leave 'em out as you pleases, and stick 'em in by the scores or just a sprinklin', and it's no odds—it's good anyways.' Them's the principles of spellin' I expect my little ones to larn at your school."

"And I hopes, Mr. Teacher," said another sententiously, "as you'll never forget that it is not enough to teach the children readin', writing, and 'rithmetic. There is something more"—

"There is a great deal more—geography, history, the Elements"—

"There is something above all that, and you should make it the first thing, and readin' and the rest after."

"What's that?"

"Temperance—teetotal principles."

Bramber walked on. His discouragement was becoming greater at every moment.

As he passed the Lamb and Flag, he was greeted by a hideous bray of instruments both stringed and brazen. This outburst was followed by a

marvellous coruscation of instrumental music, races, leaps, a helter-skelter of fiddles, flutes, cornets, bass-viol, now together, more often running ahead or falling behind each other, then one a-pickaback on the rest.

At the door of the public-house stood Mr. Jonas Southcott with his face radiant.

"Well, Mr. Schoolmaister!" shouted he; "what do you think of this? You've never heard such moosic before, I warrant. That is what I call moosic of the spears! It's Jackson's 'Tee-dum.'"

CHAPTER XII

DAFFODILS

Unwilling to return to his lodgings, where in vain the net was spread in his sight, Bramber walked towards Coombe Cellars. There for sixpence he could have his tea—cockles, winkles, and presumably bread and butter.

There also would he see that pale-faced girl with the large violet-blue eyes, which had been fixed on him with so much sympathy. Disappointed in proportion to the sanguineness of his expectations, Walter felt that he needed some relief from his discouragement, a word from some one who could understand him. On that day he had looked straight into many eyes, into beaming eyes, into irises that were dull with no speech in them, into stupid eyes, into boastful, into defiant, into insolent eyes.

Those of his landlady were clear as crystal, and he could see to their bottom; but what he saw there was but the agglomeration of common details of everyday life—so many loaves per week, a pint of milk, a beefsteak or mutton chop for supper, coals at so much a bushel, so much cleaning, so much washing. As in a revolving slide in a magic lantern, the same figures, the same trees, the same houses, reappear in endless iteration; so would it be with the eyes of the landlady, week by week, year by year, till those eyes closed in death; nought else would be revealed in their shadows but loaves and milk, and coals and washing, over and over and over again. There are eyes that are stony and have no depth in them; such were those of Zerah. Others have profundity, but are treacherous; such were those of Pasco. In the two glimpses into the eyes of the pale girl, whose name he did not know, Bramber had seen depths that seemed unfathomable; wells which had their sources in the heart, deeps full of mystery and promise.

The evening might have been one in summer. A light east wind was playing; the sky was clear. The sun had been hot all day. Marsh marigolds blazed at the water brim, reflecting their golden faces in the tide. The orchards were sheeted

with daffodils. The evening sky was blue shot with primrose, and every hue was mirrored in the water.

Bramber asked to have his tea out of doors on the little platform above the water, and Mrs. Pepperill bade Kate attend on the schoolmaster, and remain on the terrace so as to be ready to bring him anything he required; and, in the event of his desiring company, to be present to converse with him. She herself was engaged, and could not give him her attention.

The evening was so warm, so balmy, that it could do the convalescent no harm to sit outside the house. Kate took her needlework and planted herself on the low wall above the water, one foot in a white stocking and neat shoe touching the gravel. She was at some distance from the schoolmaster, who opened a book and read whilst taking his tea. He did not, apparently, require her society, and she had no thought of forcing herself on him.

Yet, occasionally, unobserved by her, Bramber looked her way. Behind her was an orchard-sweep golden with daffodils, and the slant setting sun, shooting down a gap in the hills, kindled the whole multitude of flower-heads into a blaze of wavering sunfire. Kate sat, a dark figure against this luminous background, but her plum-coloured kerchief, bound round her throat and tied across her breast, was wondrous in contrast with the brilliant flowers.

Occasionally, moreover, Kate, who long looked at the flower carpet which by its radiance threw a golden light into her face, turned her head to see if the schoolmaster needed more milk or butter; and then her eyes rested on the book he held with much the same greed with which a child fastens its eyes on sweets and a miser on gold.

The setting sun had fired glass windows on the opposite side of the estuary, and it flashed in every ripple running in from the sea.

Kate wore a little bunch of celandines in her bosom, pinned into the purple kerchief. The flowers were open through the warmth of their position, and when she stooped and a streak of sunlight fell on them and filled their cups, they sent a golden sheen over her chin. The girl was looking dreamily with turned head at the sheet of blazing daffodils, drinking in the beauty of the scene, and sighing, she knew not why, when she was startled to hear a voice at her ear, and, looking round, saw the schoolmaster.

“Are you admiring the daffodils?” he asked.

“Yes,” answered Kate, too shy, too surprised to say more.

“And I,” said he, “I also have been looking at them; and then I turned to familiar lines in Wordsworth, the poet I am reading. Do you know them?”

“About lent-lilies? I know nothing.”

“Listen.”

Then Bramber read—

“I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle in the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:—
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

Kate's dark blue eyes were fixed with intensity on the reader's face. Then they became full to overflowing.

"Why," exclaimed Bramber, "you are crying!"

"It is so true, it is so beautiful," she said, and her voice shook; and as she spoke the tears ran down her white cheeks. "How did he who wrote that know about my illness, and that I was thinking about, and troubled about, the daffodils when I was in my fever? It is all true"; she put her hands to her bosom; "I feel it—I cannot bear it."

Walter Bramber paused in surprise. He was himself a passionate lover of nature, of flowers, and he was fond of the words of the poet of nature—words that touched deep chords in his spirit. But here was a pale, reserved girl, to whom the words of the poet appealed with even greater force than to himself.

"Are you fond of poetry?" he asked.

She hesitated, and slightly coloured before answering.

"I do not know. Father sings a song or two. There are words, they rhyme, and they are set to a tune, and sometimes a good tune helps along bad words; but I never before heard words that had the music in themselves and wanted nothing to carry them along as on the wings of a bird. When you read that to me, it was just as though I heard what I had felt in my heart over and over again, and had never found how I could put it."

"Do you know why these flowers are called daffodils?"

She turned her solemn eyes on him again.

“Because they are daffodils; why else?”

“I suppose,” said Bramber, “when the Normans came to England, they brought these yellow flowers with them, and with the flowers the name by which they had known them in Normandy—*Fleurs d’Avril*, which means April flowers.”

“They do come in April, but also in March, and this year the weather has been warm, and everything is advanced.”

“So,” continued Bramber, “when the English tried to pronounce the French name, *Fleurs d’Avril*, they made daverils, and then slid away into further difference, and settled down on daffodils. Do you know about the Conquest by the Normans?”

Kate shook her head sadly.

“I know nothing—nothing at all.” Then, after a pause, she asked timidly, “Will you be very good and kind, and repeat those verses, and let me learn them by heart? Oh,” she gasped, and expanded, and clasped her hands, “it would be such a joy to me! and I could repeat them for ever and ever, and be happy.”

“I shall be delighted.”

Kate planted herself on one of the benches by the table, leaned her chin in her hands, and listened to each line of the poem with concentrated attention. One or two words she did not understand, and Bramber explained their meaning to her. When the piece had been read over slowly, she said—

“May I try? Do you mind? I think I know it.”

Then she recited the poem with perfect accuracy.

“You are quick at learning,” said Bramber. “I hope I may find my pupils in the National School as eager to acquire and as ready to apprehend.”

“I never heard words like these before,” said Kate.

“May I tell you what they are like to me?”

“Certainly.”

“They are like lightning on a still night, without rain, without thunder. The heavens are open and there is light—that is all. Is there more in that book?”

“A great deal,” answered the young man; and, pointing to the celandines in Kate’s bosom, said, “The poet has something to say about these flowers.”

“What, buttercups?”

“They are not buttercups. Take them out from where they are pinned. I will teach you a lesson—how to distinguish sorts.”

As the girl removed the bunch and placed it on the table, he said, “Do you see the petals? The golden leaves of the flower are called petals. They are pointed. Now, remember, a buttercup has rounded petals.”

"You are right, and they come out later. They are more like little drunkards."

"Drunkards? What do you mean?"

"The large golden cups that grow by the water's edge—these we call drunkards, but they drink only water."

"You mean the marsh marigold."

"Perhaps so, but it is very different from the marigold of the garden. The leaves"—

Bramber laughed. "Now you are going to teach me to distinguish. You are quite right—that water-drinker is not a marigold at all. But country people give it that name because it is the great golden flower that blooms at or about Lady Day, and the lady is the Virgin Mary. Now consider. The celandine has sharply-pointed petals. Do you see the difference between them and those of the golden water-drinker?"

"I see this clearly now."

"He who wrote those verses about the daffodils has written three poems on the celandine."

"What! on these little flowers?"

Kate coloured with delight and surprise.

"Yes, and very beautiful they are. I will reserve them for another day. You have enough to think about in the lines on the daffodils."

"How did the man who wrote them know of my illness, and how I dreamed and troubled about the daffodils?"

"He knew nothing of you."

"He must have done so. He says he was lonely as a cloud, and I am Kitty Alone."

"Is that your name?"

"They call me so because I have no companions and no friends, and because"—She checked herself and hung her head.

"But you have relatives."

"Yes—my father and Aunt Zerah. But for all that I am alone. They are grown big and old, and so of course cannot understand me—a child. And at school I didn't have friends. Then the man must have been here, for he says—

'Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze

Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle in the Milky Way,

They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay.'

There they are—'in never-ending line.'"

"There are daffodils elsewhere, as there are solitary spirits elsewhere than in this little being"—and Walter lightly touched the girl's brow.

Both were silent for a minute. Presently Kate said, "When I was looking at the daffodils, as the sun was on them, they blazed in at my eyes and I was full of light, and now those beautiful words are like the sun on the flowers that I shall carry away with me, and as I lie in bed in the dark I shall think of them, and the golden light will fill my room and fill my heart—

'Flashing upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude.'

That is true of the inward eye. You can see more with that than with the real eye. The man was a prophet. He knew and wrote of things that are not known or are not talked about in the world."

"So they call you Kitty Alone. You did not give me the second reason. What is that reason?"

The girl looked embarrassed.

"You will laugh at me."

"Indeed I will not," answered Bramber earnestly.

She still hesitated.

"You fear me? Surely you can trust me."

"You are so good—indeed I can. You speak to me as does no one else, and that is just why I do not wish to appear ridiculous in your eyes."

"That you never will."

Then she said, blushing and hanging her head, "It is all along of a song my father sings."

"What song is that?"

"It is some silly nonsense about a frog that lived in a well—and the burden is—'Kitty Alone'—and then 'Kitty Alone and I.'"

"Sing me the words."

She did as requested.

"The air is pleasant and very quaint. It deserves better words. Will you remain here whilst I run for my violin?"

"Yes, unless my aunt calls me within."

Walter Bramber hastened to his lodgings, and brought away his cherished instrument. He made the girl sing over a few verses of the song, and then struck in with the violin.

He speedily caught the melody, and played it, then went off into variations, returning anon to the pleasant theme, and Kate listened in surprise and admiration. Never before had she thought that there was much of air, or of grace and delicacy in the tune as sung by her father, and cast jeeringly at her in scraps by the youths of Coombe-in-Teignhead. Zerah looked out at the door and summoned her niece.

Kate started as from a dream.

“My bunch of flowers,” she said.

Bramber had secured the celandines.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY

Kate entered the house, at the summons of her aunt, and found that John Pooke was within, standing with his hat in his hand, in front of him, twirling it about and playing with the string that served to contract the lining band.

“I am so glad to see that you are well, Kitty.”

Kate thanked him. She was not a little vexed at being called away from conversation with the schoolmaster, whose talk was so unlike that of any other man she had met. The rector she knew and loved, but she was before him as a scholar to be instructed in spiritual concerns, and their conversation never turned on such matters as had been mooted between her and the schoolmaster. For a little while she had been translated into a new sphere, and had heard words of another order to those that had hitherto met her ears. Now she was brought back into the world of commonplace, and could not at once recover herself and accommodate herself to it. This made her shy and silent. Pooke also was shy, but he was awkward to boot.

“Have you nothing to say to me, Kate?” he asked in suppliant tone.

“Indeed, I thank you many times, Jan, for inquiring about me when I was ill. Now, as you see, I am myself again.”

“I was the cause of your illness.”

“No indeed, no blame attaches to you. We will not talk of blame—there is none.”

“Are you going to Ashburton Fair on Tuesday?”

“I do not know.”

“Yes, you do,” threw in Aunt Zerah; then to John Pooke, “She is going to the moor to her father for a change. It is her father’s wish, so that she may be soon strong again. He will meet her at Ashburton at the fair, if we can get her so far.”

“I am going to the fair,” said Pooke eagerly. “That is to say, sister Sue and I be going together there. The young man to whom she is about to be married lives at Ashburton, and will have it that she goes. There is room for a third in our trap. I should so much like to take you—I mean, sister Sue would wish it, if you would favour me—I mean sister Sue.”

“Thank you again, Jan, for another kindness,” said the girl, “but I shall be driven to Ashburton by my uncle. I really had not considered that the fair was on Tuesday.”

“Your uncle can spare you,” thrust in Zerah; “and if Jan Pooke is so civil as to invite you to go in his conveyance, it is only proper you should accept.”

“But, aunt,” said Kate, slightly colouring, “my father has settled that I am to go with Uncle Pasco, and I do not like”—

“Oh, so long as you are got to Ashburton, it doesn’t matter who takes you,” interrupted Zerah.

“If it does not matter,” said Kate, “then let me hold to my father’s arrangement.”

“That is not kind to me—I mean to sister Sue,” said Pooke dolefully.

“I intend no unkindness,” answered the girl, “but when my father has made a plan, I do not like to break it even in little matters.”

The young man twirled his hat about, and pulled out the string from the band. He paused, looked ashamed, and said, “You don’t choose to go with me, that is the long and the short of it. Your aunt will excuse you from going with Pasco Pepperill.”

“Do not tease me, Jan,” pleaded Kate, confused and unhappy. She was well aware that there had been village talk about her having been in the boat with Jan, that her aunt was desirous of thrusting her upon him. With maidenly reserve she shrank from his proposal, lest by riding in the trap with him some colour might be given to the suspicions entertained in the village, and some food should be supplied to the gossips.

The lad went to the window, and looked out on the little platform with moody eyes.

“Why,” said he, “there is that new schoolmaster there.” He stood watching him. “He’s a noodle. What do’y think he is about? He has got three or four faded buttercups, and he is putting them between the leaves of his note-book, just as though there was something wonderful in them; just as if they were the rarest flowers in the world. I always thought he was a fool—now I know it.”

Kate winced.

"I say," pursued Jan, "have you heard about him and Jackson's 'Tee-dum'? The landlord went to him civil-like, and invited him to join the choir. He bragged about his violin as if he could play finer than anyone hereabouts. But when the landlord told him our chaps could play Jackson's 'Tee-dum,' he ran away. I reckon Jackson's 'Tee-dum' is a piece to find out the corners of a man. He daren't face it. Kitty, if you won't come with me to the fair, I swear I'll offer the odd seat to Rose Ash."

Then he left the house.

Kate attempted to fly, for she knew what was coming, but was arrested by her aunt, who grasped her by the shoulders.

"You little fool!" she said. "Don't you see what may come of this if you manage well, or let me manage for you? Jan Tottle came here every day to inquire when you were ill, and now you let him slip between your fingers and into the hands of that designing Rose. He is a ball that has come to you, and you toss it to her. Don't think she is fool enough to toss him back to you. When she has him she will close her fingers on him. What is going to become of you, I'd like to know, that you should act like this? Do not reckon on anything your father will bring you; or on your uncle either. One is helping the other down the road to ruin, and we may all be nearer the poorhouse than you imagine."

She let go her hand, for Bramber came in, and asked what he had to pay.

"Sixpence," answered Zerah, "and what you like to the little maid. I reckon she'll take a ha'penny."

Kate's head fell, covered with shame, and she thrust her hands behind her back.

Walter paid Mrs. Pepperill, and said, without looking at Kate, "The little maid and I understand each other, and the account between us is settled."

"Now look here," said Zerah, allowing her niece to escape, and laying hold of the young man, "I want a word with you, Mr. Schoolmaster. My husband has let you go through his accounts. I reckon he'd got that muddled himself, he didn't know his way out, and thought you'd have led him, as well as Jack-o'-lantern leads out of a bog. The light is good enough, but when the mire is there, what can the light do but show it? It can't dry it up. If it weren't for the cockles and coffee as I get a few sixpences by, I reckon we'd have been stogged (mired) long ago. But Pasco, he has the idea that he's a man of business and can manage a thousand affairs, and as ill-luck will have it, that brother o' mine feeds his fancies wi' fresh meat. Now I want you to tell me exactly what you found in his books."

"I am not justified in speaking of Mr. Pepperill's private affairs."

"What! not to his wife?"

"Not to anyone. I was taken into confidence."

"Bless you! he couldn't help himself. Set a man as don't know nothing about machinery to manage an engine, and he'll get it all to pieces in no time. Pasco knows nothing about business, and there he is trying to run coal stores, wool,

timber—all kinds o' things. I know what it will come to, though you keep mum."

To escape further questioning, Bramber left Coombe Cellars, and walked towards the village.

The school was closed for a week. Some painting and plastering had to be done in it before he could begin his duties. It was as well, he thought; it allowed him time to find his bearings, to get to understand something of the people amongst whom he was to be settled, and whose children he was to instruct.

As Bramber walked in the dusk, he encountered the rector, Mr. Fielding, who stopped him.

"Are you going indoors?" asked the parson; "or have you leisure and inclination for a stroll?"

"You do me an honour, sir; I shall be proud."

"Let us walk by the water-side. This is a beautiful hour—neither night nor day—something of one, something of the other, like life. And who can say of the twilight in which he walks whether it will broaden into perfect day or deepen into utter night."

The rector took the young man's arm.

Mr. Fielding belonged to a type that has completely disappeared; peculiar to its time and necessarily transitory. He belonged to that school of Churchmen which had been founded by Newman and Keble; of men cultured, scholarly, refined in thought, steeped in idealism, unconsciously affected, aiming at what was impossible,—at least, fully to achieve,—and not knowing practicable methods, not able to distinguish proportion in what they sought after, ready to contend to death equally for trifles as for principles.

Mr. Fielding wore tall white collars and a white tie, a black dress coat and open black waistcoat. His hat was usually at the back of his head, and he walked with his head bent forwards and his shoulder against the wall—a trick caught and copied from Newman, caught when first under his influence, and now unconsciously followed.

Mr. Fielding was unmarried, a quiet, studious man, courteous to all, understood by none.

They walked together a little way, and talked on desultory matters. Then Walter Bramber asked the rector, "Would you mind telling me, sir, where my predecessor got into trouble? Mr. Pepperill says it was at Waterloo."

"Waterloo? dear me, no; it was at Wellington."

"I knew it could not be at Waterloo, but he insisted on it, and that it was in England."

"There was, you see, a connection of ideas. There is always that, in the worst blunders. Did you correct him?"

“Yes; I said Waterloo was not in England.”

“You should have let it pass, till you knew how to enlighten him as to where the place really was. Never show a man he is wrong till you can show him how he can be right. Also, never let a man see you are pulling him out of a ditch, always let him think he is scrambling out of it himself. A man’s self-respect is his best governing motive, and should not be wounded.”

They paced along together a little way.

“You are a young man,” said the rector, “and a young man is sanguine.” He paused, and walked on without saying anything for a minute, then he added, “I was sanguine once. That arises from confidence in one’s self, and confidence in one’s cause, and confidence in mankind. You have a noble cause—the priest and the schoolmaster have the greatest of missions: to educate what is highest in man, spirit and intellect. You have no reason to be shaken by any doubt, to feel any hesitation in adhesion to the cause of education. ‘Let there be light!’ was the first word God spake. There is the keynote of creation, the moral law laid down for the whole intelligent world. We walk in the twilight that we know is brightening into day.”

He paused again; then after a dozen paces he proceeded, “You have confidence in yourself. You have enthusiasm, you have ability, you know what you have to teach, and you long to impart to others what you value yourself. Is it not so?”

“It is so indeed.”

“Discouragement will come, and it is my duty to prepare you for it. You have confidence in human nature. You think all will be as eager to drink in instruction as you are eager to dispense it. You may be mistaken, and will be disappointed. It has taken me some years, Mr. Bramber, to learn a fact which I will communicate to you, as a caution against losing heart. You will remember that when the sower went forth to sow, though all his seed was good, yet only one-fourth part came to anything. We must work for the work’s sake, and not for results. In your patience possess ye your souls. That is one of the hardest of lessons to acquire.”

“I will try not to expect too much.”

“Expect nothing. Look to the work, and the work only. One sows, another reaps, a third grinds, a fourth bakes, but it is the fifth who eats the loaf and tastes how good it is. Did you ever hear what Mme. de Maintenon said of the carps, that had been transferred to the marble basins of Marly, in which they died? ‘Ah!’ said she, ‘they are like me, they regret their native mud.’ You will find that your pupils do not want to be translated to purer fountains, that in them there is a hankering after their native ignorance. That there will be little receptiveness, no enthusiasm after the light, no hunger after the bread of the Spirit—that is what you must be prepared to find. I have found it so, and am now content with the smallest achievements—to make them take a few crumbs from my palm, to accept the tiniest ray let into their clouded minds. Be content to do your work, and do not be asking for results. Do your duty, leave results to another day and to the reapers. You and I are the humble sowers, enough for us

to know that, but for us, there would be no golden harvest which we shall not see."

The rector withdrew his hand from the arm of Bramber.

"There is a saying, 'Except ye be as little children'—You know the rest. What does that mean? Not the simplicity of children—simplicity springs out of inexperience; not the innocence—which arises from ignorance—but the inquisitiveness of the child, which is its characteristic. The child asks questions, it wants to know everything, often asking what it is inconvenient to answer. Mr. Bramber, unless we have this spirit of inquiry, we cannot enter into any kingdom above that of animal life. There is the intellectual kingdom, and when there is eagerness to know, then there is advance into that realm, and you will be the great prophet and mystagogue who will lead the young of this village into that kingdom. Then, secondly, there is the spiritual kingdom, but of that I will not now speak. I hope you will find some pupils apt to learn, but the many will, I fear, be listless."

"A single swallow does not make a summer," said the schoolmaster; "but I have already met with one here who verily hungers and thirsts after knowledge."

"Ah!" Mr. Fielding looked round, and his face lightened. "You have met—talked to Kitty."

"Yes, sir; she is full of eagerness."

"Oh that we had many other minds as active! Alas! alas! I fear in that she is, as they call her, Kitty Alone."

CHAPTER XIV

TO THE FAIR

"Heigh! schoolmaister!" Pasco Pepperill shouted from his tax-cart to Walter Bramber, who was walking along the road collecting wild-flowers—the earliest of the year—that showed in a sheltered hedge.

In the trap with Pasco was Kate.

"I say, schoolmaister," said Pepperill, reining in his grey cob, "be you inclined for a drive? I'm off to Ashburton Fair, where I may have business. You have not yet seen much of our country. Jump up! She"—he indicated Kate with a jerk of his chin—"she can squat behind."

The day was lovely, the prospect of a drive engaging; but Bramber hesitated about dislodging Kate, who had, however, immediately begun to transfer herself from the seat beside her uncle to the place behind.

"That is not fair nor right," said the young man. "Let her keep her place, and let me accommodate myself in the rear."

"Not a bit! not a bit!" exclaimed Pepperill. "I've asked you for company's sake."

"But you have the best company in your niece."

"She!"—Pasco uttered a contemptuous sniff,—"she is no company. She either sits as a log or pesters one with questions. What do you think she has just asked of me?" Imitating Kate's voice, he said, "Uncle, why have horses so many hairs in their ears? Why the dowse does it matter whether horses have hair in their ears or not? Now, schoolmaister, get up in front."

Bramber still objected.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Pasco; "I'm taking you up so as to be freed from these questions. It is catechising, or nothing at all."

Bramber looked uneasily at Kate's face, but her countenance was unmoved; she was accustomed to contemptuous treatment. She raised her timid eyes to Walter, and he said hastily, with some earnestness—

"You and I, Mr. Pepperill, form very different opinions of what entertainment is. When I was having tea at your house, she and I had plenty to say to each other. I found her full of interest"—

"In what?" sneered the uncle.

"Daffodils."

"Oh, daffodils!" he laughed. "Any ass likes daffodils."

"Pardon me," answered Bramber warmly; "the ass and animals of like nature reject or pass them by unnoticed."

"Well, I care not. Get up if you are coming with me. I'll show you a better sight than daffodils, and something worthier of conversation."

Pasco took up the schoolmaster, not solely for his own entertainment, but because he was somewhat uneasy at having let him into the secrets of his affairs. In his perplexity and inability to balance his accounts, he had grasped at the chance offered by the advent of Bramber; but now he feared he had been too confiding, and that the young man might blab what he had seen. It was requisite, or advisable, that he should disabuse his mind of any unfavourable impression that might have been received from the perusal of his accounts; and, like a stupid, conceited man, he thought that he could best effect this by ostentation and boastfulness.

In his pride, Pepperill would not admit that his circumstances were involved, though an uneasy feeling lay as a sediment at the bottom of his heart, assuring him that there was trouble in store.

"Why do horses have hair in their ears?" said Bramber on taking his seat, turning to the girl in the back of the carriage. "I will tell you why. If a cockchafer or an earwig were to get into your little pink shell, in a minute up would go the finger in protection of the organ, and to relieve you of the intruder. A horse cannot put up his hoof to clear his ear, therefore he is provided with a natural strainer, which will guard him from being irritated, and perhaps injured, by anything penetrating where it should not."

"Thank you," said Kate. "There is a reason for everything."

"You don't happen to know anything about business?" asked Pepperill, impatient to engross the conversation. "I mean—commercial business."

"My mother kept a shop—in quite a small way."

"Ah! in *quite* a small way. I don't mean anything in a *small* way," said Pasco, swelling. "I refer to buying in gross and retailing coal, wool, hides, bark, timber. That's my line. I do nothing myself in a small way—still, I can understand there are people who do."

Pasco nodded to right and left as he drove along, in return to salutations he received from men driving cattle, from farmers ambling on their cobs.

"You observe," said Pepperill, "I'm pretty well known and respected."

Presently he drew up at a wayside inn.

"I like to step into these publics," said he apologetically; "not that I'm a man as takes nips—but one meets one's fellows; it is all in the way of business; one hears of bargains. There is more dealing done over a tavern table than in a market-place. I'll be with you shortly—unless you will join me in a glass inside. Kitty will mind the cob."

"Thank you; I will await you here, and keep Kitty company."

"Ah, you will never be popular as was Puddicombe, unless you take your glass!"

Then Pepperill entered the house.

Bramber turned in his seat, and met Kate's earnest blue eyes. There was question in them.

"Now," said he, "I know your head is full of notes of interrogation."

"I do not understand you."

"Your uncle and others do not like to be questioned. I am a schoolmaster. I delight in answering questions and communicating information. Put to me any queries you like, and as many as you like, and I will do my best to satisfy you."

"Why do some stars twinkle and others do not?" asked Kate at once. This difficulty had been troubling her mind ever since the night in the boat.

“Planets do not twinkle.”

“What are planets?”

“Worlds on high. Stars that flash are suns that illumine worlds. They glitter with their own light; planets shine with borrowed, reflected light.”

“The planets are worlds?”

“Yes.”

“Very tiny ones?”

“Not at all. Some are far larger than our globe. They circle round our sun.”

Kate looked the young man steadily in the face. The thought was too great, too awful, to be received at once. She supposed he was joking. But his countenance was an assurance to her that he spoke the truth.

“Oh,” said she, with a long breath, “what it is to know!”

“There is no higher pleasure.”

“Nothing gives me greater joy than to learn.”

“But did you not get taught such simple truths as this in school?” asked Bramber.

“Mr. Puddicombe did not tell us much,” answered Kate. “We learned our letters and to cypher—nothing more.”

“I am glad you can read,” said Bramber.

“I can read, but I have no books. It is like having thirst and no water. I have learned how to walk, but may not use my feet. I am always like one who is hungry; I want to know about this, and about that, and I get no answer. Why are there tides? Why are some higher than others? What becomes of the stars by day?”

“The matter of the tides is beyond you. The stars are in the sky still, but, owing to the blaze of the sun by day, you cannot discern their lesser glories. If, however, you were at the bottom of a well, you would be able, on looking up, to see the stars, pale, indeed, but distinctly visible, in the heavens.”

“I should love to go down a well, and see that with my own eyes.”

“I wish—oh, I wish you were coming to school!”

Kate heaved a sigh.

“But as you cannot come to me,” said Walter, “I shall have to come to you.”

Kate shook her head. “That means sixpence a time in cockles and tea. It would ruin you.”

“Well, I will lend you books.”

"Mr. Fielding once did that, but Aunt Zerah was angry, and sent them back to the Rectory. She said that she did not want me to be a scholar, and have all kinds of book nonsense put into my head. I was to be a maid-of-all-work."

Bramber did not speak. He was very sorry for the girl, craving for knowledge, gasping for the very air in which her spirit could live—and denied it. Then he said, pointing to the board above the inn-door—

"Do you notice the tavern sign, Kitty?"

"Yes—'The Rising Sun.'"

"Recently repainted and gilt. Now, I will repeat to you the lines I withheld the other day concerning the celandine; that is to say, such as I remember:

'I have not a doubt but he
Whosoe'er the man might be,
Who, the first, with painted rays,
(Workman worthy to be sainted,)
Set the signboard in a blaze,
When the risen sun he painted,
Took the fancy from a glance
At thy glittering countenance.'"

Then a rattle of wheels and a tramp of horse's hoofs. A dogcart was approaching rapidly. As it came near, the driver reined in and drew up alongside.

Kate recognised John Pooke, with Rose Ash at his side; behind, clinging uncomfortably to the back rail, was Susan Pooke. The young man flourished his whip and saluted Kate joyously.

"We shall meet at the fair. I shall await you, Kitty."

Then he lashed the horse, and whirled away. Kate saw Rose's face turned towards her, wearing a dissatisfied frown.

"Who are those?" asked Walter, with a little twinge of displeasure in his heart.

"The young man is Jan Pooke, he whose rick was burned; and with him is Rose Ash, the prettiest girl in all Coombe. Jan's father has the orchard in which are the daffodils. It belonged to uncle. Uncle had a bit of farm, but he gave it up—sold it—to devote himself more to business. Behind, in the dogcart, is Susan Pooke. She is going to be married at Easter to someone in Ashburton."

Then, wiping his lips and buttoning his pockets, Pasco came from the tavern. He mounted to his place and resumed the reins and whip.

"Well," said he, "got some talk out of the girl?—foolery—rank foolery, I'll swear. Never heard her say anything sensible; but you and I will have a good conversation as we drive along. We will talk about bullocks."

CHAPTER XV

A REASON FOR EVERYTHING

Walter Bramber sprang from his seat beside Pasco, on the latter drawing up outside the inn at Ashburton, and ran to the back of the tax-cart that he might assist Kate to descend. There was no step at the back. He held up his arms to receive her; she was standing preparing to spring.

As he looked up, he exclaimed, “They are planets!”

“What are planets?”

“Those blue orbs—their light is so still and true.”

Then he caught her as she sprang, glad to cover her confusion. A compliment was something to which Kate was wholly unaccustomed, and one startled and shamed her.

“Now, whither?” he asked.

“To my father.”

“But where is he?”

“I do not know.”

“Come, come!” said Pepperill, who had consigned the reins to the ostler. “I want you, schoolmaster; I cannot let you go fairing yet. I have business on my hands and desire your presence. Afterwards, if you will, and when we have got rid of Kate, I’ll find you some one more agreeable with whom you can go and see the shows.”

“But, in the meanwhile, who is to take care of her?” asked Bramber.

“I will do that,” said John Pooke, who came up, elbowing his way through the crowd. “Here are several of us Coombe-in-Teignhead folk: there is sister Sue, but she is off with her sweetheart; and here is Rose Ash, and here is Noah Flood.”

There was no help for it; much to his disappointment. Bramber had to relinquish Kate, and accompany her uncle into the market.

Kate hesitated about going with John Pooke, but knew not what else to do. Her uncle shook her off, concerned himself no more about her, and carried the schoolmaster with him. Alone she was afraid to remain. A shy girl, unwont to be in a crowd; the noise of the fair, the shouts of chapmen, the objurgations of drovers sending their cattle through the thronged street, the braying of horns and beating of drums outside the shows, the hum of many voices, the incessant shifting of groups, combined to bewilder and alarm her. But she did not like to attach herself to Jan Pooke’s party. Tongues had already been set a-wagging relative to herself and the young man. The adventure in the boat, followed up

by his solicitude during her illness, had attracted attention in the village, and had become a topic of conversation and speculation.

Rose Ash, as was well known, had set her mind on winning John; she was a handsome girl, of suitable age and position, the miller's daughter. Everyone had said that they would make a pair. Jan, in his amiable, easy-going way, had offered no resistance; he had, perhaps, been a little proud of being considered the lover of the prettiest girl in the district; he had made no advances himself, but had submitted to hers with mild complacency, taking care not to compromise himself irrevocably.

Since John had been associated with Kate in that adventure on the mud-bank, he had been less cordial to Rose, had kept out of her way, and avoided being left alone with her. Rose was ready-witted enough to see that a spoke had been put into her wheel, and to discover how that spoke had been inserted. She felt jealous of, and resentful towards Kate, and lost no occasion of hinting ill-natured things, and throwing out wounding remarks both to Kate's face and behind her back. Kate had every reason to shrink from joining this party, sure that it would lead to vexation. But she had no choice.

"Come along, Kate," said John; "sister Sue and I and the rest are ready. What do you wish?"

"I think I might be consulted," said Rose sullenly.

"I know your wishes already—you want to go into the fair," replied Jan, turning to the pouting girl.

"And if she wishes to be out of it,—in the mud, for instance,—are we all to be dragged in with her?" asked Rose.

"Tell me, Kitty, what do you desire?"

"I would like to find my father."

"Where is he? do you know? We will go through the fair and look for him."

Kate held back. John came after her and said, "If we cannot find your father at once, where would you like to go?"

Half laughing and half crying, the girl answered, "I should like to be at the bottom of a well; Mr. Bramber says that there one could see the stars, even in broad daylight."

"By all means, put her there and leave her there; we are well content," said Rose, who had followed and overheard what was said.

"There is no well in Ashburton," said Jan, taking Kate's arm. "There are better things to be seen than stars by daylight. Come, we will seek your father. I will be sworn we shall light on him."

Kate withdrew from the young man's hold, but nevertheless allowed herself to accompany the little party that now moved in the direction of the fair. The girl was unaccustomed to be in a crowd. Neither her father nor her uncle had concerned himself to give her diversion, to take her out of the monotony and

solitude of her life in Coombe Cellars. A country fair presented to her all the attractions of novelty, at the same time that the noise and movement alarmed her. Susan Pooke's intended husband had hooked her on to his arm, and the two, sufficient to each other, separated from the rest and took their own way among the booths. Kate was therefore left with Rose, John Pooke, and Noah Flood.

Noah was an acquaintance rather than a friend of John, and a cousin of Rose. Jan did not discourage him. Noah was one of Rose's many admirers; a hopeless one hitherto, as he felt his inability to compete with Pooke. Now, Jan was glad of his presence as likely to relieve him of Rose; and that girl was also content to have him by, hoping that by showing him some favour she might rouse the jealousy of the torpid Jan. The little company, in which prevailed such discordant elements, moved along the street to the market-place. Every neighbouring parish had sent in a contingent of farmers to buy and sell, of young folks to gape and amuse themselves, of servants who sought masters and mistresses, of employers in quest of servants. All elbowed, pushed their way along, met friends, laughed, shouted, made merry. Presently Jan arrested his party at a stall on which numerous articles attractive to the female heart were exposed for sale.

"Now, Kate," said he, "I have long owed you something, and a fairing you expect as your due."

"It is I who have a right to it," said Rose hastily. "You brought me to the fair. That is fine manners for a lad to bring a girl, desert her, and give his fairing to another."

"I am going to make presents to both of you," replied Jan, colouring. "I invited Kitty before I asked you."

"Oh, indeed?" Rose flared up. "I am to come second-best after that frog, unfortunately, against her wishes, not now in a well. I refuse your presents. I will take what Noah will give me."

"Do not be angry, Rose," said Jan. "Kitty, you see, has no one with her. Her uncle and that schoolmaster fellow have deserted her. As for a fairing—I owe it her. It was all along of me that"—

"I know," scoffed Rose. "She ran you on a mud-bank. It was done on purpose. A designing hussy."

"For shame!" said Jan.

"No respectable girl would have done it I know what folks say"—

Jan boiled up. "You are a spiteful cat, Rose. I will not give you anything. Kate, what would you like to have? Choose anything on this stall; it is yours."

"I do not wish for anything," answered the girl timidly. Yet her eyes had ranged longingly among the treasures exposed.

"You shall have some present from me," persisted Pooke. "Here, a dark blue silk handkerchief—the colour of your eyes."

"I am going to have that," exclaimed Rose. "Noah was about to take it up when you spoke. It is mine."

"There are two, I'll be bound," said Jan.

"No, there are not. Get her a yellow one—the blue is mine." Rose snatched at it.

There actually was no second of the same colour.

"Yellow becomes you best," said Jan angrily; "you are so jealous and spiteful."

"Jealous? of whom?"

"Of Kate."

"I!—I!" jeered the handsome, spoiled girl, with an outburst of laughter. "I jealous of that creature. Cockles and winkles picked off a mud-bank!"

"Give up that handkerchief," exclaimed Jan passionately.

"I really will not have it. I assure you I will not. Take it," pleaded Kate, "I have no right to accept any present."

"Nonsense," said Pooke. "I invited you to the fair, and here you are with me. I must and I will give you something by which to remember me."

He stepped back and pushed his way through the crowd to another stall. Kate remained where she was with fluttering heart, averting her burning face from the eyes of Rose, and looking eagerly among the throng for her uncle or father.

Presently Jan returned.

"There," said he, "now I have something more worthy of you: a really good and handsome workbox."

He held out a polished box with mother-of-pearl shield on the lid, and scutcheon for the keyhole.

"Look at it!" he said, and, raising the lid, displayed blue silk lined and padded compartments, stocked with thimble, scissors, reels, pins, needles, bodkin, and a tray. "Look!" exclaimed Jan, his cheeks glowing with mingled anger and pleasure; "underneath a place where you can put letters—anything; and you can lock the whole up. There, it is yours."

Kate was shy about accepting so handsome a gift, yet could not refuse it. The workbox had been bought and paid for. It was the custom for a young man to give a damsel a present at the fair, but then, to do so was tantamount to declaring that he had chosen her as his sweetheart. With thanks, more in her eyes than on her lips, Kate accepted the offering, and took it under her arm. Rose had turned away her head with a toss of the chin, and had pretended not to have seen the transaction.

"Let us move on," urged Pooke; "there is a shooting-place beyond, and, by George! I'll have a try for nuts and fill your pockets, Kate."

Noah and Rose had already drifted from the booth at which the altercation had taken place. The girl had knotted the blue silk kerchief about her throat in

defiance; her cheeks were flaming, her eyes glistening, and her mouth quivering. She pretended to be devoted to Noah, who was vastly elated, but her eyes ever and anon stealthily returned to Jan and Kate.

A large tray full of hazel nuts stood before a battered target, and on the nuts lay a couple of guns.

“Now then! a penny a shot! only one penny!” yelled the proprietor; and his wife dipped a tin half-pint measure into the nuts, shook it, poured them out and echoed, “Only one penny. Half a pint in the red, a pint in the gold! Only one penny. A dozen nuts for the white. Only one penny.”

“I’ll have a shy,” said Noah, laid down his coin and fired. He struck the white, and received a dozen nuts.

“I’ll do better than that!” shouted Jan, and took the gun from Flood’s hand, threw down threepence, and said, “I’ll have three shots and stuff my pockets.” He fired—and missed.

“By George!” Jan looked astonished. “I always considered myself a crack shot.”

He fired again and hit the black. The woman offered him half a dozen nuts.

“I won’t have ’em—I’ll clear the stall presently.”

He aimed carefully and missed again.

Then Kate touched him on the arm and said, “Do you not see all your shots have gone one way—to the right, low down. Aim at the right-hand corner to the left, just outside the black.”

“You try,” said Jan, and threw down a penny with one hand and passed the gun to Kate with the other.

The girl aimed, and put her arrow into the bull’s-eye.

She handed back the gun, saying to Pooke, “The barrel is crooked, that is why your shot went wrong.”

“Try again, Kitty.”

She shook her head.

“Well,” said Jan, “I’ll follow your directions.”

He fired, and his shot flew into space beyond the target. “There!” he exclaimed reproachfully, turning to the girl.

“The woman changed the gun,” said Kate. “Now aim at the centre, and I will soon tell you what is wrong.”

He did as she directed, and his shot went into the outer green.

“I see,” said Kate; “this barrel is given a twist in another way. Now look where your arrow strikes. Draw a line from that across the gold, and aim at the point in the outer ring exactly opposite.” The young man did as instructed, and hit the red.

"Kitty Alone, I have it now!" laughed he; threw down another copper, and this time his shot quivered in the bull's-eye.

"Why, Kate! however did you discover the secret?" he asked in amazement.

"I watched. I knew you aimed straight, so I was sure the fault lay in the barrel. There is, you know, a reason for everything."

"Lor', Kitty! I should never have found out that."

"I saw it because you went wrong. I considered why you went wrong, and so considering, I saw that the fault must be in the barrel. There is a reason for everything, even for our blunders, and if we seek out the reason where we have blundered, we go right afterwards and blunder no more."

CHAPTER XVI

THE DANCING BEAR

"Have some nuts, Rose?" said Jan Pooke. He had got a large paper-bag full of those he had earned.

"I don't want any of your nuts," answered the girl. "I hate hazel cobs, specially when old and dry. I'm going to have some of that sort, and Noah is bringing me some." She pointed to some Brazil nuts.

"They're like slugs turned to stone," said Jan. "There can't be good eating in such as them."

"We shall see. Crack them, Noah."

This was easier ordered than done.

Flood compressed two nuts in his palm, but could not crush them. He tried his teeth, and they failed. He put a nut under his heel, but in the throng was thrust aside and lost his nut.

"I'll do it presently, Rose, as soon as I can find something hard on which to crack 'em."

"Do, Noah. I'm longing to eat them. I wouldn't give a straw for them dried, shrivelled hazel cobs."

"I promise you I'll break 'em—the first occasion." Then, suddenly, "Rose! Kate! Jan! Come along this way; there is a man here with a dancing bear."

"A bear? Oh, I do want to see a bear!" exclaimed Kate eagerly.

"I don't care for a bear," said Rose.

"But he's dancing—beautiful," urged Noah.

“Oh, if he’s dancing, that’s another matter,” said Rose.

Kate was most desirous to see a bear. She had read of the beast in Æsop’s Fables—seen pictures of Bruin as he smelt about the traveller who feigned himself dead whilst his fellow escaped up a tree; also as he tore himself with his claws after having overset the hives and was attacked by the bees. She had formed in her own mind an idea of the beast as very big, and as very stupid.

A considerable throng surrounded the area in which the bear was being exhibited, but Jan and Noah were broad-shouldered, and not scrupulous about forcing a way where they desired to pass, and of thrusting into the background others less broad and muscular. Following close after the two young men, dragged along by them, were Rose and Kate, and they were speedily in the inner ring, in full view of Bruin and his master, an Italian, who held him by a chain. The bear was muzzled, and had a collar to which the chain was attached. A woman, in dirty Neapolitan costume, played a hurdy-gurdy and solicited contributions.

The bear was made to stand on his hind legs, raise one foot, then the other, in clumsy imitation of a dance, and then to take a stick and go through certain evolutions which a lively imagination might figure as gun practice.

“De bear—he beg pretty—von penny, shentlemensh!”

Bruin, instructed by a jerk of the chain and a rap, put his front paws together. Then, tired of his upright attitude, he went down on all-fours.

The brute was not equal to Kate’s anticipations, certainly not as massive and shaggy as pictured by Bewick in his Æsop’s Fables. About the neck it was rubbed by the collar, and the hair was gone. Its fur over the body was patchy and dirty. The beast seemed to be without energy and to be out of health. Its movements were ungainly, its humour surly.

Kate soon tired of observing the creature, and would have withdrawn from the ring had she been able; but the crowd was compact behind, and she was wedged into her place.

The passive disposition of Bruin was all at once changed by the appearance of a dog that had passed between the legs of the spectators, and which entered the ring and flew at the bear with barks and snaps.

“De dogue! Take de dogue away!” shouted the Italian. “De bear no like dogue.”

But no owner of the dog answered and attempted to call it off, and the lookers-on were delighted to have the opportunity of seeing sport.

The dog, apparently a butcher’s brute, sprang about the bear, endeavouring to bite, and darting out of his way whenever Bruin struck at it with his fore-paws.

The woman gave up turning the handle of the hurdy-gurdy, and screamed at the dog to desist from irritating the bear, but it paid no attention to her words. Some fellows in the crowd shouted to the assailant to persevere and take a bite.

The conductor of the bear shortened the chain so as to obtain a portion wherewith to lash the dog, but he was as unsuccessful as his wife. These united attempts to drive it off served only the more to incense the dog and stimulate it against the bear. The man became angry as the young fellows encouraged the dog, and as the bear became unruly, and endeavoured to wrench the end of the chain from his hand, so as to have more scope for defending himself against his adversary.

Rose nudged Noah, and said in a whisper, "Knock her workbox from under her arm."

Flood answered, "'Twould be a shame."

"I won't speak to you again if you don't."

"Heigh!" yelled Noah; "go it, Towser!"

"Is dat your dogue?" shouted the bearward.

"No, not mine," answered Noah. "He looks a towser, that's why I called him so. Go it, Towser!"

When the bear made a dash at his tormentor, the dog sprang back, and the circle that surrounded the area became an ellipse.

On one of these occasions Kate made an effort to withdraw, but Jan caught her by the arm and insisted on retaining her.

"Here comes another!" he said, as a terrier dashed in. "We shall soon have a proper bear-bait."

The Italian woman had stooped and picked up the baton with which the bear had gone through his drill, and with it she endeavoured to drive away the dogs. The man swore and kicked with his iron-shod boots at them when they came near; but if the dogs showed signs of retreat, they were kicked forward again by the young men in the ring. The owner of Bruin had lost his temper; he saw that the bystanders were amusing themselves at his expense, and that the baited beast was getting beyond his control, being driven wild and desperate by his assailants.

The yelping of the dogs, the cries of the woman and her husband, the cheers and laughter of the crowd, formed a combination of noise frightening to such a girl as Kate.

The bear, frantic at being unable to reach and maul his tormentors, was now tearing at his muzzle. The terrier was on his back, snapping, and the bear rolled over, and with one paw succeeded in forcing the muzzle aside.

At that moment a blow was struck behind Kitty's back at the workbox she carried, and it was propelled into the arena, where it fell, was broken open, and its contents were scattered—thimble, scissors, reels of black and white cotton, pins and pincushion.

"Who did that? By George, it was you, Noah!" shouted Jan, who happened to have turned at the moment and saw the movement of Noah's fist.

Kate asked no questions as to who had done her this wrong. With a cry of dismay, regardless of danger, concerned only for her precious workbox and its contents, she darted forward to pick up what was strewn about. For the moment she forgot the presence of the bear and the dogs, and, stooping, began to collect what she could, regardless of the cries of the bystanders. Bruin had at the same time wrenched himself free from his guardians, and had fallen upon one of the dogs, which howled, and bit, and writhed, and rolled over at Kate's feet.

Jan Pooke, enraged at the cowardly act of Noah, without looking towards Kate, without a thought that she was in danger, struck Flood full in the face with his clenched fist, and Noah, stung by the blow, and already jealous of Pooke, retaliated.

Immediately the ring that had been formed about the bear and dogs dissolved, and re-formed itself into a figure eight about the several contending parties—some clustering round the bear and dogs, others about the two burly young men, whose fight promised to give greater entertainment than that in the other circle.

Kate was suddenly grasped by a firm hand and drawn away out of danger. She looked up, and saw that she was held by Walter Bramber.

"Oh, my workbox!"

"Never mind your workbox. You were exposed to great risk."

He drew her through the throng.

"Oh, Mr. Bramber, look! look! There is Jan fighting with Noah. It is all because of the workbox. Do go and separate them."

"Not till I have brought you to your father. You cannot be safely trusted in such a crowd,—at least, not with such reckless and quarrelsome fellows as Pooke and the other."

"Yes," said Kate, the tears running down her cheeks, "take me to my father. I wish I had not come here; but indeed—indeed—this is no fault of mine."

"No; of that I am very sure. You are inexperienced, that is all. There come the constables; they will separate the combatants. Be no further concerned for them. I will not now leave you till you are safe out of the fair."

CHAPTER XVII

INSURED

Pasco Pepperill had taken the schoolmaster with him through the market-place. He was greeted on all sides by acquaintances and would-be dealers. Pasco's strut became more consequential as he returned the salutations, and he looked

out of the corners of his eyes at his companion, to see what impression was made on him by the deference with which he was received.

“I bought wool—two hundred pounds’ worth—of that man. Coaker is his name,” said Pasco, indicating a moor farmer jogging in on his cob. “I bought last Friday. Do you see Ezra Bornagin? There, sneaking behind his missus. He’s had coals of me all the winter, on tick. Hasn’t paid a penny, and I’m in doubts whether I shall see the colour of my money. But I’m not one to be crushed by a few bad debts.” Presently, “There’s the landlady of the ‘Crown,’ at Newton. She knows where to get good spirits at a moderate figure—that hasn’t paid duty—tobacco also. Coombe Cellars is a fine place for a trade in such goods.”

“How d’ y’ do, Pepperill?” said a bluff farmer, coming up and extending an immense red hand. “Come here to buy or to sell to-day?”

“Both,” answered Pasco. “It doesn’t do to let money lie idle.”

“Ah! if a chap has got money—but when he hasn’t, that’s another matter. I want to sell.”

“What?”

“Hides; will you buy? Had bad luck with my beasts.”

“Don’t know; I’ll see.”

“It’s terrible bad times,” said the big man.

“I suppose it is—for some folks,” answered Pepperill.

“I say, I hear you’ve got the ‘Swing’ on again down your way.”

“Not quite that, I hope. There has been an incendiary fire, but it was the work of one man, not of a gang. I reckon the ‘Swing’ conspiracy was done with in ’.”

“Don’t be too sure. One fire has a fatal knack o’ kindling others, ’specially if the fellow gets off who did the job.”

“He has escaped,” said Pasco; “but we know pretty well who did the mischief. It was one Roger Redmore. He’d been turned off for imperence to his master, and drink, and that’s how he revenged himself. I wish he’d been caught. A fellow who sets fire a-purpose to rick or barn or house, if I had my way, would be hung without mercy. No transportation; that’s too mild. Swing, I say, at a rope’s end, and so put an end to all incendiarism.”

“I reckon you’re about right,” said the farmer. “If there comes another fire, I shall get insured. The fellow is at large.”

“Ay, but he won’t do any further mischief of this sort. It was a bit o’ personal revenge, nothing more; not like them old combinations.”

“Well, but who is safe? If I say a word to one of my men that he doesn’t like, he may serve me as Redmore has served Pooke.”

“That’s true,” said Pepperill. “More’s the reason that Roger should be made an example of. If I see’d him I’d shoot him down as I would a wild beast, or hang him, as I might a lamb-worrying dog, with my own hands—that I would!”

“I know, of those rascals who were sentenced to be hung in ’, more than half got off with transportation; and of them as was transported, most got let off with six or seven years—more’s the pity.”

“We’re too merciful—that’s our fault,” said Pasco. “Show no pity to the offender,—chief of all, to the incendiary,—and such crimes will soon be put a stop to. We encourage criminals by our over-gentleness.”

“Well, I hope this firing o’ stacks won’t spread; but it’s like scarlet fever. What business are you on to-day?”

“I’ve bought the oaks at Brimpts,” said Pepperill.

“So I’ve heard.”

“And I’ve a mind to dispose of the bark.”

“Then here’s your man—Hamley the tanner.”

The man alluded to came up—a tall, handsome fellow, with a cheery face.

“Mr. Hamley,” said Pasco, “you’re the chap I want. I shall have tons o’ bark to sell shortly.”

“Well, Mr. Pepperill, I’m always ready for bark, if the figure suits. Tan is my trade, you know.”

“I shall have stuff the like of which you have not had the chance of buying, I’ll be bound. I’ve bought the oaks of Brimpts.”

“What, at Dart-meet?”

“Yes; bought the lot. The timber is three hundred years old; hard as iron. And conceive what the bark must be when the timber is so good.”

“I doubt if we shall come to terms over that.”

“Why not? You won’t have another chance. What will you give me a ton?”

“Is the bark running now? It is full early. The sap don’t begin to rise so soon as this,—leastways, not in timber trees,—and the moor is always three weeks or a month behind the Hams.”

“The bark will be all right, if you will buy. What is the market price?”

“Best bark has been up to seven guineas, but it’s not that now. Five guineas is an outside price for thirty-year-old coppice.”

“But Brimpts is not coppice—far from it.”

“I know, and the value will be according. Sapling, of some forty years, comes second, at four guineas; then last quality is timber-bark, if not too old, say three pound ten.”

“Three pound ten?” echoed Pepperill. “A pretty price, indeed. You do not understand. Brimpts oaks must be three hundred years old, and so worth seven guineas a ton.”

“I won’t give three guineas for this bark. Take off a pound for every hundred years. If I take it, I don’t mind two guineas.”

“Two guineas? that’s not worth having. The bark is first-rate—must be, it is so tremendous old.”

“That is just what spoils it. We get the tan-juice from the under rind. We don’t want the crust, or outer bark; that is so much waste. Young coppice is the best for our purpose, and worth more for tanning than thrice the value of your old timber. I’ll give you two guineas; not a penny more. And let me tell you, you’ll have some difficulty in barking the old trees. The sap is a wonderful ticklish thing to run in them; it’s like the circulating of blood in old men.”

“Two guineas! I won’t look at ’em,” said Pepperill, and passed on. He was angry and disappointed. He had reckoned on making a good price out of the bark. This meeting with Mr. Hamley would have a bad effect on the schoolmaster. Pepperill turned to him and said, “He’s a cunning file. He knows the Brimpts bark is worth seven guineas at least, but he’s trying to drive a bargain. He’ll come round in time, and be glad to buy at my price.”

“Halloo!”

Pepperill was clapped on the back, and, turning, saw his brother-in-law.

“Pasco, old boy,” said Jason, “is it true you bought his two years’ stock of fleeces off Coaker?”

“Yes, I did.”

“More fool you. What did you pay?”

“Thirteenpence.”

“Done you are. Have you not heard that wool has dropped to tenpence?”

“Jason! it is not true?”

“It is. There have come in several cargoes of Australian wool, finer than ours; and behind, they say, is simply any amount—mountains of wool. This comes of your not reading the papers. Coaker knew it, and that made him so eager to sell. I hear we shall have a further drop. You are done, old boy, in that speculation. Why did you not consult me? Have you paid Coaker?”

“I gave him fifty pounds, and a bill at two months.”

“Try what you can do with the Sloggitts. They may want to buy, but don’t reckon on making more than tenpence. Lucky if you get that. I dare swear they will offer no more than ninepence.”

Pepperill’s face became white, but he quickly rallied, and said to Bramber, “That is Quarm all over; he loves a joke, and he thought to frighten me. I’ll go at once to Sloggitt; I know where to find him. He has a mill at Buckfastleigh.”

He caught the schoolmaster's arm, and drew him along with him. He had not gone many steps before a stranger addressed him—

"Mr. Pepperill, I believe?"

"Certainly."

"You were pointed out to me. You have done some business with us—the wood at Brimpts. I am the agent of the bank. I think we oughtn't to have come to so hasty a conclusion. The fact is, we hadn't any idea there was so much forest timber there. But as it is, of course, it can't be helped; only bank rules, you understand, must be observed."

"And what are they?"

"Well—it is all the same, whether we were dealing with the Duke of Bedford or with you. Rules are rules, you know."

"Of course rules are rules. But what are your rules?"

"I'm only an underling; I don't make rules. It is my duty to see they are carried out. You comprehend?"

"To be sure; and what are those rules?"

"Well, you are aware in the bank we always expect payment before delivery. There is the agreement. Mr. Quarm saw our head clerk, and it is all settled. I just came along over the moor to Ashburton Fair, and had a look at Brimpts on my way. They sent me, you know, to see that all is square, and all that sort of thing. I have nothing more to do than just see that you comprehend the rules."

"What am I to do?" asked Pepperill sharply.

"Well, well; it is just this. We don't allow any timber—nothing—to be removed till full payment has been made, and I see you have already begun felling."

"Yes; I suppose my brother-in-law has begun to cut."

"You know, that's all right and proper; but rules are rules, and I'm not my own master. I don't make regulations; I am held to seeing them carried out. There's a matter of a couple of hundred pounds you'll have to pay into the bank before a stick is disposed of, or a ton of bark removed."

"And when do you demand the money? Will not a bill do?"

"Rules, you see, are rules! they ain't india-rubber, that you can pull about to accommodate as is desired. I daresay you want to get the timber removed as quickly as you can, but, hang it! rules are rules, and you can't till the money is paid in cash. Personally I love bills, but the bank don't, that's a fact. I suppose you, or Mr. Quarm, will be over next week at the bank, and pay up. Then we've nothing to say but clear away the timber and the bark as you can."

When Pepperill had shaken off the agent of the bank, he turned to Bramber, and said, "Did you catch his admission? He said that the bank had made a mistake in letting us have Brimpts wood so cheap. Actually it sold without ever having

seen. Of course I shall pay up; and if I don't pocket a thousand pounds out of the transaction, call me a fool."

A moment later he was touched on the arm, and saw the landlady of the Crown, Mrs. Fry. She made him a sign, and whispered, "Take care; the revenue officers have smelt something. Have you a stock by you?"

Pepperill nodded.

"That's bad. Get rid of it as quick as you can, lest they pay you a visit. I've had a hint."

"Thanks," said Pasco, looking uncomfortable.

His visit to Messrs. Sloggitt was more discouraging than he had been led to expect. Mr. James Sloggitt, who was in Ashburton, told him bluntly that the firm was indisposed to buy wool at any price. The importations from Australia had disturbed the market, and there was no knowing to what extent wool might fall. They would buy nothing till they had received advice as to how much more foreign wool was coming in.

"That won't touch me," said Pasco. "Down it goes in a panic, and up it will swing in a month or two, and then I shall sell. Come with me to the Red Lion, and have a glass of ale."

"Thank you," said Bramber; "if you will excuse me, I should wish to go into the fair."

"There is time enough," answered Pepperill; "I shall not let you go yet. What! Jason—here again?"

Quarm limped up, and planted himself in front of him.

"I have hardly had a word with you yet, Pasco. How is my sister—and how is Kitty?"

"Both pretty middling. Kate is here—in the fair. I left her with Jan Pooke and his party. Something may come of this, Zerah thinks. Jan has been mightily attentive since they were together in the boat."

"Pasco," said Jason, "that fellow, Roger Redmore, is abroad still."

"Yes; he has not been caught."

"If I was you, I would insure."

"Pshaw! I'm not afraid of fire."

"There is no telling. You keep such a stock of all kinds of goods in your place—coals, spirits, wool, hides—and now you are likely to have bark in. Take my advice and insure, in case of accident."

"It is throwing good money away."

"Not a bit. If Pooke had insured, he would not now be the loser to the tune of fifty pounds."

"Well; I don't mind; but if I insure, it shall be for a round sum."

"Two or three hundred?"

"Bah! A thousand."

"A thousand?"

"Why not? My stores are worth it."

"Are they? Stores, and house as well?"

"No, stores alone. I'll consider about the house."

"A thousand pounds! You don't mean it, Pasco?"

"Ay. I'll insure for one thousand two hundred. I shall have all Coaker's wool in, and the Brimpts tan which Hamley won't buy; and I shall be having coals in during summer when price is down, to sell in winter when prices are up. Twelve hundred, Jason; not a penny under."

"Come on, then, to the office, and have your policy drawn."

"We do business in a large way," said Pepperill, turning to Bramber. "Twelve hundred would not cover my loss, were that scoundrel Redmore to set fire to my stores. Now I will let you go; may you enjoy yourself. Come, Jason—twelve hundred!"

CHAPTER XVIII

BRAZIL NUTS

The constables, always on the alert for some breach of the law during the fair, had come down on the combatants, arrested them, and conveyed them to the courthouse.

On fair-days a magistrate was ever at hand to dispose of such cases as might arise, disputes over engagements, quarrels, petty thefts, etc.

Mr. Caunter, the justice who lived in the town, and who had undertaken not to absent himself that day, was summoned. Another joined him.

The two young men presented a somewhat battered and deplorable condition. Noah, bruised in the face, had his eye darkened and swelling; but Jan showed the most damaged appearance, as his head had been cut, and the blood had flowed over his forehead and stained his cheek. Something had been done to wash his face and to staunch the flow, but this had been only partially successful.

The court-house was crowded. Friends and acquaintances had deserted the bear, that they might see the end of the brawl between the lusty young men, and to exhibit their sympathy and give evidence in their favour if required.

After the constables had recorded their evidence, the magistrate called on John Pooke to say what he had to state in answer to the charge. It was a case of affray, and of common assault if one of the parties chose to complain.

"You seem to be the one most damaged," said the justice. "What is your name?"

"John Pooke."

"Where from?"

"Coombe-in-Teignhead, sir."

"I think I have heard your name. Your father is a most respectable yeoman, I believe."

"Yes, sir, and woundy fat."

"Never mind about his obesity. With so respectable a parent, in such a position, it is very discreditable that you should be brought up before me as taking a principal part in a vulgar brawl."

"Brawl, sir? where?"

"Here in Ashburton, in the market-place, according to the account of the constables, you were principal in an affray, and an affray—according to Lord Coke—is a public offence to the terror of the king's subjects, so called because it affrighteth and maketh men afraid."

"I, sir? Whom did I affright and make afraid?"

"The public, before whom you were fighting."

"Lor, bless you, sir! they loved it. It was better sport than a little dog snapping at a mangy bear."

"Never mind whether they liked it or not; it was an affray and an assault. Now tell me your version of the circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"The brawl. Did you not hear what the constables said?"

"Oh, that little tittery matter! We was looking at a bear and a dog."

"Well—proceed"

"The dog didn't understand how to get hold of the bear; he thought he was wus' than he was, and the bear could do nothing till he had his muzzle off. Then up came a little terrier. My word! he was a daring little dowse of a dog."

"I want to hear nothing about the dogs and the bear, but about yourselves. What was the occasion of your quarrel with your adversary?"

"Adversary?"

"Yes; the other—Noah Flood, I believe he is called. You see he has a swollen eye, and his face is puffed and bruised. I presume you admit you hit this man Flood?"

"What!—Noah?"

"Yes, Noah."

"Was that him you called my adversary?"

"Yes; you were fighting him, so the constable says."

"Bless y'! Noah is a right-down good fellow, and a chum o' mine. He's no adversary."

"Anyhow, you banged him about, assaulted him, and did him grievous bodily harm."

"Who—I?"

"Yes, you."

"Lawk, sir! Noah and I was at school together with Mr. Puddicombe. That was before his little misfortune, sir, when he lost the school because of cock-fighting. Father never approved of his being turned out, nor did I—nor Noah neither. We got on famous wi' Puddicombe; didn't us, Noah?"

"I want to hear nothing about your school reminiscences," said the magistrate sharply. "Moreover, you will please to confine your observations to the Bench, and not address questions to your fellow under arrest."

"Thank you, sir. What is that?" This last to the constable. "I beg your pardon, the constable tells me I ought to say 'your worship,' and so I does. Noah and I was in the same class; we left the school together, and the very last thing we learned was, 'Vital spark of heavenly flame'; wasn't it, Noah?"

Noah assented.

"I do not care what the course of instruction was in the school," protested Mr. Caunter. "To the point, if you please, and remember, address yourself to the Bench. There was some sort of affray between you and Flood. The constables separated you. What led to this?"

"I believe there was some tittery bit of a thing. I titched Noah, and Noah titched me, and my hat falled off. You see, your worship, I'd pomatumed my hair this morning, and so my hat didn't sit easy. My head was all slithery like, and a little titch, and away went my hat."

"Here is the hat, your worship," said a constable, producing and placing on the table a battered and trampled piece of headgear.

"Is that your hat, John Pooke?"

"I reckon it may ha' been. But her's got terrible knocked about. It wor a mussy that I hadn't on my new hat I got at Exeter—that would ha' been a pity. I bought she for sister's Sue's wedding. Sister Sue be a-going to be married after Easter, your worship."

"I don't want to hear about sister Sue. So Noah Flood knocked your hat off, and that occasioned"—

"I beg your pardon, sir, I never said that. I said my head was that slithery wi' pomatum the hat falled off, and then folks trod on it."

"Come, this is trifling with the Bench, and with the majesty of the law. The people may have trampled on your hat, but not on your head, which is cut about and battered almost as much as the hat."

"No, sir, I don't fancy nobody trod on my head."

"How comes it about that you are so cut and bruised? I see you have had your wounds plastered."

"Yes, your worship. The surgeon, he sewed up the wust place."

"And your dear good friend and chum, and school companion, and comrade in learning 'Vital spark of heavenly flame,' did that, I presume?"

"No, sir, it was the surgeon did it."

"What, cut your head open?"

"No, sir; sewed it up."

"Then who cut your head open?"

"Nobody, sir."

"Someone must have done it. This evasion only makes the case worse."

"Nobody did it at all. It was the Brazil nuts."

"Brazil nuts?" exclaimed the magistrate in astonishment. "I do not understand you."

"Well, your worship, they're terrible hard, and have got three corners. Noah! hand over some of them nuts to his honour. Just you try your teeth on 'em, Mr. Caunter. You can't do it. It was the Brazil nuts as cut my head. Not that it matters much. My head be nicely sewed up again, and right as ever it was."

"Explain the circumstances to the Bench, and no meandering, if you please."

"Well, that's easy done, your worship. Noah, he'd bought thickey nuts at a stall. What did you give for 'em, Noah?"

"Tu'pence," said Flood solemnly.

"Hish! hish!" from the nearest constable.

"Twopence he paid, your worship, and then he wanted to crack 'em and couldn't do it. He couldn't wi' his teeth, nor in his fist. If your worship will be pleased to try on the desk, you'll find how hard the nuts be."

"Go on, and to the point."

"You see, Rose, she's got a wonderful fancy for nuts"—

"Who may Rose be?"

“Her’s the beautifullest maid in Coombe-in-Teignhead—red cheeks as she ought to have, being called Rose; and as for twinkling eyes”—

“Never mind a description; what is the other name?”

“Rose Ash. She is here, sir, looking on and blushing.”

“We’ll call her presently. Proceed with your story.”

“Rose, she wanted Noah to crack the nuts, and he hadn’t a hammer, nor a stone, so”—

“He broke them on your head?”

“No, sir, he broke my head with the nuts.”

“Oh, that is the rights of the story, is it? You objected, and a fight ensued?”

“He’d undertaken to crack the nuts for Rose, sir.” Then, turning to Flood, “That’s about it, ain’t it, Noah? Shake hands; we’re old friends.”

“I agrees with everything as my friend Jan Pooke said. He puts it beautiful,” said Flood.

“Step aside, John Pooke,” said the magistrate; “we will now hear what the other fellow has to say.”

Nothing, however, was to be extracted from Flood but that he agreed with Jan, and Jan could speak better than he. He referred himself to Jan. Jan knew all about it, and he himself was so bewildered that he could not remember much, but as Jan spoke, all came out clear. As to the Brazil nuts, he had them in his hand, and it was true he “had knocked Jan on the head wi’ ’em. If the gentleman would overlook it this time, he hoped no offence; but he’d buy no more Brazil nuts—never as long as he lived.”

“Call Rose Ash!” said the justice. “Perhaps she can throw some light on this matter.”

Rose was in court, and was soon in the witness-box, looking very pretty, and very conscious that the eyes of every one in the place were on her. She kissed the New Testament with a glance round of her twinkling eyes that said as plain as words, “Would not every young fellow in this room like to be in the place of the book?”

“It was all the fault of Kitty Alone,” said Rose. “We were in peace and comfort till she came meddling and setting one against another; just like her—the minx!”

“And who, if you please, is Kitty Alone?”

“Kitty Quarm. There never would have been any unpleasantness unless she had poked her nose in. Me and Jan Pooke drove to the fair, and then up comes Kitty and will interfere and be disagreeable.”

“Constable, send for Catherine Quarm,” ordered the magistrate. “I presume she is not far off. Go on, Miss Ash, and tell us precisely the cause of the quarrel.”

"That is more than I can undertake to do. All I know is that Kitty was at the bottom of it."

"How do you know that?"

"Every one who knows Kitty knows that she is a mischief-maker. Nasty, meddlesome toad!"

"Rose, this is spite, and nothing more," exclaimed Jan.

"Silence!" ordered the magistrate. "The witness is not to be interfered with."

"Please, your worship, I won't have her slandering an innocent girl just because I gave her a workbox as a fairing."

The justice endeavoured, but in vain, to get a connected story out of Rose. That Kitty was at the bottom of the fight, guilty of setting the young men boxing and belabouring each other: that was the burden of her evidence.

"A word with John Pooke," said the justice, "whilst we are waiting for the other witness."

Jan was put into the dock again.

"Is it your intention to summons Flood for assault?"

"What—Noah?"

"Yes, on account of your head being cut open."

"My head is sewn up."

"But you have suffered loss of blood."

"The nuts did that, not Noah."

"Then you forgive him?"

"Whom?"

"Noah Flood."

"There is nothing to forgive. The nuts were terrible hard. He'll never buy any more."

Kate Quarm was now brought into court, and placed in the witness-box. She was bidden to give a succinct account of the quarrel.

"I was standing looking at the bear," she said, "and someone knocked my workbox from under my arm. I do not know who did it, there was such a crowd, and all were in motion because the bear had got free of his chain and muzzle. Then I ran to pick up what was fallen, and when next I looked about me, Jan Pooke and Noah Flood were fighting."

"What made them fight?"

"I do not know, sir. Perhaps Jan thought Noah had knocked my workbox from under my arm. But I cannot tell. I had gone after my scattered things, and then I was drawn away to be taken to my father."

"You did not hear Pooke say anything to Flood, or *vice versâ*, about cracking nuts?"

"Not then, sir; a little before, Rose had asked to have the Brazil nuts cracked, and Noah had promised to crack them when the opportunity came."

"I told you so, your worship," threw in Pooke.

"Well," said the magistrate, "this girl Kate Quarm is the only one among you who seems to have her wits about her, and can tell a simple tale in an intelligent way. As for you, John Pooke, and you, Noah Flood, I shall bind you over to keep the peace, and dismiss you with a caution."

END OF VOL. I.

KITTY ALONE

A STORY OF THREE FIRES

BY

S. BARING GOULD

AUTHOR OF

“IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA” “THE QUEEN OF LOVE”

“MEHALAH” “CHEAP JACK ZITA” ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II

METHUEN & CO.

ESSEX STREET, W.C.

LONDON

v

CONTENTS OF VOL. II

CHAP.

XIX. SUGGESTIONS OF EVIL

XX. A FACE IN THE WATER

XXI. AN OFFER

XXII. A RACE FOR LIFE

XXIII. BORROWING

XXIV. SHAVINGS

XXV. BORROWING AGAIN

XXVI. SILVER PENINKS

XXVII. TROUBLE

XXVIII. ALTERNATIVES

XXIX. A FRIEND GAINED

XXX. UNDER THE MULBERRY TREE

XXXI. ON MISCHIEF BENT

XXXII. JASON IN THE WAY

XXXIII. ONE CRIME LEADS TO ANOTHER

XXXIV. AND YET ANOTHER

XXXV. UNSUCCESSFUL

XXXVI. ALL IN VAIN

KITTY ALONE

CHAPTER XIX

SUGGESTIONS OF EVIL

The crowd in the market-place and in the streets of Ashburton began to thin as the afternoon crept on. In vain did the showmen blow their trumpets, ring their bells, and invite to their entertainments. Those who had come to the fair had spent their loose cash. The proprietors of the stalls offered their wares at reduced prices, but found few purchasers. Young men who had been hired by the farmers swaggered about singing or shouting, some tipsy, others merely on the road to tipsiness. The ostlers in the inns were harnessing horses to the traps, market carts, gigs, dog-carts, that had brought in the farmers and their wives. Empty waggons were departing. The roads were full of streams of people flowing homeward to the surrounding villages.

Pasco Pepperill started with the schoolmaster. He had surrendered Kate to her father. The reins were in his hand, and he had whipped the cob, when he saw Coaker, the man from whom he had bought the wool, coming towards him.

The blood rushed into Pepperill's face.

"How d'ye do?" asked the farmer. "Going home?"

"I be," answered Pasco, with constrained anger.

"You'll find all the wool there. I sent off the lot this morning—three waggon-loads."

"Why did you not inform me?—and I would have waited for it, and not come to the fair."

"I did not know how the weather might be—and I wished to be rid of it." Coaker laughed.

This angered Pasco further, and, losing command of himself, he said, "'Twas scurvy—that selling me at such a price when you knew wool was down."

"That was your concern. Each man for himself. But I reckon you've made a worse bargain at Brimpts, if, as they tell me, you have bought the wood."

"How so? Is not the timber first-rate?"

"Oh, the timber is good enough."

"Then what is wrong?"

"Have you been to Brimpts?"

“No—but Quarm has.”

“Then you don’t know the road. It is thus”—Coaker made a motion with his hand up and down. “The waves of the sea mountains high is nothing to it—and bad—the road is! Lor’ bless y’! the cost o’ moving the timber when cut will swallow up all the profits.”

“Pshaw! The distance from Ashburton is only three miles.”

“Better ten on a decent road. You’ll never get the timber drawn, or, if you do, farewell to all profits. But when you have got it to Ashburton—who will buy it there?”

“Oh, Quarm has an idea of disposing of the oak to the Government—selling it to the dockyard at Devonport.”

“How far off is that? Some five-and-twenty miles—and over the moor!” Coaker laughed.

“If I don’t sell the oak, I am a”—Pasco’s face was as red as blood. He checked himself from the confession that he would be a ruined man, and said between his teeth, “I’ll never speak to Quarm again. He’s led me into a pretty quandary.”

“Quarm? He’s a Jack-o’-lantern—don’t trust he.”

Coaker waved his hand, and, still laughing, went his way to the stable-yard to get his cob.

Pasco whipped his horse and drove homewards. His lips were closed, his brows knitted, he looked straight before him at the ears of his horse. He was in no disposition to speak. Nor, for the matter of that, was his companion. Bramber was thinking of Kitty, of the uncongenial surroundings, the hot-headed father, running himself and his brother-in-law into speculative ventures that must lead them to ruin; of the uncle, boastful, conceited, and withal stupid; of the hard, selfish aunt. He saw that young Pooke admired her, and this did not altogether please Bramber. Pooke might be well off and amiable, but he was dull of intellect—a boor—and could never be a suitable companion to the eager Kitty, whose mind was greedy for knowledge, and whose tastes were those of a class above that in which she was cast. The admiration of Jan Pooke brought on her contrariety. It had involved her in the quarrel between Jan and Noah, and had roused the jealousy of Rose Ash.

As the trap passed out of Ashburton, many a salutation was cast at Pepperill, but he hardly acknowledged any. He put up his hand and beat his hat down over his brows, then lashed savagely at his cob.

All at once something arrested his eye, and he instinctively drew up, then muttered, and whipped his brute again. What he had observed was a little plate, affixed to a house, with the title of the Insurance Company on it, with which he had that day had dealings.

“I wonder,” thought Pasco, “what that house is insured for? Not for twelve hundred pounds, I’ll swear.”

Then a sense of bitterness rose in his heart against his brother-in-law for drawing him into this expense of insuring his property;—he had that day expended all the gold he had about him in paying the first premium. There remained only some silver in one pocket, and coppers in the other. Where was he to find the money for the payment of the oaks he had bought? Where that to meet the bill for the wool? The tanner would not pay enough for the bark to cover the cost of rending. Quarm had told him that the sap rose badly, and that it would involve much labour and waste of time to attempt to bark the trees.

Fevered with anxiety and disappointment, Pasco thrashed his cob savagely, and sent it along at its fullest pace, whirling past the gigs and waggons returning from the fair, and giving the drivers hardly time to get on one side to avoid him. He relieved his breast by swearing at them for their sluggishness in making way, and some retaliated with oaths, as, in order to escape him, they ran into the hedge or over a heap of stones.

Presently his horse slackened speed, as it reached a sharp ascent, and there Pasco met an empty waggon, with "Coaker—Dart-meet" on it. He stopped his panting horse, and shouted to the driver of the team, and asked whence he came.

"I've been to your place—Coombe Cellars," answered the waggoner. "Master sent me with a load of fleeces."

"Did my wife give you anything?"

"Not a glass of cider," answered the man. "We had to unload and do the work of hoisting into the warehouse ourselves—no one was about."

"She left it for me—she knew you would meet us."

Tossing his head, to shake off the depression that had come upon him, and with a flash of his vanity through the gloom, he put his hand in his pocket and drew out a couple of shillings.

"There," said he; "you'd have had more, but I have spent most of my cash at the fair. Buying, buying, buying, that's my trade. Go and drink a glass to my health."

Then he drove on.

On descending the hill another waggon was encountered. This was also one that had conveyed fleeces to Coombe Cellars. Pasco gave this driver a couple of shillings. Then he turned to Bramber and said, "Two years of wool—I paid as much as thirteen pence a pound, and I can't sell at tenpence. They say it is going down to sevenpence; that is nearly half what I gave. A loss to me of sixpence a pound; I have bought three waggonload. A good sheep may have sixteen pounds on his back, but the average is ten or eleven. Coaker must keep a couple of hundred. You're a schoolmaster; reckon that up—two hundred sheep at eleven. I'm not a quick man at figures myself."

"Nothing can be simpler than that calculation. Two thousand two hundred."

"Ah! But two years' wool?"

“Well, that is four thousand four hundred.”

“And I have lost, say, sixpence a pound.”

“Then you lose a hundred and ten pounds by the transaction.”

“Think of that. A hundred and ten pounds—say a hundred and twenty. That is something for a man to lose and make no account of.” The vanity of the man was flattered by the thought of the amount of his loss. “And then,” said he, “there was what Coaker said about the oak. I’ve undertaken to lay out two hundred pounds on that; and there is the fellin’ and cartin’—say another hundred. Suppose I lose this also—that is a matter of three hundred. With the wool, four hundred and twenty pound. I reckon, schoolmaster, you’ve never had the fingering of so much money as I am losing.”

Bramber looked round at Pasco with surprise. He could not understand the sort of pride that was manifesting itself in the man.

“Are you able to meet such losses?”

“If not—I can but fail. It’s something to fail for a good sum. But I’ll not fail; I am full of resources.” He beat the horse. “I shall sell the wool. It will go up. I shall sell the timber at a good figure, and pocket a thousand pounds. I am sorry I did not give those men half a crown each, but I have spent most of my money, and”—

Crash! He drove against a post, and upset the trap.

Pasco staggered to his feet.

“Schoolmaister—are you hurt?”

“No.” Walter sprang to the horse and seized its head.

“It would have been best had I broken my neck and finished so,” said Pepperill. Then he regretted the sudden outburst of despair, and added, “So some folks might ha’ said, but I’ve disappointed ’em. I may have a chuck down, but I’m up again in a jiffy. That’s been my way all along, and will be to the end.”

One of the shafts was broken, and there ensued delay whilst it was being patched up with rope. Then, when they were able to pursue their career, Pasco was constrained to drive more carefully and less rapidly. Night was coming on as they neared Newton Abbot.

“I’ll tell you what it is,” said Pasco; “I’m uncommon hungry, and I’ll just go into the first public-house and have a mouthful of something, and you shall do the same. The cob is a bit shaken with that spill, and I’ll have the shaft fastened up firmer before we proceed. What say you? Here’s the ‘Crown and Anchor.’ How the place is changed. Ah, ha! It is insured at the same office as I am. Why—bless my life!—the old inn was a ramshackle sort of a place.”

Pepperill descended from his trap, and gave instructions to the ostler what he was to do to the broken shaft. “I’ll pay you well if you do your work,” said he. Then to Bramber, “Come in! Cold meat and bread-and-cheese, and a glass of ale. We need refreshment, and the house looks as if it could provide it. Don’t be

concerned about the cost. I don’t suppose you are overflush with cash. I’ll pay—you are my guest.”

Pasco’s self-conceit was a constant spring of energy in him. Dashed his spirits might be by disaster, but he speedily recovered his buoyancy, owing to this characteristic element in his nature. It is said that the fertility of Manitoba is due to the fact that below the surface the soil is frozen hard in winter, and during the summer the warmth of the sun penetrating ever farther thaws the ice, and thus water incessantly wells up, nourishing and moistening the roots of the corn. There was a perennial body of self-esteem deep in the heart of Pasco Pepperill, and this fed and sustained in vigorous growth a harvest of generosity in dealing with his inferiors, of liberality towards the poor, of display in his mercantile transactions, that imposed on the public and made it suppose that he was prosperous in his many affairs.

The landlord came to the door.

“How do you do, Mr. Pepperill?—glad to see you. You do not often favour me.”

“Well—no. If I come this way I mostly stop at the Golden Sun. You see, you are rather near my home.”

“I hope this, though the first visit, is not the last!”

“I daresay not. What brings me now is an accident. Can you let us have some supper?”

“Certainly. What would you like—cold beef, cold mutton, or chops and potatoes?”

“You have a supply of good things.”

“I am obliged to have. I get plenty of custom now.”

“What! more than of old?”

“Oh, double, since I have rebuilt my house.”

“I see. The place is completely changed. You had but a poor sort of a tavern.”

“Yes; and now”—the landlord looked round, smiled, and put his hands into his waistband—"middling good, I think."

“Uncommon,” said Pasco. “I suppose it is the better look of the house that has brought better custom.”

“That’s just it. I had only common wayfarers before—mostly tramps. Now—the better sort altogether. Where I turned over a penny before, I turn over a shilling now.”

“So you rebuilt your public-house to get better business?”

“Well, you see, I couldn’t help myself. The old place caught fire and burnt down.”

“And it did not ruin you?”

"Dear me, no. I was insured."

"So—that set you on your legs again?"

"It was the making of me, was that fire."

"How long had you been insured before you were burnt out?"

"Well, now, that is the curious part of the story," said the landlord; "hardly a week."

"And how did your place catch fire?"

"There was a tramp. I refused to take him in, as he had no money. That was the best stroke of business I ever did in my life. He hid himself in a sort o' lean-to there was over the pigs' houses, joined on to the house, and in it was straw. I reckon he went to sleep there with his pipe alight, and he set fire to the place."

"Was he burnt?"

"No; he got away all right; but the straw set fire to the rafters, and they ran into the wall. It was a poor old wall, with no mortar in it, and the rafters came in just under those of the upstairs chambers, so that when the roof of the linhay was afire, it set the house in a blaze too. That was how it all came about."

"And a good job it was for you!"

"It was the making of me."

Pasco was silent through the meal. He seemed hardly to taste what he was eating. He gulped down his food and drank copiously.

Bramber was relieved when he left. He was afraid Pepperill would drink more than he could bear. At the entrance to the village he left the cart, and thanked Pasco for the lift.

Pepperill drove on to Coombe Cellars.

As he came up, he saw his wife standing at the door with a light in her hand.

"Pasco, is that you?"

"Who else?"

"So, you are home at last. There has been the coal merchant here; he swears he will bring you no more, and that, unless you pay up this month, he will set the lawyers on you."

Pepperill flung himself from his cart.

"Heavens!" said he, looking sullenly at his stores; "if they would but burn!"

"Burn—what burn?" asked Mrs. Pepperill sharply. "Do you think you cannot leave the house for a day but some mischief must come on it? As if I were not to be trusted, and everything lay with you."

"I did not mean that, Zerah."

"Then what did you mean?"

“I meant that it might have got me out of difficulties.”

“What might?”

Pasco did not answer.

“I should like to know how, if the store were to be burnt, any good would come of that. You’ve been drinking, Pasco.”

“I’m insured,” said he in a low tone.

“Oh, it has come to that, has it? Heaven help us!”

The woman beat her face with her open palms, turned, and went within.

CHAPTER XX

A FACE IN THE WATER

Kate Quarm was very happy on the moor. Her father had fetched her from Ashburton, and had lodged her in a cottage near Dart-meet, the point where the East and West Darts, rushing foaming from the moors, dancing over boulders, breaking over granite floors, plunging under tufts of golden gorse, and through brakes of osmund and male fern, reach each other and meet in one silver flood.

The weather was fine, though cold, that is to say, the sun was hot, but a keen east wind blew. But then this is one of the charms of the moor, that shelter can always be found from the wind. A mighty bank of mountains rose as a wall against the east, and in its dingles and dells, dense with gorse, now in blaze of flower, the air was warm, and balmy, and still.

At Coombe Cellars Kate had been kept continually employed; her aunt, an active woman, gave the child no rest. If she saw her flag in her work, Zerah goaded her with reproach to fresh activity; she was, moreover, never accorded a word of encouragement. Zerah accepted her work as a matter of course; if it was well done, that was but as it ought to be; everything that fell short of well, was occasion for a scolding. Kate’s nature was one that needed repose from manual and sordid labour, for her mind desired to be active, and craved for freedom in which to expand, and for liberty to seek material on which to feed. This Zerah did not understand; with any other activity, except that of the body in scrubbing and rubbing, in cooking and baking, she had no sympathy; she entertained a positive aversion for books. She had no eye for beauty, no ear for melody, no heart for poetry.

Now Kate had leisure—now for the first time in her life in which her soul could draw its tender wings out of its case and flutter them in freedom. She felt much as must the May-fly when it breaks from its chrysalis.

It was, moreover, a joy to think that her father had considered her so far as to require her to be sent to the moor to recover. He usually paid little heed to Kitty, and now her heart was warm with gratitude because he had given her that very thing of all others which she most desired—rest in the presence of nature awakening under a spring sun.

Kate had another source of pleasure with her. As Walter Bramber parted from her at Ashburton, he put a little book into her hand, and said—

"I will lend it you. I know you will value it."

The book was Wordsworth's poems.

As she sat beside her father in the gig, she had her hand on the volume all the while, and her heart swelled with excitement and eagerness to read it. At night she hugged the book to her bosom, and fell asleep with both hands clasped over it. She could hardly endure that night should, with its darkness, deny her the happiness of reading. She woke early, and in the breaking daylight devoured the pages. As she read, she laughed and cried—laughed and cried with sheer delight. She had a book to read; and such a book!

This happy girl turned first to the verses on the daffodils that she had learned by heart, to make quite certain that she had all, that not a line had been missed, not a word got awry. Then she looked at the little poems on the celandine, and never did a famished child devour a meal with greater avidity than did Kate read and master these verses. There was much in Wordsworth that she could not understand, but the fact that she encountered passages that were unintelligible to her were of advantage, her clear intellect striking on these hard portions threw out sparks—ideas that had light in them. The book not only nourished her mind, but proved educative to her imagination.

Kate was at first overwhelmed with the flood of happiness that rolled over her. Her eyes could not satiate themselves with the beauty of the moorland scenery. She ran among the rocks, she dived into the coombs, she stepped on the boulders over the water, she watched the workmen engaged in felling trees.

Spring flowers peeped from behind rocks, bog plants peered out of the morasses. Kate began collecting. She dried the flowers between the leaves of her Prayer-book.

She scrambled among the towering rocks that overhung the Dart below the meeting of the waters, and watched the shadows and lights travel over the vast tract of moorland that stretched away as far as the eye could see in every direction but the east, where the river rolled out of its mountain cradle into a lap of the richest woodland. Sometimes the beauty of the scenery, the variety of landscape, were too much for her; she sought change and repose by creeping among the rocks and drawing the book from her bosom.

Yet she could not read for long. The verses exacted close attention, and a flash of passing sun, or impatience at some passage she could not comprehend, made her close the volume and recommence her rambles. The exhilarating air, the brilliancy of the light, the complete change from the mild and languid atmosphere in the Teign estuary told on Kate's spirits and looks. Her cheeks gathered roundness and colour, and her tread acquired elasticity. Her spirits were light; they found vent occasionally in racing the cloud shadows over a smooth hillside.

One day, with her lap full of moss of every rainbow hue, she came upon the rector of Coombe-in-Teignhead, painting.

At her exclamation he turned, recognised her, and smiled.

"So—I thought I must soon see you," he said. "My dear little Kitty, I come with messages for you and kind inquiries."

"From whom—from uncle and aunt?"

"No; not from them. The schoolmaster, Mr. Bramber, when he heard whither I was coming, begged me to see you and ascertain how you were, and whether you liked the book he lent you."

"Oh, sir, I read it every day! I know several pieces by heart."

"That you are well, I see. I never saw you with such a glow of health and happiness in your bonnie face before."

"Thank you, sir. And will you see him soon?"

"Whom? Bramber?"

"Yes, sir," answered Kate, the glow in her face deepening. "And will you say that I have been picking the flowers as they come out, and I can find them, and that I do want to know what they are called? God brought the beasts to Adam to name them, and I do not think Adam can have been happy with the beasts till he had given each a name. It is so with me and the flowers. I see them, and I love them; but I don't feel content till I can tell what each is called. Mr. Bramber can name them all."

"You have made a collection?"

"Yes, I have dried them in my Prayer-book. They are waiting for Mr. Bramber to name. But"—Kate drew back—"I am in your way, sir; you are painting the old bridge."

"Yes; but you can sit down there if you like, and will not disturb me."

"May I? Oh, I shall be pleased."

Kate placed herself on a lichen-covered rock on one side, at a little distance from the water.

"I have left my few sheep for a couple of days," said Mr. Fielding apologetically, partly to Kate, mostly to himself; "but I do not think I have done wrong. Moses went up into the Mount, and came back to his people with his

face shining. I do not know, but it seems to me that when I have been here aloft, speaking with nature and nature's God, face to face, that I can go back and carry with me some of the brightness and the freshness and the fragrance of the mountain. I may be wrong, finding an excuse for myself, because I love to come here."

"Please, sir," said Kate, "the Great Master of all dismissed the multitude and went up into the mountain apart."

"Yes, child, yes," answered the rector, painting as he talked; "and when He came down, He walked on the stormy waves. And I—His humble follower—I think I can tread on the troubles and cares of life erect, and not be swallowed up after I have been here."

"I do not know how I shall bear to go back to Coombe Cellars," said Kate sadly.

"You will go back braced to do your work. We cannot always play, Kitty dear. You know the fable of the bow. It was relaxed only that it might be the better weapon when restrung. Besides, when you return you will have pleasure."

"I shall think about my delightful holiday."

"Yes; and learn the names of the flowers you have dried in your Prayer-book," said Mr. Fielding, with a twinkle in the corner of his eye.

Kate dropped her head in confusion, but looked up again and said frankly, "Yes, that will be pleasant; and I can tell where each grew and how I found it."

"Tell whom—your aunt?" A faint crease in the old man's cheek showed he was smiling.

"No, sir! she won't care. I shall tell Mr. Bramber, if I have the chance."

"Kitty, I get very downhearted over my work sometimes. Then I come up here, and gather courage and strength, and—and trust, Kitty. You will return to Coombe Cellars strengthened and nerved to do your duty well and hopefully. Remember, it was kind of your aunt to let you come. She has to drudge hard whilst you are absent, but she does it because you have been ill and need relaxation in mind and invigoration of body. She does it, Kitty, because she *loves* you."

"Oh, sir!" Kate coloured with astonishment and with a twinge of pain at her heart.

"Yes, dear little friend, she loves you. She is not a demonstrative person. She is a clear-headed, practical woman. She has had a hard life, and much to try her, and to give her a cold and perhaps repellent manner. Nevertheless, her heart is sound and warm. When you were ill I spoke with her. I saw how anxious she was for your welfare. I saw into her heart, and I read love there."

Kate trembled, and let the mosses fall from her lap and strew themselves about her feet. The tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, sir, I should like to go home at once and do everything I can for her! I did not think she really cared for me."

"You do not return till your father decides that you are to go back to work. Then, you will return with a good courage, as I said."

"With all my heart!" answered Kate fervently, and her face brightened as though the sun shone on it.

Afraid of disturbing the old rector at his painting, Kate withdrew. She was happy at heart. What he had said had done her good. She had shrunk from the thought of return to the humdrum of her usual life, but Mr. Fielding had given her a motive for facing work with cheerfulness. It was a delight to her to think that her aunt loved her. She loved her aunt. Daily association with Zerah had made her cling to the hard, captious woman; she had had no one else to love, and the young heart must love someone.

Kate delighted to lie by the river, or lie on a rock in it, and look down into its pellucid pools, or at the flowing crystal where it broke between the stones. She was accustomed to the muddy estuary, and though the sea-water when it flowed was clear, it had none of the perfect transparency of this spring water near its source. The sea sweeping up the creek was as bottle-green glass, but this was liquid crystal itself, without colour of any sort, and through it everything in the depths was visible as though no medium intervened.

Kate could look at the shining pebbles, at the waving water-weed, at the darting fish. When she had left Mr. Fielding, she went to one of her favourite haunts beside the Dart, where it brawled over a cataract of rocks and then spread into a pool still as glass.

Now she saw what puzzled her, and set her active brain questioning the reason. As she looked into the water, she could see no reflection of her own face; the light sky was mirrored, and where the shadow of her head came, she could see far more distinctly to the bottom of the pool than elsewhere. Indeed, when a fish darted past she could discern its fins and scales, but when it passed beyond her shadow, its form became indistinct.

Then Kate rose on her elbows, and as she did this the sun caught her cheek and nose, and cheek and nose were at once reflected in the water, and where the reflection came, there the water was less transparent to her eyes.

To observe was to rouse in the girl's mind a desire to find an explanation for the very simple phenomenon that puzzled her.

She was thus engaged, raising her face, then a hand, so as to be now sunlit, then to intercept the light, and see what the effect was on the water, when she was startled to observe in the liquid mirror the reflection of a second face looking down from above. The sun was on it, in the eyes, and they glittered up at her from below.

With an exclamation of alarm, she turned and saw a man standing above her.

CHAPTER XXI

AN OFFER

Kate rose to a sitting posture, and drew her feet under her, rested one hand on the rock, and with the other screened her eyes from the glare of the sun, to observe the intruder on her solitude.

Then she recognised Roger Redmore. He was without his coat, an axe over one shoulder. In his right hand he held a tuft of cotton grass dug up by the roots.

"I knowed as you wor here," said he, "but I dursn't speak before others, lest they should find me out who I wor."

"Are you living here, Roger?"

"I be working here at the felling Brimpts oaks. You see, your fayther, he's so little at Coombe that he don't know me, and I thought I might get money by working here. And I want you to do a little job for me."

"What is it, Roger?"

"There's two jobs. First, do y' see this here root o' white shiny grass? Well, I want y' to take it to Coombe and to set it on my little maid's grave. Stick the roots in. It may grow and it mayn't. Hereabouts it groweth mostly in wet land. But anyhows by it I shall know where the little maid lies when I come back to Coombe."

"You are returning, Roger?"

"Not by day. I reckon some night I shall be back just for an hour or so, and I want, when I does come, to go to the churchyard and find out at once where my darlin' lieth. If it be moonlight, or dimmets (twilight), and I see the little silver tuft glitter above her head, then I shall know where her be. I can't go wi' my wife; that would be tellin' folks I wor home agin. I mun go by myself. Whereabouts now have they put her?"

"By the wall where the cedar is, on the east side."

"There'll niver be no headstone there," observed Redmore, "but what o' that? When once I know where her lieth, sure but I'll put a fresh new tuft of silver tassels as oft as the old ones die, and I reckon they'll die, not being in a wet place. My little maid's grave won't be wet save wi' her father and mother's tears, and her fayther he can't be there but on the sly, and now and then."

"I will do it for you gladly," said Kate. "When do you think you will be home?"

"Home!" repeated Roger; "I've no home—not like to have. My wife and my little ones, wherever they be, that's all the world to me, and I cannot see them but at night, and very chancy, when I don't think nobody's about. And t'other thing be this."

Roger put his hand into his pocket and drew forth some coin, and gave it to the girl.

“Take this to my old woman. I’ve earned wi’ my work a bit o’ money, and here is what I can send her. Tell her to leave the door ajar. I may come any night; but,” he paused, “I reckon they’ve turned her out o’ house and home now.”

“Not yet, Roger,” answered Kate. “Mr. Pooke has not insisted on her leaving at quarter-day, but I believe he has a fresh workman coming to him in a week, and then she will have to leave.”

“And where will she go? Will they drive her into the street?”

“I really do not know; but”—she considered and said timidly, “I have had it on my heart, but have been afraid to speak of it as yet to my father. There is his cottage, never or hardly ever occupied. Now I will take courage, and beg him to let your wife go into it till something can be settled; but you must keep out of danger, and you are not safe here.”

“I cannot go far till my wife and little ones are secure and have a home. Here no one know’th me, the other woodcutters are all men from the moor. There was but your father, and he did not recognise me when I axed him to take me on at felling the timber.”

“I will entreat him to allow your wife and children to go into his house till something can be done for them. You will have to escape into another part of the country.”

“Ay, I will go. If I were took, it would go bad with us all, and there’d be the shame on my little ones—that their father wor hanged. They’d never shake it off.” Then he touched Kate on the head. “My hand be but a wicked un. It hev set fire to a rick, but it be the hand o’ a hunted man, as be nigh crushed with sorrows, as was druv to wickedness thro’ his sufferin’s, and hev bitter repented it since, and swears he’ll niver do it agin, so help me God!” He raised his hand solemnly to heaven. “That’s one thing I ha’ larned, as doin’ wrong niver brings matters right. There wor just that gettin’ drunk. Then there wor the cheek to Farmer Pooke. Then my heart were all wormwood; and when my little maid died, I thought it wor his doin’; and so in a way it wor, for I’d no work and no wage, and us was just about starvin’, and I did that deed o’ fire. It’s kindled a fire in here”—he touched his heart—"that nothink can quench. The Lord ha’ pity on me. I don’t know as I’d ha’ come to this mind but for you, little Kitty Alone, as was pitiful to me when I were bound and like to be given over to gaol, and you let me go, and fed me wi’ crumbs out o’ your hand; and now you will find a house for my dear ones." He laid his hand on her head again. “Mebbe the Lord’ll hear a sinful thief o’ a man, and I ax His blessin’ on thee; an’ if I can iver do anything to show you I’m thankful, I will. Amen.”

“Hah!”

Roger. Redmore started. He was caught by a hand in his collar-band.

Kate sprang to her feet. Her uncle, Pasco Pepperill, was there. He had come up from behind unobserved, and had laid hold of the incendiary.

“I have you, you burning vagabond!” shouted he; “and by heaven! I’ll hand you over to the constables, and see you hanged, as you deserve. Kate, run away—away at once!”

“Oh, uncle, do not be cruel! Let him go.”

“You mind your business,” answered Pasco sharply. “It’s my belief you let him escape after Jan Pooke had bound him in the boat. Jan left you in charge, and Roger slipped away then.”

“But think, uncle, of his poor wife and children.”

With a sudden wrench Roger freed himself, and then, standing back with brandished axe, he said—

“Touch me, and I’ll split your head.”

“Get away from here,” ordered Pasco, turning to his niece; “and as for you, Redmore, I want a word. You know very well that if I give the hue and cry you will be caught, even though now you have slipped from me. Lower your hatchet; I’m not going to hurt you if you be reasonable; but wait till that girl is out of earshot.”

Pepperill put his hands into his pockets and watched Kate as she withdrew. Roger assumed an attitude of wariness. He was ready at a moment’s notice to defend himself with his axe, or to take to flight.

“Look here,” said Pasco, satisfied that he could not be overheard, “it seems to me that you, with your head almost in the noose, have done a wonderful silly thing to stay so near the scene of your crime.”

“I’d my reasons as is not for you to know,” answered Redmore surlily. “I’m sure you don’t consarn yourself for me and mine so as to care.”

“There you are mistaken,” said Pasco. “I don’t mean to say that I am deeply interested in you, but I don’t intend, unless driven to it, to take any steps to get you acquainted with Jack Ketch.”

“I can defend myself pretty well, suppose you do.”

“I’m not the fool to risk my head in another man’s quarrel.”

“And I can take to my heels and find a hiding-place anywhere on these moors.”

“Ay, and a starving-place where your bones will rot.”

“What have you to say to me?”

Redmore spoke surlily. Now that his whereabouts was discovered, it would be needful for him to shift his place of refuge.

“I suppose you don’t deny setting fire to Farmer Pooke’s rick?” said Pasco.

Roger shrugged his shoulders and jerked his head.

“How did you do it? smoking a pipe under the tree when drunk?”

“No, it warn’t.”

"How was it, then?"

"I warn't drunk, niver but that once, and that wor just because o' Jackson's 'Tee-dum.' I've a bit of a orgin in zingin', and the innkeeper he wor terrible longing to have me in the choir. So he got me in, and they tried to teach me the tenor part o' Jackson's 'Tee-dum,' and I cu'dn't maister it noways; and they stood me liquor, and I tried, and I cu'd do naught wi' it. You see t'other parts went curling up and about, and bothered me. If they'd a' stopped and let me zing alone, I cu'd ha' done it. Then I went out into the open air, and it wor cold and frosty, and somehow I got mazed wi' the drink and the 'Tee-dum' together, and I rinned agin my maister, Farmer Pooke, and I reckon I zed what I ort not, and he turned me off. That wor it. I niver did it avor, and I'll niver do it agin. Save and presarve me from liquor and Jackson's 'Tee-dum'!"

"Never mind about that. So you didn't fire the rick with your pipe?"

"No, I didn't. If it had niver been for Jackson's 'Tee-dum,' I'd not now be in risk of bein' hanged."

"Of course it was Jackson did it all," sneered Pasco.

"I don't mean to say that. It wor the beginning on it. I were throwed out o' work, and were starvin', and my little maid, her died, and then I wor like a mazed chap, and I ran out wi' the cann'l, and so I did it."

"Oh, with the candle?"

"It wor a rushlight."

"I've heard of barns and storehouses being set fire to by men going into them to sleep, and lighting their pipes. There was the landlord of the Crown and Anchor at Newton. He had a miserable sort of a house, but a tramp got in one night"—

"What, into his house?"

"No, into a linhay over the pigstye, and slept there, or went there to sleep, and there was straw in the loft, and in smoking his pipe he managed to set fire to the straw, and then the whole public-house was in a blaze and burnt down."

"I've heard of that. Nobody knows what became o' the tramp. There wor roast pig found in the ashes, and whether roast tramp nobody cared to inquire."

"The inn has been rebuilt. They call it a hotel now."

"I daresay they does."

"The insurance money did that."

"I s'pose so. Lucky the house wor insured. I wish Varmer Pooke 'ad been."

"You do?"

"I reckon I does. I'm sorry for what I did when I wor in a b'ilin' blue rage. Now I can't get over it noways, and you may tell'n so."

"Why, that fire was the making of the landlord. He feels no ill-will against the tramp. What are you going to do with yourself now?"

"I don't know."

"I suppose you will want to see your wife again?"

"I s'pose I shall."

"For that you will return to Coombe?"

"In coorse I must."

"At night—lest you should be seen?"

"Ay—to be sure."

"You will lurk about—be in hiding. I'll tell you what, I'm your good friend. I will do you no harm. I'll just leave the door of my stores open—unhasped; and if you want to creep in, there's a lot of wool and other things there, you can be warm there, Roger, warm in the wool."

"Thanky', sir. You'll not peach?"

"And if—if you like a pipe—well"—

"No, Mr. Pepperill, I won't do you that ill turn if you're so good to me—and the little maid, Kitty, too."

"Oh, I did not mean that. I can't say but if a spark chanced to fall among the wool, and the whole was to blaze away, I should be sorry. I can't say that I should be troubled, any more than was the landlord at Newton when the tramp set fire to his linhay over the pigs."

Redmore said nothing. Pepperill spoke slowly, and did not look the man in the face as he spoke.

"If that chance was to happen to me as happened to the man at Newton, it might, there's no saying, be a saving of me from a great misfortune, and—I shouldn't mind being a liberal friend, and helping you out of the country."

"That is what you mean, is it?"

"It might be a convenience to both of us."

"'Tis a wonderful world," exclaimed Redmore, "when the biggest rascals go free, and one of them be you! A little rascal like me, who's sorry that ever he done wrong, is chivied like a mad dog."

"Well—what do you say?"

"You're a rascal and I despise you," cried Roger, and turned to go.

"Will you have me as your friend or your enemy?"

"Your enemy rather than friend on them terms."

"Then I'll hang you!" exclaimed Pasco, and set off running in the direction of Brimpts.

CHAPTER XXII

A RACE FOR LIFE

Kate had walked away without a thought of attempting to gather the subject of her uncle's conversation with Redmore. She resolved at once to seek her father and obtain from him permission to house the unfortunate wife with her children in his cottage. She had been told that he had gone to a farm lying somewhat to the right of the Ashburton road, near the prominent and stately rock citadel of Sharpitor. She therefore ascended the long, steep hill, up which scrambles the high road from Dart-meet.

Halfway up the ascent is an oblong mass of granite, lying in the moor, which goes by the name of the Coffin Stone, because on it coffins are rested by those who are bearing a corpse to its lasting resting-place in the distant churchyards of Buckland or Ashburton. Kate had reached this stone, and was panting for breath, when she heard shouts and cries in the valley she was leaving, and, leaping upon the Coffin Stone, she saw a swarm of men on the opposite bank of the Dart—the Brimpts side—running in the direction of the bridge, headed by her uncle, who was then levelling a gun he carried.

From her elevation she could not only see but hear everything.

"An incendiary! He set fire to a stack. A pound to any man who takes him, alive or dead!" shouted Pasco, and to Kate every word was audible. Then she saw the flash of the gun, and a little later heard the report. The shot had missed, for her uncle urged on the men to run and not let the scoundrel escape, and he himself lagged behind to reload his barrel.

She looked for the fugitive, but was able to see him for one moment only, as he leaped a ruinous fence in his flight down stream.

Why was he taking that direction? Because the way into the fastnesses of the moorland was closed to him by his pursuers. He could not run up the hill that Kate ascended, as he would be exposed throughout, without the smallest cover, to the gun of Pepperill. Though a course down the river led ultimately into inhabited land, yet between the moor and population lay the great woodland belt of Buckland and Holme Chase, where the river wound its way in sweeps among dense forest and rock, and where Redmore knew he could hide with the greatest ease. But before he could be in the woodland he had a long stretch of moor to traverse, where there was no road, at best a fisherman's track, among rocks scattered in confusion, among heather and furze bushes, with here and there sloe and thorn trees and an occasional "witch beam" or rowan growing out of the rocks. Almost immediately after the junction of the East with the West Dart, the united stream doubles round Sharpitor, that shoots high above it on one side, and under the ridges of Benjietor on the other side, in whose lap grows a little copse, and which, from its crags to the water's edge, is green with bracken in summer, but at this period was russet with withered leaves. Thence

smoke rose—some boys had ignited the gorse, and the flames ran among the withered ferns and the fallen oak-leaves, and blackened and burnt the copse.

Kate hastened on her way. She knew that on reaching the head of the ridge a short distance intervened between the road and the precipices of Sharpitor that overhung the ravine. Thence she could see all that followed—if Roger Redmore succeeded in turning the moorland spur round which the river foamed.

Hot, trembling, and breathless, Kate ran, then halted to gasp, then ran on, and did not rest for more than a minute till she had reached the vantage-point on the rocks, and looked down into a wondrous ravine of river, granite boulder, and glaring golden furze, and with the blue smoke of the smouldering fern forming a haze that hung in its depths, but which rose in places above the rocky crests of the moor and showed brown against the luminous sky.

Kate ensconced herself among the piles of granite, with a "clatter," as it is locally termed, at her feet, a mass of rocky ruin, composed of granite, in fragments of every size and in various conditions of disintegration.

She saw Redmore as he doubled the foot of the mountain, and for awhile had the advantage of being invisible to his pursuers, and safe from the gun of Pepperill. He stood on a great rock half-way out of the water, and looked about him. He was resolving what to do, whether to continue his course down stream, or to endeavour to conceal himself at once. The fire and smoke on the farther side in the bosom of Benjietor made it impossible for him to secrete himself there—every lurking-place was scorched or menaced by the flames. The slope of Sharpitor on his left, though strewn with the wreckage of the crags above, offered no safe refuge; it was exposed to full light, without any bushes in it other than the whortle and heather. Roger did not take long to make up his mind; he pursued his course down the river, now wading, then scrambling over stones, then leaping from rock to rock, and then again flying over a tract of smooth turf. Occasionally the wind, playing with the smoke, carried a curl of it across the river, and drew it out and shook it as a veil, obscuring Redmore from the eyes of Kate, who watched him in panting unrest, and with prayers for his safety welling up in her heart. Then shouts—the men who hunted him had rounded the flank of Shapitor, and had caught sight of the man they were endeavouring to catch. One fellow, with very long legs, familiar with the ground, accustomed all his life to the moor, was making great way, and bade fair to catch Roger.

Redmore looked behind him. He had cast away his axe, and was therefore unarmed, but was lightened for the race.

"A sovereign to the man who catches him!" yelled Pepperill. "Knock him down, brain him!"

Then one man heaved a stone, picked out of the river, and threw it. A vain attempt. He was not within reach of Redmore; but in a pursuit, none can quite consider what is possible, and measure distances with nicety, without much greater coolness than is possessed by men running and leaping over difficult ground. The long-legged man kept forging ahead, with his elbows close to his

sides; he had distanced the rest. He was fleet of foot, he sprang from stone to stone without pausing to consider, and without ever missing his footing. Roger advanced slowly: he was unaccustomed to such difficult ground; sometimes he fell; he floundered into the river up to his armpits and scrambled out with difficulty. His pursuer never got into the water. The man had not merely long legs, he had a long nose and protruding eyes, and as he ran, with his elbows back, he held his forefingers extended, the rest folded. Every stride brought him nearer to Redmore, and Roger, who had just scrambled upon a rock in the river, saw that he must be overtaken, and he prepared for the inevitable struggle.

Kate, leaning forward in her eagerness, at this moment displaced a large block, that slid down, turned on its edge and rolled, then leaped, then bounded high into the air, crashed down on another rock, and from it leaped again in its headlong course.

The girl held her breath. It seemed as though the rock must strike the running pursuer, and if it struck him it would inevitably be his death. The rattle of displaced stones, the crash of the block as it struck, the cries of those behind, who saw the danger, arrested the long-legged man. He halted, and looked up and around, and at that moment the stone whizzed past and plunged into the river. Kate saw in a moment the advantage thus gained, and in palpitating haste threw down every stone she could reach or tilt over from its resting-place, where nicely balanced, thus sending a succession of volleys of leaping, whistling stones across the path, between the pursued and the pursuers.

She heard shouts and execrations from those who were coming up, and who stood still, not daring to continue their course, and run the risk of having their brains beaten out by one of the falling stones. She regarded them not. Her one idea was to save Roger. She could see that the man for whom she acted had recognised her intervention, and continued his flight. She could see that the pursuers were stationary, uncertain what to do.

Then her uncle again raised his gun. Kate put her hands to her mouth and called to Roger, who looked over his shoulder, and dropped behind a stone just as the gun was discharged.

Then he picked himself up once more and ran on. Kate dared not desist. She continued to send block after block rolling. Some were shattered in their descent, and resolved themselves into a cloud of whizzing projectiles. Some in striking the soil set a mass of rubble in motion that shot down and threw up a cloud of dust.

She was hot, weary, her hands wounded. But the consciousness of success strung her to renewed exertion. Pasco Pepperill called the party in pursuit together. He shouted up the height to the girl. Who it was there engaged in dislodging stones he couldn't discern, for Kate kept herself concealed as far as possible, and the confusion of the granite rocks thrown into heaps and dislocated, served to disguise the presence of anyone among them. He threatened, but threatened in vain; Kate did not stay her hand to give time to listen to what he cried.

After a brief consultation, as the avalanche did not decrease, the party resolved to cross the river and continue the pursuit down it on the farther side, through the smoke and over the ashes of the conflagration. By this means Roger Redmore could be kept in sight, and possibly it would be more easy to run over the charred soil among bushes reduced to ash. Moreover, few, if any, of the stones dislodged by Kate had sufficient weight and velocity to carry them to the farther side of the river.

Accordingly, the party began to step on the rocks that projected from the water, or to wade, so as to reach the farther side, Pepperill lingering behind reloading his gun, and keeping his eye on the fugitive. Then a sudden idea struck him, and, calling to the men to proceed as they had proposed, he started to climb the steep tide of Sharpitor, at a point where not menaced by the falling stones, judging that by this means he would dislodge the person who had come to the assistance of the fugitive, and at the same time be able to follow the flight of the latter with his eye better than below, and to obtain a more leisurely shot at him when a suitable occasion offered, as his poising himself on a rock, or halting to resolve on his course.

Kate desisted from sending down volleys of stones, till the occasion should arise again. She watched the flight of Roger, and perceived that he was aiming at a coppice which was in a fold of the hills undiscernible by those on the farther side of the river; by means of this coppice, if he could reach it, Roger would be able to effect his escape.

In three minutes he was safe; then Kate drew a long breath. At the same moment she was touched on the shoulder, and, looking round, saw her father.

“What’s all this about? What’s this shouting and firing of guns?”

“Oh, father, I hope I have not done wrong! Uncle and all the men are after Roger Redmore.”

“Who is he?”

“The man who burnt Mr. Pooke’s ricks, and he has been working for you here—and uncle recognised him, and sent the men to take him, and he ran away, and I have helped him.”

“You?”

“Yes; by rolling down rocks.”

Jason burst into a fit of laughter. “Come, that is fine. You and I, Kitty, aiders and abettors of an incendiary. Is he clear off now?”

“Yes; but here comes uncle up the steep side.”

Jason hobbled to the edge of the rock, and, leaning over called, “Halloo, Pasco! Here we are waiting for you—Kitty Alone and I.”

CHAPTER XXIII

BORROWING

“It is you—you two!” exclaimed Pepperill, as he reached the summit. He gasped the words; he could not shout, so short of breath was he. His face with heat was purple as a blackberry. “What’s the meaning of this?” He held to a projection of granite, and panted. “Interfering with law—protecting a scoundrel.” He paused to wipe his face. “A malefactor—a criminal—guilty”—again gasped like a fish out of water—"guilty of incendiarism, of arson, of felony!"

“Why, Pasco, you’re hot. Keep cool, old boy,” said Jason, laughing. “Who has created you constable, or sheriff of the county, that you are so anxious to apprehend rogues?”

“Rogues? rogues? Only rogues assist rogues in escaping the reward of their deeds.”

“Is there a warrant out for his apprehension?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then what on earth makes you put yourself in a heat and commotion to catch him?”

Pasco mopped his brow, and, tearing up some ferns, dry though they were, proceeded to fan his face.

“Why? Do you ask? For the public security, of course. And now”—again he puffed—"now I can’t talk; my wind is gone."

Pepperill looked into the ravine. He could see that the men on the farther side of the stream were at a nonplus. The fugitive had escaped them, had dived out of their sight into the coppice-wood, and they knew that pursuit was in vain. He turned sharply on his brother-in-law.

“This is your doing—you and Kate. First you give him work, and then you let him escape. He who helps a felon is a felon himself.”

“My dear Pasco,” said Jason Quarm, laughing, “what makes you so fiery in this matter?”

“Fiery? of course I’m fiery. And look there, Jason! There are the workmen, a dozen of them, doing nothing, and we shall have to pay their wages for a half day, and nothing to show for it.”

“Whose fault is that? You sent them from their tasks.”

“Yes, to catch a villain.”

“Which was no concern of yours.”

“It is a concern of mine, and of every honest man. How can one be safe with such a malefactor at large? I have my house, my stores; I shall not be able to

sleep at night with ease, knowing that this fellow is at large. If anything happens, I shall come on you."

"You'll get nothing from me."

"That is the worst; I know it. Why did you help the man to escape? No one is safe—no one. And I, least of all; for now he regards me as his enemy. He has sworn vengeance; he may come on me and cut my throat."

"Not much throat to be cut, Pasco."

"There is my money-box"—

"Box, not money."

"He may set fire to my house—my barns—burn me and my wife—your sister—Kitty—your daughter. Don't you care for that?"

"I am not afraid. If you went after him, and have angered him, well, we helped him, as you suppose, and have won his good-will."

"As I know. Have I not found you here? Who else could have rolled down the rocks? Show me your hands. There, I said so!—there is blood on Kate's hands; they are cut and bruised. She has been doing what she could; and you, her father, who ought to have known better, have encouraged her. Rascals! rogues!—rogues all!"

"And oh, how honest am I!—eh, Pasco?"

"Of course I'm an honest man. I don't encourage burglars, and murderers, and incendiaries."

"I did not know that Redmore was a murderer or a burglar."

"Who can say but, having been an incendiary, he may go on to murder and plunder; these things run together. One who can commit arson is capable of doing the other crimes as well. I shall have to drive back to Ashburton alone."

"Kitty returns with you."

"What help is there in Kitty? That fellow Roger, full of rage and desire of revenge, is about the woods, and may shoot me."

"He has not a gun."

"He may spring upon me with his axe."

"He has thrown it away," said Kate.

"You mind your own concerns," exclaimed the angry man, turning on his niece. "There are plenty of ways in which he may fall on me and murder me, and then he will pick my pockets and make off in my clothes, and Kitty will help him."

"You are talking nonsense, Pasco. Are you such a weakling that you cannot defend yourself? But, pshaw! the man will not injure you."

"He will steal by night to Coombe. His wife is there; his children are there. He knows where I am. He has sworn revenge against me."

"When? When he escaped?"

"No; before I set the men after him."

"Before he knew you would hunt him? A probable story!"

"Probable or improbable, it is true. I threatened him, and I would have arrested him, but could not. Kate knows I had him by the throat; but he was armed with his axe, and I could not retain him. Then he swore he would do me an evil turn, and he will keep his word."

"He cannot harm you; he is afraid for himself."

"He can harm me. He can do to my house, my stores, what he did to Pooke's rick."

"Well, that would not hurt you greatly; you are insured over value."

"Not over value, with the wool in."

"You were a fool about that wool, Pasco. Why did you not consult me before dealing with Coaker? I knew of the fall."

"Oh, you know everything. You knew that the Brimpts oak bark was worth three times more than it is; and now you are felling, without considering that the bark at present is practically worthless."

"The sap doesn't run."

"If the sap ran like the Dart, it would not make the bark sell for tan. You either knew nothing about the conditions, or you wilfully deceived me; and I dare be sworn it was the latter. I can believe even that of you now, a favourer of incendiaries."

"Come, do not be extravagant. What other criminals have I ever favoured?"

"I am too hot and too angry to argue," retorted Pasco. "But I want to know something for certain about this Brimpts wood. It is well enough to cut it down, but what I want to know is, how will you transport the oak so as to make it pay?"

"Sell on the spot."

"To whom?"

"To timber merchants."

"They will reckon the cost of carriage."

"We shan't have to pay for it."

"We shall sell at a good price."

"We shall sell! Such oak as Brimpts oak is not to be had every day."

"Have you offered it to anyone—advertised it?"

"No, I have not. Time for that when it is all felled."

"You will make as much a misreckoning in this as you have along of the bark."

"Trust me. The oak will sell high."

"You said the same of the bark. All your ducks are swans. I *must* have money."

"So must I," said Quarm. "I want it as the March fields want April showers."

"I am in immediate need," urged Pepperill.

"In a fortnight I shall require money to pay the men their wages," observed Quarm.

"I have nothing. You were right; I have a cash-box, but no cash in it. I have paid away all I had."

"Dispose of something," said Quarm cheerily.

"Dispose of what? Coals? No one wants coals now."

"Then something else."

"Wool, and lose on every pound? That were fatal. I have not paid for all the wool yet. I want money to satisfy the coal-merchant, money to meet the bill I gave Coaker; and then the agent for the bank which has its hold on the Brimpts estate says we may not remove a stick till everything is paid."

"Then do not remove," said Quarm. "Sell on the spot."

"To whom?"

"There are plenty will buy."

"Why have you not advertised?" asked Pasco testily.

"For one thing, because I did not know you were in immediate need of cash; for the other, because, till the timber is down, it cannot be measured. Never sell sticks standing. A timber merchant will always buy the trees before felled, and many a landowner is fool enough to sell standing trees. The merchant knows his gain; the landlord does not know his loss."

"Felled or unfelled, I must realise. My condition is desperate. I cannot meet any of the demands on me."

Pepperill had lost his purple colour. He wiped his brow again, but this time the drops did not rise from heat, but from uneasiness of mind.

"You have drawn me into this Brimpts venture, and I have now all my fortunes on one bottom. If this fails, I am ruined; there will remain nothing for me but to sell Coombe Cellars, and then—I am cast forth as a beggar into the roads. I have trusted you; you must not fail me."

"Oh, all will come right in the end."

"The end—the end! It must come right now. I tell you that I have to meet the demands of the bank, or I can do nothing with the sale of the oak, and all now hangs on that. Owing to the ruinous purchase of Coaker's fleeces, I am driven to desperate straits. I cannot sell them at a loss. I calculated it with the schoolmaster—a loss of some hundred and twenty pounds. You must help me out of my difficulty."

"I can but suggest one thing. Go to Devonport, and see if the Government Dockyard will buy the oak. Ship-building can't go on without material. If Government will take the timber, you need not concern yourself about the bank's demand; it will be satisfied, and more than satisfied, that the money is safe. Bless you! in these times a man is happy to see his money within twelve months of him, and know he must have it."

"I don't mind; but I'll go to Devonport at once," said Pepperill.

Whilst the conversation thus detailed was taking place, the three had crossed a strip of moor that intervened between Sharpitor and the high road, walking slowly, for Pasco was fagged with his scramble, and Jason was crippled.

"I don't mind," said Pasco again. "But I shall want a few pounds to take me there, and my pockets are empty."

"I can't help you. Mine wouldn't yield if wrung out."

"Here comes the parson," said Pepperill—"our parson, jogging along as if nothing were the matter and went contrary in the world. I'll borrow of him."

"Oh, uncle," protested Kate, flushing crimson, "pray do not, if you have no chance of paying."

"You impudent hussy, mind your own concerns," answered Pasco angrily. "I, with no chance of paying! I'm a man of means. I'll let you see what that signifies. How d' y' do, parson?"

"What! my churchwarden?" exclaimed Mr. Fielding, drawing rein. "What brings you to the moors?"

"Business, sir, a trifle with regard to oak timber. I've bought the Brimpts wood—cost me a few hundred, and will bring me a thousand."

"Glad to hear it, Mr. Pepperill;—and then we shall have a double subscription to our school."

"I daresay, Mr. Fielding; I'm a free man with my money, as you and others have found. And, by the way, talking of that, could you kindly accommodate me with a little loan of a few pounds. I started from home without a thought but of returning to-day, and I learn that the Government has an eye on these oaks—first-rate timber—and I must to Devonport to strike a bargain. I won't come to their terms, they must come to mine. Such timber as this is worth its weight in gold."

"How much do you want, Mr. Pepperill?"

"How much can you spare, Mr. Fielding?"

"Well, let me see." The rector of Coombe opened his purse. "I have about six guineas here. I shall want to retain one for current expenses. When can you let me have the loan returned."

"Any day. I'll drop you a line to my wife—or—on my return. I'm only going to Devonport to get the best price for the timber, and then I shall be back. If you

can spare me five guineas—or five sovereigns—I shall be obliged. You know me—a man of substance, a man of means, a warm man. We represent the Church, do we not, Mr. Fielding? and hang Dissenters all, say I."

"I can let you have five pounds," said the rector; "I see I am short of silver."

"That will suffice," answered Pasco, with dignity. "I will let you have it back directly I have settled with Government about the oaks."

Mr. Fielding gave Pepperill the gold, then excused himself, as he desired to reach home before dark, and rode on his way.

"I had no idea that to borrow was so easy," said Pasco. "Of course, all depends on the man who asks. Everyone knows me—sound as the Bank of England."

"And same thing," said Quarm; "all depends on the man solicited."

Then Pepperill, with his hands in his pockets and head in the air, his spirits revived as though he had borrowed five hundred pounds in place of five pounds, walked towards Dart-meet Bridge humming the old harvest song,—

"We've cheated the parson; we'll cheat him again;

For why should the vicar have one in ten?

One in ten?

We'll drink off our liquor while we can stand,

And hey for the honour of Old England!

Old England!"

CHAPTER XXIV

SHAVINGS

With five pounds in his pocket, Pepperill drove to Plymouth and on to Devonport. His moral courage was up again now he had gold to spend. When his purse was empty, his spirits, his tone of mind, became depressed and despairing. A very little—a few pounds—sufficed to send them up to bragging point. There was no limit to his self-complacency and assurance as he appeared at the dockyard.

His spirits, his consequence that had so risen, were doomed to sink when he learned that no oak, however good, was required. Okehampton Park, the finest, the most extensive in the county, had been delivered over by the impecunious owners to the woodman; thousands of magnificent trees, as ancient and as sound as those of Brimpts, had been felled. The market was glutted, oak of the

best quality sold cheap as beech; and the Government had bought as much at Okehampton as would be needed for several years.

"That is the way with all Government concerns, stupidly managed by blunderheads. I can do business better with private firms. I know very well what this means—to grease the palms of the authorities. I am a man of principle—I won't do it." So said Pepperill, as he swung away from the dockyard. "Bah! I've always been a staunch supporter of Church and State, churchwarden and Tory. If the Government can't oblige me when I want a little favour done, but must go to the cheapest shop, blow me if I don't turn Whig—that's not bad enough—roaring Radical, and cry, Down with the Constitution and the Crown! As for the Church, I don't say as I'll go in for disestablishment and disendowment just now. There is some benefit in an Established Church when it will accommodate one at a pinch with five pounds, and don't press to have it returned till convenient."

Pasco betook himself now to private firms of shipbuilders, but was unable to dispose of his timber. The mowing down of Okehampton Park had flooded the market with first-quality oak. One firm was inclined to deal with him, if he would draw the timber into Plymouth. Sanguine at this undertaking, he returned to Dart-meet to drive a bargain with some of the farmers on the moor for conveying the oak logs to the seaport town. He found that their charges were likely to be high. The way was long, the road hilly, in places bad. It would take them two days at least to convey each load, with a pair of horses, or a team of three, to Plymouth; and what was one load?—what, but a single log. Then there was the return journey, that might be done in a long day; but after three such days, the horses would not be fit for work on the fourth. A pair of horses was ten shillings; and for three days—that was five-and-twenty; but in reality three horses would be needed, and that would be thrice fifteen—two pounds five for each stick of timber before it was sold. As for the spray,—all the upper portion of the trees,—that would have to be disposed of on the spot; and Pepperill foresaw, with something like dismay, that he would get no price for it. The expense of carriage would deter all save moor farmers from purchasing, and they were so few in number, that the supply would exceed the demand, especially as they could have as much turf as they wanted for the cutting; and practically not sufficient would be got from the sale of the faggot wood to pay for the felling of the timber.

It is one of the peculiar features of England that our roads are absolutely without any of the facilities which modern engineering would yield to travellers on wheels. Our ancient highways were those struck out by packmen, and when wheeled conveyances came into use, the carriages had to scramble over roads only suitable for pack-horses. In France and Germany it is otherwise, there modern road-engineering has made locomotion easy. The main arteries of traffic ascend and descend by gentle gradients, and make sweeps where a direct course would be arduous and exhaustive of time.

Now the road from Dart-meet, a main thoroughfare over the moor, might be carried along the river-bank, with a gentle fall of a hundred feet in the mile, for

six miles. But instead of that, it scrambles for a mile up a hogsback of moor, nearly five hundred feet in sheer ascent, then comes down to the Dart again; then scrambles another ridge, and then again descends to the same river. Nothing could be easier than to have a trotting road the whole way; but in mediæval times packmen went up and down hill; consequently we in our brakes, and landaus, and dog-carts must do the same; not only so, but the transport of granite, peat, wool, and the oaks from the felled forest was rendered a matter of heavy labour and great cost. Pepperill saw that it was quite hopeless to expect to effect any dealings on the Ashburton side, on account of the tremendous hills that intervened.

With rage and mortification at his heart, he sought for his brother-in-law, and could not find him. He was told that Quarm had gone to Widdecomb. Some repairs were to be done in the church, the parsonage was to be rebuilt, and he was going to ascertain whether oak timber would be required there, and how much, and whether he could dispose of some of the wood of Brimpts for this object.

He could not wait for Quarm. He wanted to be home. He was to convey Kate to Coombe Cellars—it had been so arranged. His wife was impatient for her return, had begun to discover what a useful person in the house Kate was. Moreover, the moor air had done what was required of it, had restored health to the girl’s cheeks.

In rough and testy tone, Pepperill told his niece to put together her traps and to jump up beside him.

“You’ve had play enough at our expense,” he growled. “Your aunt has had to hire a girl, and she’s done nothing but break, break—and she’s given Zerah cheek—awful. Time you was back. We can’t be ruined just because your father wants you to be a lady, and idle. We’re not millionaires, that we can afford to put our hands in our pockets and spend the day loafing. If your father thinks of bringing you up to that, it’s a pity he hasn’t made better ventures with his money.” After a pause, with a burst of rancour, “His money! *His* money, indeed! it is mine he plays games with, it is my hard-earned coin he plays ducks and drakes with—chucks it away as though I hadn’t slaved to earn every groat.”

As he talked, he worked himself up into great wrath; and like a coward poured forth his spite upon the harmless child at his side, because harmless, unable to retaliate. He was accustomed to hear his wife find fault with Kate, and now he followed suit. We all, unless naturally generous, cast blame on those who are beneath us; on our children, our servants, the poor and weak, when we are conscious of wrong within ourselves, but are too proud for self-accusation. It has been so since Adam blamed Eve for his fall, and Eve threw the blame on the serpent.

“I don’t hold with holiday-making,” said Pasco. “It is all very well for wealthy people, but not for those who are workers for their daily bread. I might ha’ been, and I would ha’ been, an independent man, and a gentleman living on my own means, but for your father. He’s been the mischief-maker. He has led me

on to speculate in ventures that were rotten from root to branch, and all my poor savings, and all that your aunt Zerah has earned by years of toil—it is all going—it is all gone. There are those workmen cutting down the oak, they are eating my silver, gorging themselves on my store, and reducing me and Zerah to beggary. To the workhouse—that's our goal. To the workhouse—that is where your father is driving us. What are you staring about you for like an owl in daylight?"

"Oh, uncle," answered Kate in a voice choked with tears, "I have been so happy on the moor, and it is all so beautiful, so beautiful—a heaven on earth; and I was only looking my last—and saying good-bye to it all."

"Not listening to what I said?"

"Indeed I was, and I was unhappy—and what you said made me feel I should never come back here, and I must work hard now for Aunt Zerah. There was no harm in my looking my last at what I have loved and shall not see again! It is so beautiful."

"Beautiful? Gah!" retorted Pasco. "A beastly place. What is beautiful here? The rocks? The peat? The heather? Gah! It is all foul stuff—I hate it. What are you hugging there as if it were a purse of gold?"

"Oh, uncle, it is something I love so! The schoolmaster sent it me by Mr. Fielding. It's only a book."

"A book? of what sort? Let me see."

Kate reluctantly produced the cherished volume.

"Pshaw!" said Pasco, rejecting it with disgust. "Poetry—rotten rubbish—I hate it. It's no good to anyone, it stuffs heads with foolery. I wish I was king, and I'd make it a hanging matter to write a line of poetry and publish it. It's just so much poison. No wonder you don't like work, when you read that vile, unwholesome trash."

Kate hastily folded up the volume and replaced it in her bosom.

"No wonder you and your father encourage vagabonds and incendiaries if you read poetry."

"Father did not help Roger Redmore to escape," said Kate. "It was I who rolled down the stones. Father came up when he had already got away to a hiding-place. I, and I alone, did it."

"More shame to you! You're a bad girl, a vicious girl, and will come to no good."

He continued grumbling and snarling and harping on his grievances, and, for some while, jerking out spiteful remarks. Presently he relapsed into silence, and let the tired cob jog along till he reached a point where, near Holne, roads branched: one went down the hill to Ashburton without passing through the village, the other went round by the church and village inn. Here Pasco drew up, uncertain which road to take. There was not much difference in the distance.

The direct way was the shorter, but by not more than half a mile, whereas the other afforded opportunity for refreshment.

At this point was a carpenter's shop. The workman was not there, but he had left his shop open, and outside was a great pile of shavings.

As Pasco sat ruminating, doubtful which way to take, his eye rested for some while on the shavings. Presently, without a word, he got out of the conveyance, let down the back of the cart, collected as many shavings as he could carry, and thrust them in, under the seat. He went back to the pile, took as many more as he thought would suffice, and crammed the body of the cart with them. Then, still without speaking, he shut the back, remounted, and drove down the shortest way—the steep hill, the direct road to Ashburton that avoided the village.

"Uncle!" said Kate, after a while.

Pepperill started, as though he had been stung. "Bless me!" he exclaimed; "I had forgotten you were here."

"Uncle," pursued the girl, "you know my dear mother left a little money, a few hundred pounds, for me. And my father is trustee, and he has charge of it, and has invested it somewhere for me. If you are in difficulties, and really want money, I am sure you are heartily welcome to mine. I will ask my father to let you have the use of it. I cannot do other—you and Aunt Zerah have been very kind to me."

"Yes, that we have, and been to tremendous expense over your keep; and there was your education with Mr. Puddicombe, and the doctor's bill coming in, and the medicines; and there has been your clothing—and you have always eaten—awful. That costs money, and ruins one. Yes, you are right, you couldn't do other. I had not thought of that. But I don't know what your father will say."

"In a very few years I shall be old enough to have it as my own to do with as I like. I do not think that my father will object to its being employed as I wish. And I know it will be quite safe with you."

"Oh, perfectly safe, safe as in the Bank of England. I'm one of your sound men. Sound, and straight, and square, all round—everything you can desire, you know. Everyone trusts me. A man of substance, a man of means—and with a head for business."

"I will ask father when I see him."

"That is right. It will be a little relief. You are a good girl, I always said you were, and had your heart in the right place. You will write to your father to-morrow."

Pasco Pepperill was comparatively genial, even boastful, on the rest of the way. When he arrived at Coombe Cellars, his wife heard the wheels and came to the door. She received Kate without cordiality, and took her husband's little bag of clothes he had taken with him. Kate carried hers in her hand.

"Anything in the cart? Shall I open?" asked Zerah.

“Nothing—absolutely nothing. Leave the cart alone,” answered Pasco hastily. “Nothing at all.”

Pepperill drew his horse away, unharnessed it, and ran the dog-cart into the coach-house. Then he stood for a moment musing, and looking at it. Presently he turned his back, locked the door, and left his conveyance undischarged of its load of shavings.

“I may chuck ’em away, any time,” said he, “or give ’em to Zerah to kindle her kitchen fire with, or”— He did not finish the sentence, even in thought.

CHAPTER XXV

BORROWING AGAIN

When Pepperill, tired with his long day’s journey, and harassed in mind, went to his bedroom, Zerah at once fell upon him.

“How have you fared, I’d like to know? But lawk! what’s the good of my axing, when I’m pretty confident your journey has been all down hill, with an upset of the cart presently.”

“And if it be so, who is to blame but your brother?” retorted Pepperill angrily.

“My brother may have made his mistakes sometimes, but not always—you never by any chance fail to do the wrong thing.”

“He has dragged me into this confounded affair of the Brimpts timber; and now—I cannot sell the bark or the oaks.”

“He had nothing to say to the wool. What made you buy at a wrong price?”

“The market is always changing.”

“Yes—against your interests. We shall end in the workhouse.”

“Things will come right.”

“They cannot. Look here! Here is a lawyer’s letter about the coals. You must pay by the first of the next month, or they will put in the bailiffs.”

“It will come right. I have had an offer.”

“For the oak?”

“No, of a loan. Kate, like a good and reasonable and affectionate girl, is going to get Jason to withdraw her money and lend it to me.”

Zerah flushed crimson. “So!” she exclaimed, planting herself in front of her husband, and lodging her hands on her hips; “you want to swindle the orphan out of her little fortune. You know as well as I do, if that money gets into your hands, it will run between your fingers as has all other money that ever got

there. Folks say that there is a stone as turns all base metal to gold. I say that your palm has the faculty of converting gold into quicksilver, that escapes and cannot be recovered."

"This is only a temporary embarrassment."

"It shall not be done," said Zerah. "I don't myself believe Jason will hear of it, and if he does, and prepares to carry it out, I'll knock his head off—that's my last word. The parson said I didn't love Kate, that I was starving her; but I'll stand up for her against you—and her own father if need be."

"The coal merchant must wait," said Pasco, shrugging his shoulders.

"He will not wait. You have passed over unnoticed his former demands, and now, unless in a fortnight the money is paid, he will make the house too hot to hold us."

"We can sell something."

"What? You have parted with your farm, the orchard, the meadow—with everything but the house, to follow your foolish passion to be a merchant."

"He must wait. I have to wait till folk pay me my little bills. Money doesn't come in rushes, but in leaks."

"He will not wait. Where is the ready money to come from?"

Pasco scratched his head.

"If everything else fails," said she further, "then I propose you go to old Farmer Pooke and get a loan of him."

"Pooke? he won't lend money."

"I am not so sure of that. Jan has called several times since Kitty has been away, and yesterday he told me, in his shy, awkward fashion, that he had spoken with his father about her. The old man made some to-do—he had fancied Rose Ash as a match for his son, as she is likely to have a good round sum of money; but when Jan insisted, he gave way. You see everyone in the place knows that Kate has something left by her mother, but they don't know how much, and, instead of three hundred pounds or so, they have got the notion into their heads that it is a thousand pounds. Now, as the father is ready to let his son marry Kate, I think it like enough he would help you, so as to prevent the scandal of bailiffs in Coombe Cellars."

"He may make that the excuse for breaking off the match."

"Jan is obstinate. When that lad sets his head on a thing, there is no turning him, and that his father knows well. He'd ha' turned his son away from Kitty and on to Rose if he could, but he can't do it; and what he is aware of is, that the least show of opposition will make Jan ten times more set on it than before."

"Then you go to Farmer Pooke and borrow."

"I! I made to go round as a beggar-woman! You have brought trouble on the house. You must ask for the loan."

Next day, Pasco Pepperill started for Pooke's house. The lion is said to lash itself with its tail till it lashes itself into fury. Pasco blustered and bragged with everyone he encountered, till he had worked himself up into self-confidence and assurance enough for his purpose, and then, with bold face and swaggering gait, entered the farm-house.

Pooke senior was a stout man, as became a yeoman of substance; he had a red, puffed face, with stony dark eyes; his hands were enormous, and their backs were covered with hair.

Pooke and Pepperill had not been on the best of terms. Pooke for some time had been churchwarden, but in a fit of pique had thrown up the office, when Pepperill had been elected in his room. But Pooke had not intended his resignation to be accepted seriously. He had withdrawn to let the parish feel that it had absolutely no one else fit to take his place, and he had anticipated that he would have been entreated to reconsider his resignation. When, however, Pepperill stepped into his vacant office, and everything went on as usual, Pooke was very irate, and spoke of the supplanter with bitterness and contempt.

"How do y' do?" said Pooke, and extended his hand with gracious condescension, such as he only used to the rector and to those whom he considered sufficiently well-off to deserve his salutation. "What have you come here about?—that matter of Jan?"

"Well, now," answered Pepperill, with a side look at a servant, "between ourselves, you know, we are men who conduct business in a different way from the general run."

"Get along with you, Anne," said Pooke to the maid. "Now we are by ourselves, what is it? That boy Jan is headstrong. It runs in the blood. I married, clean contrary to my father's wishes, just because I knew he didn't like the girl. I don't think that it was anything else made me do it. But your niece, Kitty, has money."

"Money? oh, of course! We are a moneyed family."

"That is well. Mine is a moneyed family. One cannot be comfortable oneself without money, nor have anything to do comfortably with other people unless they're moneyed. I have often thought there is a great gulf fixed between the comfortably off and those who are in poor circumstances, and those who are in comfort can't pass to the other side—not right they should; let them make their associates among the comfortably off. That's my doctrine."

"And mine also," said Pasco. "I like to hear you talk like this—it's wholesome."

"Well, and what do you want with me?"

Pepperill crossed his legs, uncrossed them, and crossed them again.

"I've been doing a lot o' business lately," said he.

“So I hear. But do you want to do business with me? I bought your orchard and meadow. There I think you did wrong. Hold on to land; never let that go—that’s my doctrine. You got rid of it, and where are you now? In Coombe Cellars, without as much as five acres around it of your own.”

“I never was calculated to be a farmer,” said Pasco. “My head was always set on a commercial life, and I can’t say I regret it. A lot of money has passed through my hands.”

“I don’t care so much for the passing as the sticking of money,” retorted Pooke.

“Well, in my line, money comes in with a tide and goes out with a tide. When it is out, it is very much out indeed; but I have only to wait awhile, and, sure as anything in nature, in comes the tide once more.”

Pooke’s stony eye was fixed on Pepperill.

“Which is it now—high tide or low water?”

“There it is—low.”

“Oh!”

Pooke thrust his chair back, and looked at the space between him and Pepperill, as though it were the great gulf fixed, across which no communication was possible.

“Merely temporary,” said Pasco, with affected indifference. “Nevertheless, unpleasant rather; not that I am inconvenienced and straitened myself, but that I am unable to extend my money ventures. You see, I have been buying a great oak wood on Dartmoor—splendid oak, hard as iron; will make men-of-war, with which we shall bamboozle the French and Spaniards. Then I’ve bought in a quantity of wool.”

“What, now? It is worth nothing.”

“Exactly—because there is a panic. In my business this is a time for buying. There will be a rebound, and I shall sell. It is the same with coals. I lay in now when cheap, and sell when dear—in winter.”

“What do you want with me?” asked Pooke suspiciously.

“The thing is this. I find I have to pay for the timber before I can sell a stick to Government, and I haven’t the cash at this instant. I’ve had to pay for the wool,—I bought in two years’ fleeces,—and for the coals, and if I could lay my hand on four hundred pounds”—

“Four hundred pound ain’t things easy laid hands on.”

“I want the money for three months at the outside. I’ll give you my note of hand, and what interest you demand.”

“Likely to make a good thing out of Government? I’ve always heard as dealing with Government is like dealing with fools—all gain your side, all loss theirs.”

“Well! ’Tis something like that,” said Pepperill, with a knowing wink. “But don’t trouble yourself; if you can’t conveniently raise four or five hundred, I

can easily go elsewhere. I came to you, because my wife said there was likely to be a marriage between the families, and so I thought you might help me to make this hit."

"Now, look here," said Pooke. "I've often had a notion I should like to deal with Government. I've a lot of hay and straw."

"I'm your man. Trust me. If I get to deal with Government about the timber, they'll have confidence in me, for the oak is about first-rate, and no mistake. They'll become confiding, and I'll speak a word for you. But if you haven't any loose cash, such as four or five hundred pounds"— Pepperill stood up, and took his hat.

"Don't go in a hurry," said Pooke. "That's been my ambition, to deal with Government. Then if one has mouldy hay, one can get rid of it at a good figure, and Government is so innocent, it will buy barley straw for wheaten."

"If you are so hard up that you have no money"—

"I—I hard up? Sit down again, Pasco."

Pooke considered for a moment, and then said, "Now, I know well enough that in business matters sometimes one wants a loan. It is always so. If you'll just give me a leg up with Government, I don't mind accommodating you. But—I must have security."

"On my stores?"

"No; they might sell out. On your house."

"Won't my note of hand do?"

"No, it won't," answered Pooke. "See here: my Jan has gone down your way to make it up with Kitty. When they have settled, you get me your deeds, and then I don't mind advancing the sum you want on that security—that is, if Kitty accepts Jan."

"She will do so, of course," said Pepperill.

"Well, of course," said Pooke.

CHAPTER XXVI

SILVER PENINKS

As soon in the morning as Kate could disengage herself from the tasks which her aunt at once imposed on her, she ran to the cottage occupied by the wife and

children of Roger Redmore. It was of cob, or clay and straw beaten and trampled together, then shaved down, and the whole thatched.

Such cottages last for centuries, and are warm and dry. So long as the thatch is preserved over the walls, there is simply no saying how long they may endure, but if the rain be suffered to fall on the top of the walls, the clay crumbles rapidly away. The cob is usually whitewashed, and the white faces of these dwellings of the poor under the brown velvet-pile thatched roofs, with the blinking windows beneath the straw thatching just raised, like the brow of a sleepy eye, have an infinitely more pleasing, cosy appearance than the modern cottages of brick or stone, roofed with cold blue slate.

The cottage of the Redmores was built against a red hedge, rank with hawthorn and primroses. But in verity it was no longer the cottage of the Redmores, for the family had been given notice to quit, and although after Lady-Day Farmer Pooke had suffered the woman to inhabit it for a few weeks, yet now the term of his concession was exceeded. He had a new workman coming in, and the unhappy woman was forced to leave.

When Kate arrived at the dwelling, she found that some sympathetic neighbours were there, who were assisting Jane Redmore to remove her sticks of furniture from the interior. The labourer who was incomer was kindly, and also lent a hand. Her goods had been brought out into the lane, and were piled up together against the bank, and on them she sat crying, with her children frightened and sobbing around her. Neighbours had been good to her, and now endeavoured to appease the tears and distress of the children with offers of bread and treacle, and bits of saffron cake, and endearments. The woman herself was helpless; she did not know whither she should betake herself for the night, where she should bestow her goods.

The incomer urged Mrs. Redmore to tell him what were her intentions. He must bring in his own family that afternoon, and would help her, as much as he was able, to settle herself somewhere. It was not possible for her to remain in the road. The parish officers would interfere, and carry her off to the poorhouse; but it was uncertain whether she could be accommodated there, interposed a neighbour, as the house was full of real widows.

Mrs. Redmore was a feeble, incapable creature, delicate, without the mental or moral power of rising to an emergency and forming a resolution. She sat weeping and crying out that she was without Roger, and he always managed for her.

"But you see, Jane," argued a neighbour, "as how Roger can't be here for very good reasons, which us needn't mention, and so someone must do something, and who else is there but you?"

"I wish I was dead," wailed the poor creature.

"Well, now, Jane," said the neighbour, "don't ye be so silly. If you was dead, what'd become o' the childer?"

At this juncture Kate arrived, breathless with running.

"It is well." She stood panting, with her eyes bright with pleasure at the consciousness that she brought relief. "I asked my father, and he says Mrs. Redmore and the little ones may go into his cottage at Roundle Post, and stay there till something is settled."

"That's brave!" exclaimed the women who were standing round. "Now, let me take the little ones, Jane, and you lead the way, and Matthew Woodman, he'll help to carry some of your things."

"I have the key," said Kate; "and the distance is nothing."

"Lawk a mussy!" exclaimed one of the women; "what would us ever a' done wi'out you, Kitty. The poor creetur is that flummaged and mazed, her don't seem right in her head, and us couldn't do nothing with she."

Mrs. Redmore caught Kate's hand, and kissed it.

"We'd all a' died here, but for you," she said.

"Indeed," answered Kate, hastily snatching her hand away, "it is my father who has come to your assistance not I. He lends you the house."

"But you axed him for it. Oh, if Roger could do anything for you!"

"I assure you my father is the one to be thanked, if anyone is."

"Well, if Roger could do aught for he, it would be the same as to you."

"Come, let us be on the move."

A little procession formed—women carrying the children, or crocks, a couple of men with wheelbarrows, removing some of the heavier goods. Then up came Jan Pooke, and at once offered his assistance, and worked as hard as any.

As soon as the poor woman was settled into her new quarters, Jan sidled up to Kate, and, seizing her hand and breathing heavily, said, "Kitty, I want to say something to you."

The girl looked at him inquiringly, waiting for what he had to say.

"I mean, Kitty, alone."

"I am Kitty Alone," observed she, with a smile.

"I don't mean that. I have something I want to say to you."

"What is it?" said she. "You look very odd."

"It's—it's—the silver peninks."

"What of them?"

It must be premised that the "silver peninks" are the *narcissus poeticus*.

"They are in an orchard."

"I know it," said Kate. "Lovely they are—and yet, somehow, I like the daffodils as well."

"Now, it's a curious thing," said Jan, "that the same roots bring up first daffies, and then silver peninks."

"That is not possible," objected Kate.

"But it is so. Come into the orchard, Kitty, and see for yourself."

"I know, without seeing, that it cannot be."

"If you will come and look, Kitty, you will see that just where the daffies were, there the peninks are now. When the daffies die down, the peninks bloom."

"Exactly, Jan, because their time for blooming is a month later than the daffodils."

"But they come out of the same roots."

"That cannot be, by any means."

Pooke rubbed his head, and said humbly, "I know, Kitty, I'm a duffer, and that you're clever, but I've seen 'em with my own eyes."

"Have you ever dug up the bulbs?"

"No, I can't say I have done that."

"Till you have, you cannot say that the golden flower and the silver flower spring from one root."

"It isn't only the peninks, Kitty—can't you understand?"

"I do not. You are very wonderful to-day."

"I want to talk to you in the orchard."

"You can say what it is, here."

"No, I cannot. I want to show you the silver peninks, and I want to say"—he let go her hand, with which he had been sawing.

Kate looked round. It would be considerate to leave the poor woman alone with her children to get settled into her new quarters, and she desired to escape another outburst of gratitude.

"Well, Jan, I will go and look at the flowers, and I hope to show you your mistake—the withered heads of daffodil apart from the bursting bud of the penink."

The two young people walked together down the lane to the gate into the orchard. Jan threw this open, and Kate, without hesitation, stepped in.

"Now," said Jan, "I said it was not the peninks."

"What is not the peninks—the daffodils? I thought you said that the one plant was the same which throws up yellow flowers and white ones."

"You try not to understand me, Kitty."

"I am trying hard to understand you, Jan."

“Look here,” he exclaimed, letting go the gate. Kate did as desired; she looked him full in the face. His mouth was twitching. “Tell me, Kate”—

She waited for him to conclude the sentence, and as he did not, she asked him gently what it was that he desired her to tell him.

“You know already what I mean,” he exclaimed, breathing short and quick.

Kate shook her head.

“Look here, Kitty. My father has given his consent at last, and I am going to be married.”

“I am so glad to hear it, Jan.”

“Kate, you tease me. You—you”—

“Indeed, I wish you all happiness.”

“That I can only have with you.”

“With me?” Kate was frightened, drew back, and fixed her great, dark blue, tranquil eyes on him. The sweat rolled off his brow.

“Oh, Jan! What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean. You shall be my missus.”

“Jan—that cannot be.”

“Why not? Give me your hand—no, give me both.”

“I cannot do that.”

A pause ensued.

“Kitty, you don’t care for me?”

“I do care for you, Jan.”

“Then love me—take me. Sister Sue will be so pleased.”

“I cannot do it, Jan, even for sister Sue.”

“You cannot love me?” he gasped, and his face lost its colour. “Oh, Kitty, since we were in the boat together I have thought only of you.”

“And before that, of Rose. Was it not so?”

“No, Kitty. Rose rather teased me.”

“Jan, you are a dear, good old fellow, and I like you better than any—I mean, almost better than anyone else in the world.”

“Whom do you like better?” he inquired in a tone between sulk and anger.

“My dear father, of course.”

“Oh, your father!—anyone else?”

“I love the dear old parson.”

“The parson? why so?”

“Because one can learn so much from him.”

“Oh, learn, learn!” exclaimed Pooke impatiently. “At that rate you will love the schoolmaster, for he can teach you all sorts of things—why some stars twinkle and others do not; and why the tides do not come regular by half an hour. If that sort of foolery suits you, he’ll do.”

“It is no foolery, dear friend Jan. I have said that I did regard and like you.” Her face had become crimson.

“But you will not love me.”

“Jan, I shall always think of you as a brother or a cousin. You are so good, so true, so kind. You deserve the best girl in Coombe, and I am not that.”

He wanted to interrupt her, but she proceeded, laying her finger-tips on his breast.

“No, Jan, I am not that—I know it well; and I know that your father, not even sister Sue, would have you marry me. I cannot love you, and you would be unhappy with me.”

“Why that?”

“Because I would be for ever asking you questions which you could not answer. And I, with you, would not be happy, because I could get no answers out of you. You would be telling me such things as that silver peninks sprang out of daffodil roots, and that—I could not believe.”

“So you refuse me?”

“Jan, you must get a good dear wife, who will believe that silver peninks grow out of daffodil bulbs—will not bother whether they do or not—one who loves you with her whole heart. I know one who does that—no—listen to me!” as he made a gesture of impatience, as if he would turn away. “Let me speak plainly, Jan. Rose is a merry, good-hearted girl; and if she has done an unkind thing to me, it has not been out of malice, but because it made her mad to think that you did not love her, and cared a little for me. No one in Coombe can say a bad word against her. She is the prettiest girl in all the country round. She is always neat and fitty (dapper). If you know at all what love is, Jan, you must judge how miserable Rose is, when, loving you with all her heart, she finds you indifferent, and even rough towards her; she hates me, only because you prefer me to her. Your father, I am quite sure, has no wish to see you marry anyone but Rose. Sister Sue is her friend, and Sue knows and cares nothing about me. Let us always remain friends. I shall ever value you for your goodness of heart, dear Jan. I wish I could love you enough to accept you, but I cannot—I cannot, Jan—and after saying that silver peninks”—

“Oh, confound the peninks!” he used a worse word than “confound.”

“Jan! Do not say that. It is a necessity of my heart to learn. I must ask questions, and I never can love a man who cannot give me something to satisfy my mind. Dear Jan, if we were married, and you said that silver”—

He stamped his feet.

"Well, never mind the peninks. It cannot be, Jan. It cannot be. We were never created for each other. Woman is made out of a rib of the man to whom she must belong. If I am so eager to ask questions, and get to know things, that shows, Jan, I was never made out of your rib, never taken from your side, and so never can go there."

CHAPTER XXVII

TROUBLE

When Kate returned to Coombe Cellars, she saw that some trouble had occurred. Her aunt was sitting at the table in tears, Pasco had planted himself on the settle, with his legs stretched before him, wide apart, the soles turned up and his hands in his pockets. His hat was on and he was whistling a tune—a strain out of Jackson's "Tee-dum"—in unconcern.

Kate had heard enough of the altercations between her aunt and uncle to be aware that their circumstances were strained, and that Zerah disbelieved in her husband's business capacities. Pasco had himself admitted to her, on the drive from Brimpts, that he was in difficulties.

Zerah, so far from refraining from her comments before Kate, hailed her entrance as an opportunity for renewing her animadversions on Pasco.

"Look here, Kitty! Here is what we have come to—read that! Your uncle, like a reckless fool, has gone and bought wool when there is no sale for it, and has given a bill for it which has expired. The bank has returned it to Coaker, dishonoured,—dishonoured, do you hear that, Pasco?—and here is Coaker, furious, and demanding immediate payment. On the other side, there is the Teignmouth coal merchant threatening proceedings. What is to be done?"

Kate looked at her uncle.

"Don't be excited and angry, Zerah," said he, with the utmost composure. "After rain comes sunshine. It is darkest before dawn. When the tide is at lowest ebb, it is on the turn to the flow."

"But what is to be done? Dishonoured!" exclaimed Zerah.

"Dishonoured?—fiddlesticks! The bill is returned, that is all. The money will come."

"Whence. Can you stamp on the ground and make the coin leap up? Can you throw your net into the Teign and gather guineas as you can shrimps?"

"It will come right," said Pasco. "There is no need for this heat, I tell you. I have seen Farmer Pooke, and he will advance me five hundred pounds."

"Yes—on the security of this house."

"Well, what of that?"

"And five hundred pounds will not suffice to meet all the claims."

"Well, there are Kitty's hundreds."

"They shall not be touched."

"You promised me the loan of them, did you not, Kitty?" asked her uncle, scarcely raising his head to look at her.

"Yes, you are heartily welcome to them," said the girl.

"They shall not be touched!" exclaimed Zerah, leaning her fists on the table.

"That is as Jason thinks and chooses," answered Pasco. "He is trustee for Kitty, not you. He got me into the hobble, and must get me out."

"What!—did he get you into this about the wool?"

"I should have managed about the wool, were it not for the Brimpts business."

"And the coals?" asked Zerah ironically.

"I can manage well enough when not drawn away into foreign speculations. Jason persuaded me against my will to embark in this timber business, and that is it which is creating this obstruction. He got me in—he must get me out. Kate's a good girl,—she helps, and don't rate and rant as you do, Zerah."

"I don't say she is not a good girl," retorted Zerah. "What I say is, you are a bad uncle to desire to rob her"—

"Rob her? I ask only a loan for a few weeks. Her money and that from Pooke will set us on our feet again."

At that moment, the man just alluded to came in with much noise. His face was red, his expression one of great anger, and without a greeting, he roared forth—

"It is an insult. The girl is an idiot. She has refused him—him—a Pooke!"

"Who? What?" asked Zerah, letting go the table and staggering back, overcome by a dreadful anticipation of evil.

"Who? What?" retorted Pooke, shaking his red face and then his great flabby hand at Kate. "She—Kitty Alone—has said No to my John!"

Zerah uttered an exclamation of dismay. Pasco's jaw fell, and, drawing in his feet, he pulled his hands from his pockets and leaned them on the arms of the settle, to be ready to lift himself.

"She—that chit—has dared to refuse him!" roared Pooke. "Not that I wanted her as my daughter. Heaven defend! I think my John is worth better girls than she. But that she should have refused him—my John—she who ought to have gone down on her knees and thanked him if he gave her a look—that she should have the impudence—the—the"—he choked with rage. "Now, not one penny

of mine shall you have, not on note of hand, on no security of your beggarly house—a cockle and winkle eating tea-house—bah!—not a penny!"

Then he turned, snapped his fingers at Zerah and Pasco, and went out.

There ensued a dead hush for some moments. Kate had turned very white, and looked with large frightened eyes at her uncle, then at her aunt. She felt that this was but the first puff of a storm which would break in full force on her head.

Pasco stumbled to his feet, planted his right fist in the hollow of his left palm, and, coming up close to Kate, said hoarsely, "You won't have him? You, you frog in a well! You won't have him, the richest young chap in Coombe! I say you shall have him. You shall run after Mr. Pooke, and say it is all a mistake—you take Jan thankfully—you only said No just out of bashfulness, you did not think yourself worthy. Tell him you said No because you thought Jan was asking you against his father's wishes. Say that now you know how the old man feels, you gratefully accept. Do you hear? Run."

Kate did not move. Her head had fallen on her bosom when he began, now she raised it, and, looking her uncle steadily in the face, she said, "I cannot. I have told Jan my reasons."

"Reasons, indeed! precious reasons. What are they?"

Kate did not answer. Her reasons were such as Pasco could not understand.

"Kate," interposed Zerah in an agitated voice, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Oh, dear aunt, it is true, I cannot take Jan. I have refused him, and I cannot, will not withdraw the No. In this matter I alone am answerable, and answerable to God."

"I insist," stormed Pasco.

"I cannot obey," answered Kate.

"Cannot—will not obey us who have brought you up. I suppose next you will refuse to obey your father?"

"In this matter, yes, if he were to order me to take Jan Pooke."

"I'll force you to take him."

"You cannot do that, uncle." She spoke with composure, whereas he was in a towering passion.

"Look at this," said he, snatching up the letter from the table. "I'm dishonoured now, indeed, as Zerah says. If you take Jan, all is well. The old father will find me money, and all runs on wheels. You put in your spoke, and everything is upset. Dishonoured, ruined, beggared—and all through you."

He beat down his hat over his brows, laughed wildly, and shook his fist at Kate. "I was chucked out of the trap t'other day. I wish I had broken my neck sooner than come to this. I've nourished a viper in my bosom, and now it turns and stings me."

"Leave her to me," said Zerah. "You make matters worse by your violence. That is the way with you men. Leave her to me."

Pasco flung himself back in the settle, and thrust out his legs as before, and rammed his fists into his pockets. Before he had held his chin up, now it was buried in his shirt front.

Then Zerah pulled her niece into the window. Kate drew a long breath. She knew that now came the worst trial of all.

"Kitty," said the aunt, holding both the girl's arms, and looking into her face. "Are you utterly heartless? Is it a matter of no concern to you that we should be ruined? You have but to run after Mr. Pooke, and all will be well. Why should you not give way to my wishes and those of your uncle? What have you against the lad? He is good, and he is rich."

"I do not love him," answered Kate confusedly.

"But he is so well off. There is no one with half his prospects in the place. I can't understand. He likes you. He is desperately fond of you."

"I will never take one I do not love," said Kate, shaking her head.

"And you have heard the condition we are in? Your uncle owes money on all sides. If money is due to him, he cannot recover it. He has sold the farm, there remains only this house. If he sells that, we are without a home. Then where will you be? Come—yield to our wishes, child."

"I cannot, indeed I cannot," answered Kate, trembling in all her limbs. "I would have taken Jan if I could."

"What is to prevent you?"

Kate was silent.

"There is—there can be no one else in the way?" pursued Zerah.

Again no answer.

"Stubborn and hardhearted, that is what you are," said Zerah bitterly. "It is all the same to you what becomes of us. We reared you. We have loved you. I have been to you as a mother. You have never shown either your uncle or me that you were grateful for what we have done for you. Your own father you treat as though he were a dog—take no notice of him. I have heard of hearts of stone, I never believed in them before. I do now. No; there is—there can be no one else so insensible. You have not got it in you to love anyone."

Kate sighed. The tears ran down her cheeks.

"Dear aunt, I have always loved you, and I love you now, and ever will."

"Then show me that you have a heart," said Zerah. "Words without deeds are wind. If my own dear child Wilmot had been alive, this would not have happened. Jan would have loved her, not you; and even if she had not cared for him, yet, when she knew my wishes, she would have yielded. She would have given her heart's blood for me."

Kate pressed her folded hands to her bosom; her heart was bursting with pain.

"What is it that I ask of you?" pursued Zerah, and brushed the tears from her own eyes. "Nothing but what is for your own advantage, your own happiness. How will you like starvation—rags, no roof over your head? If you take Jan Pooke, you become the first woman in the place. You will have money to do with just as you likes. Jan is a good-hearted fellow. Never have you heard of his having wronged man, woman, or child. He is amiable; you can turn him round your little finger. What more can a woman wish for?"

Kate's mind was tossed with trouble. She had so often longed that the opportunity might arise for her to prove to her aunt that she loved her. Now the occasion had come. The future was full of threat and disaster, and one word from her might avert this and restore serenity; and not only would that one word relieve her uncle and aunt in their present distress, but it would also suffice to make poor, worthy Jan a happy man. But that word she could not speak, she could not prevail with herself to speak it. She liked John Pooke, and but for one thing she perhaps might have yielded—that one thing was that she had met with a man very different from the young yeoman, one who could answer questions and satisfy her hungry mind.

"I cannot, dear auntie."

"Cannot? What stands in the way? *Who* stands in the way?"

"I cannot, auntie."

"Perverse, headstrong, heartless child! When luck comes to you, you throw it away, and cast your own self, and all belonging to you, into misery. I wish you had never come here; I wish I had never nursed you in my arms, never cared for you as a child, never watched over you as a grown girl."

"Auntie!"

"Away—I will not speak to you again."

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALTERNATIVES

Pasco had left the room and the house. His anger with Kate was obscured by his unrest as to his own condition. What could he do? He must meet the bill for the wool, he must pay for the Brimpts timber before he removed any of it, or forfeit

what had already been spent over felling the trees. He must pay the coal merchant's account, or bailiffs would be put into the house.

He went into his stores and observed the contents of his warehouse. There was wool on the upper storey, coal was lodged below. Above stairs all the space was pretty well filled with fleeces.

Then he went to his stable, and looked at his cob, then into the covered shed that served as coach-house. He put his hand in his pocket, pulled out the key, and opened the back of the cart. The shavings he had put in were there still. He could not carry them into the house now, whilst Zerah was engaged with Kate. Besides, he would not require so much kindling matter within doors. Where should he bestow it?

Suspecting that he heard a step approach, Pasco hastily closed the flap of the cart, and went to the front of the shed. No one was there. He returned to the shed and reopened the box of the cart, and filled his arms with shavings, came out and hastily ran across with them to his warehouse.

Then he came back on his traces, carefully picking up the particles that had escaped him. There remained more in his dog-cart. Would it do for him to run to and fro, conveying the light shavings from shed to warehouse? Might it not attract attention? What would a customer think were he to come for coals, and find a bundle of kindling wood among them? What would neighbours think at the light curls caught by the wind and carried away over the fields?

He went hastily back to the warehouse and collected the bundle he had just taken there, and brought it all back in a sack, and rammed this sack into the box of his cart; and then went again to the stores, and raked the coals over the particles of shavings that remained.

Then Pasco harnessed his cob, and drove away to the little town of Newton. A craving desire had come over him to see again the new public-house erected in the place of that which had been burnt. He had no clear notion why he desired to see it.

As he drove along, he passed the mill, and Ash, the miller, who was standing outside his house, hailed him.

"By the way, Pepperill—sorry to detain you; there is a little account of mine I fancy has been overlooked. Will you wait?—I will run in and fetch it; my Rose—she does all the writing for me, I'm a poor scholard—she has just made it out again. It was sent in Christmas, and forgot, I s'pose, then again Lady-Day, and I reckon again overlooked. You won't mind my telling of it, and if you could make it convenient to pay"—

"Certainly, at once," answered Pasco, and thrust his hand into his pocket and drew it forth empty. "No hurry for a day or two, I reckon? I find I have come away without my purse."

"Oh no, not for a day or two; but when it suits you, I shall be obliged."

"Will to-morrow do?"

"Of course. I say, Pepperill, your brother-in-law is a right sort of a man."

"Why do you say that?"

"Giving up his cottage to that poor creetur, Jane Redmore."

"I do not understand you."

"What—have you not heard? There was like to be a proper mess. Farmer Pooke wanted Roger's cottage for his new man, and so she, poor soul, had to turn out. There was no help for it. She had no notion where to go, and what to do. A lost sort of creetur I always thought, and now that Roger is away and not to be found, and what wi' the death of her little maid, gone almost tottle (silly). Her had to clear out, and folks was nigh mazed to know what to do wi' her, when your niece, Kitty Alone, came and said as how her father Jason gave his cottage till Jane Redmore could settle something."

"I never heard a word of this till this moment," said Pasco. "When did it happen?"

"To-day—not long ago. Jane Redmore is in Jason Quarm's house now. Kate gave her the key."

Pepperill grew red, and said, not looking Ash in the face, but away at the ears of his horse, "I don't like this—not at all. We ought to get rid of Redmore and all his belongings. You are not safe in your house, your mill is not safe, I am not safe, with that firebrand coming and going amongst us—and come and go he will so long as his wife and children be here. He were mighty fond of they."

"Roger will do you no harm. Your people have been good to him."

"What! do you call Jason 'my people'?"

"Jason and Kitty have housed his wife."

"It don't follow that he loves me. I set the men in pursuit of him at Dart-meet, and he knows it, and hates me. I live in fear of him as long as he is uncaught."

The miller shrugged his shoulders. "Roger is not so bad, but Farmer Pooke did try him terrible. I won't detain you. You'll mind and pay that little account, will you not—to-morrow?"

"Yes—certain."

Then Pepperill drove on. He passed a man in a cart, and the man did not salute him. In fact, the way was narrow, and the fellow was careful that the wheels should clear, and had not leisure to look at and touch his hat to Pasco. But Pepperill regarded the omission as an intentional slight. He was in an irritable condition, and when shortly after he drove before a cottage, and the woman in the doorway, hushing her child, did not address him, or answer his address, his brows knitted and he swore that everyone was against him. His disturbed and anxious mind longed for recognition, flattery, to give it ease, and unless he received this from everyone, he suspected that there was a combination against him, that a wind of his difficulties had got abroad, and that folk considered he was no longer worth paying attention to.

There were not many on the road, and he acted capriciously towards those few. Some he greeted, others he passed without notice. He fancied he detected a sneer in the faces of such as returned his salutation or a purposeful lessening of cordiality. On reaching the new inn at Newton, his heart was full of anger against all mankind.

The host did not receive him with cordiality, as he expected; he looked out at the door and went in again with a hasty nod.

In the yard Pasco cautiously opened his gig-box when the ostler was not looking and drew out a halter, then, hastily closed the flaps, and, extending the cord, said, “I’m not going to stay many minutes; don’t take the cob out of harness. Let him stand and eat a bite, that is all.”

Then Pepperill went into the inn and called for a glass of ale.

“Halloa, Pepperill!” said a cheery voice, and Coaker moved up to him at the table. “How are you? Sold the wool yet? I hear there is a rise.”

Pepperill drew back and turned blood-red; this was the man to whom he owed so much money—the man to whom he had given the bill that was dishonoured.

“No, I haven’t sold,” answered Pasco surlily.

“I advise you not to. You’ll make something yet. That Australian wool won’t go down with our weavers. It’s not our quality, too fine, not tough enough. Hold back, and you will make your price.”

“That is all very well for you to say, but”— Pasco checked himself. What was on his lips was—"It is ready-money I need, not a profit a few months hence."

“There’s good things coming to you yet,” continued Coaker. “I heard on the moor that your brother-in-law has near on made a sale of the Brimpts oaks.”

“He has?”

“Yes; there has been a timber merchant from Portsmouth come there. He wanted the Okehampton oaks, but was too late, they had been picked up, so he came on to Dart-meet, and I reckon now it is only about price they are haggling, that is all.” Coaker dropped his voice and said, “There’s an awkwardness about that bill of yours. Nay, don’t kick out; I won’t be so terrible down on you just for a fortnight or three weeks. I’ll let you turn that timber over first if you will be sharp about it. There, don’t say I’m down on you. A fortnight or three weeks I give you.”

Pasco held up his head, but the sudden elation was damped by the thought that he could not remove any of the timber till the covenanted price had been paid for it, and whence was this money to come? Money he must have to enable him to hold on with the wool till it fetched a better price, and to dispose of the oaks he had felled on the moor, to enable him to escape the scandal and humiliation of having the bailiffs put in his house by the coal merchant.

But then, in the event of a certain contingency which loomed before Pasco’s inner eye, there would be no wool to be disposed of, it would have been

reduced to—even to himself he would not complete the sentence. Would that matter? The insurance would more than cover the loss, and he would be able to dispose of the oak.

"Will you have a pipe?" asked Coaker, and after having stuffed his tobacco into his bowl, he produced a match-box and struck a light with a lucifer. At the period of this tale lucifer matches were a novelty. The tinder-box was in general use for domestic purposes, and men carried about with them small metal boxes, armed with a steel side, containing amadou and flint, for kindling their pipes and cigars.

"What do you call that?" asked Pepperill, observing the proceedings of the farmer.

"Ah! I reckon this be one of the finest inventions of the times. Have you never seen or read of this yet? It is better than the phosphorus bottle, and than Holmberg's box. Look here. This little stick has got some chemical stuff, sulphur and something else, phosphorus, I believe, at the end; all you have to do is to rub, and the whole bursts into flame."

Pepperill took the box, turned it over, opened it, looked at and smelt the matches.

"Are they terrible expensive?" he asked musingly.

"Oh no. There, as you are curious about it, I'll give you the box, and you can show it to your missus."

Pasco put out his hand to shake that of Coaker. It was cold and trembled.

The devil was playing a game with him. He was offering him a reprieve from his embarrassments, and at the same time thrusting him forward to the accomplishment of the evil deed on which he brooded, and was placing in his hands the means of executing it.

Pasco sank into deep thought, looking at the match-box and playing with it, now opening, then shutting it.

"I'm depriving you of it," he said.

"Not a bit. I have a dozen. They are just brought in from London and are selling off amazin' fast at Ashburton. In a week they'll be all over the country and the tinder boxes chucked away."

"Are they dangerous—I mean to carry about with one?" asked Pasco.

"Not a bit. There is no fire till you strike it out."

Then Pepperill again fell into meditation. He put the box into his pocket, and sat looking before him into space, speechless.

Suddenly a shock went through his frame. He had been touched on the arm by Coaker.

"What is it?" he asked, with quivering lips.

"Look at the landlord," said the farmer in an undertone, with his hand to his mouth. "Do you know what folks say of him?"

Pasco asked with his eyes. He could not frame the words with his lips.

"They do say that he set fire to the old place, so as to get the insurance money for rebuilding in grand style."

"A tramp did it—got into the cellar," said Pasco in a whisper.

"Nobody never saw thickey tramp come, and sure and sartain nobody never saw him go. I don't believe in the tramp. He did it himself."

"You should not speak that unless sure of it," said Pepperill, thrusting back his chair. "You have no evidence."

"Oh, evidence! Folks talk, and form their opinion."

"Talk first and form opinions after on the idle chatter—that's about it."

Pasco stood up. He was alarmed. He was afraid he had not fastened the box of his dog-cart. The flap might have fallen, and then the interior would be exposed to view; and what would the ostler, what would anyone think who happened to come into the stable-yard and saw what constituted the lading of his cart? His hand had shaken as he turned the key, after bringing out the halter; almost certainly in his nervousness he had imperfectly turned it. He could not rest. He went out into the yard and looked at his dog-cart. It was closed. He tried the key. The lock was fast.

"Put the cob in," said he to the ostler, and he returned, much relieved, to the house.

Coaker had departed. Pepperill called for another glass of ale, and found interest in observing the landlord. That man had set fire to his tavern so that he might construct an hotel. He seemed cheery. He was not bowed down with consciousness of guilt. His voice was loud, his spirits buoyant. He looked Pepperill full in the eyes, and it was the eyes of Pepperill that fell, not those of the landlord.

"I wonder," considered Pasco, "whether he did do it, or did not? If he did not, it is just as bad as if he did, for people charge him with it all the same. No one will believe he is innocent. Suppose he did it—and I reckon it is most likely—well, Providence don't seem to ha' turned against him; on the contrary, it is a showering o' prosperity over him. P'r'aps, after all, there ain't no wrong in it. It was his own house he burnt. A man may do what he will with his own." He put resolutely from him the thought of fraud on the insurance company. What was a company? Something impersonal. Then Pepperill rose, paid for his ale, and went forth. As he jumped into the dog-cart, the ostler held up the halter.

"Will you give me the key and I will put it inside?" asked the man.

"No, thank you—hand it to me."

The ostler gave him the halter, and Pepperill fastened it to the splashboard and drove on. He had attached it hastily, carelessly, and before long the rope uncoiled and hung before him. His eyes were drawn to it.

“What would come to me if the bailiffs were put into the house, and Coombe Cellars were sold over my head to pay what I owe?”

Pasco was a man who could live only where he was esteemed, looked up to, and where he could impose on underlings and brag among equals. The idea of being in every man’s mouth as “gone scatt”—a ruined man—was intolerable. “I would die rather than that,” he exclaimed aloud, and put his hand to the halter to twist it and knot it again.

It was a sin to commit suicide. His life was his own, but he could not take that. His storehouse with his stores was his own. Would it be wrong for him to destroy that? Better that than his own life. There were but two courses open to him. He must either use the halter for his own neck and swing in the barn, or recover himself out of the insurance money on his stores. He drove on brooding over this question, arguing with his conscience, and presently he held up his head. He saw that his life was too precious to be thrown away. What would Zerah do without him? He must consider his wife, her despair, her tears. He had no right to make her a widow, homeless. Were he to die—that would not relieve the strain. The sale would take place just the same, and Zerah be left destitute. Pepperill held up his head. He felt virtuous, heroic; he had done the right thing for the sake of his dear wife, made his election, and saw a new day dawning—dawning across a lurid glare.

CHAPTER XXIX

A FRIEND GAINED

Kate fled upstairs to her bedroom, where she might be alone and have free scope for tears. She threw herself on her knees by her bed, and putting her hands under the patchwork quilt, drew it over her ears and head, that the sound of her sobs might be muffled, so as not to reach her aunt were she to ascend the staircase. She feared lest there should be a repetition of the scene on the return of her father. Aunt Zerah would wait impatiently for him, and the moment that he arrived, would pour forth her story, not in his ear only, but in Kate’s as well, whom she would forcibly retain to hear it and receive the reproaches of her father. That her father would be disappointed that she had put from her the chance of becoming a well-to-do yeoman’s wife, she knew for certain. He had never concerned himself very greatly about her, had never endeavoured to sound her mind and put his finger on her heart, and would be quite unable to appreciate the reasons she could give for her conduct; he would look on her refusal of young Pooke as a bit of girlish caprice. She feared that he would view

it as a bad speculation, and would hasten off without consulting her, to endeavour to pacify the mortified vanity of the old man, and to assure the young one that she, Kate, had rejected him out of girlish bashfulness, whilst loving him in her heart. There was no bond of sympathy between her father and herself. That which filled his mind had no place in hers; what interested him she shrank from. She had returned from Dartmoor with heart glowing with gratitude to him for having insisted on her having a holiday, to her uncle for having taken her out to Dartmoor, and to her aunt for having spared her. It had been her desire to find occasions to prove to them that she was grateful, and now, her first act on return was to run contrary to their wishes, and anger her uncle and aunt, and lay up matter for reprimand on the arrival of her father.

Her aunt had never comprehended the character of Kate, filled to the full as her heart was with bitterness at the loss of her own daughter. Kate was in all points the reverse of Wilmot, and because so unlike, woke the antipathy of the bereaved mother, as though the silence and reserve of Kate were assumed out of slight to the memory of the merry, open-hearted girl. She looked on her niece as perverse, as acting in everything out of a spirit of contrariety. How else explain that a young girl with warm blood in her veins should not retain the longings and express the wishes common to other girls of her age? that she had no fancy for dress, made no efforts to coquette with anyone, had no desire for social amusements?

Wilmot had been frolicsome, roguish, winsome—did Kate desire to eschew everything that had made her cousin a sunbeam in the house, and the delight of her mother's heart, out of wilfulness, and determination not to please her aunt, not to make up to her for the loss of her own child?

Not only by her aunt was Kate regarded as heartless and perverse. That was the character she bore in the village, among the girls of her own age, among the elders who adopted the opinions of their daughters. Kate had been brought in contact with the village girls at school, in the choir, and elsewhere, and some had even attempted to make friends with her. But those things which occupied the whole souls of such young creatures—dress, the budding inclination to attract the youths of the place—were distasteful to Kate; there was nothing in common between them and her, and when both became conscious of this, they mutually drew apart, and the girls arrived at the same conclusion as her aunt, that she was a dull, unfeeling child, who was best left alone.

Kate had felt acutely this solitariness in which she lived; her aunt had often thrown it in her teeth that she made no friends. Her father was displeased that he heard no good report of his daughter; her uncle had rudely told her that a girl who made herself so unpopular to her own sex would never attract one of the other. Now the opportunity had come to her to falsify his predictions, to gratify her father, and to make her aunt proud—but she had rejected it, and was more than ever alone. Loneliness was endurable ordinarily. Kitty had her occupations, and, when not occupied, her thoughts, recently her book, to engross her; but now, when her own relatives were against her it was more than she could bear. The pain of desolation became insupportable. There were but

two persons she knew with whom she was in touch, two persons only who could feel with and for her, and to one of these she could not fly.

The rector, whom she had loved and respected, was the only friend to whom she could unburden her trouble, and she feared to approach him, because she had just done what he might not like, any more than did her uncle and aunt. He would hear, and that speedily, of her conduct, and Kate wished greatly to see him, and explain her refusal to him as far as she could, that he might not blame her. But even should her explanation prove unsatisfactory to him, she was not prepared to withdraw her refusal. Kate never wavered. She was one of those direct persons who, when they have taken a course, hold to it persistently.

She rose from her knees, bathed her face, brushed her hair, and descended.

Her aunt was in the kitchen, and averted her face as the girl entered. She did not ask Kate where she was going, nor turn her head to see what she was about.

“I shall be back again in a few minutes, auntie; if you can spare me, I should like to go out.”

No answer; and Kate left.

She had not taken many steps from the house, walking with her head down, as the glare of the sun was too strong for her tear-stung eyes, when she was caught, and before she could see in whose arms she was, she was boisterously kissed.

“You are a dear! you are a darling! I shall always love you.”

Kitty saw before her Rose Ash, with glowing cheeks and dancing eyes.

“You darling! I never believed it of you, you are so still. I thought you were sly. I am so sorry I misunderstood you; so sorry I did anything or said anything against you. I will never do it again. I will stand your friend; I will fight your battles. And, look here!”

A polished wood workbox was at her feet. She had put it down for the purpose of disengaging her hands to hug Kate.

“Look, Kitty! This is my own workbox. Is it not beautiful? It has a mother-of-pearl escutcheon on it and lock-plate. And it locks—really locks—not make-believe, like some you buy. And, see! pink silk inside. It is for you. I give it to you. It is nearly new. I am not much of a needlewoman, and so have not used it. It is really a hundred times better than that which Noah knocked—I mean, that which the bear danced upon and smashed. And there is a silver thimble in it. I give it you with all my heart—that is to say, with as much heart as I have left to give to anyone.”

Kate stepped back in astonishment. What did this mean?

“O Kitty! you really shall no longer be Kitty Alone; it shall be Kitty and Rose. We shall be regular friends. Only think! I was so jealous of you. I thought that Jan Pooke had taken a fancy to you—and I suppose the silly noodle had done so for a bit, but you know he properly belongs to me. We are to make a pair—

everyone says so, and his father and sister Sue wish it; and I'm sure, I'm sure, so do I. But men are cruel giddy, they turn and turn like weathercocks; and just for a while Jan fancied you. But you put him off bravely, you did."

"What have I done to you?" asked Kate.

"My dear, I heard it all. I saw you and Jan going to the orchard, and I was so jealous that I hid myself in the linhay. I got over the hedge and tore my frock in a bramble, but I did not heed it; I slipped in where I could peep and see, and put out my ears and listen. I know everything. I heard how you spoke up for me, and quite right and reasonable too; and how you refused him, and very sensible you was. Just think what a thing it would ha' been, Kitty, if he'd gone right off his head and married you, and then come to his senses and found he had got the wrong one, and it was me all along he should have had. You would never have known happiness after. You never would have enjoyed peace of conscience again. But you were a sensible child, and did what you ought to ha' done, and nobody can't do more than that; nor promise and vow to do more than what is in the catechism. So, now, I'm all for you, and there is my workbox I give you in place of that the bear kicked to pieces. I don't mind telling you now, Kate, that Noah did it. I put him up to it; I told him he was to do it. He didn't like it, but I forced him to it—I mean to knock the workbox from under your arm. He's a good chap is Noah, and now that it is all put right between Jan and me"—

"Is it? Have you spoken with him?"

"Oh no, I can't say that; but you have refused him. It will take him a day or two to steady his head, and then he will come up right again, and we will make it up, and be the better friends in the end. And, what is more, I'll stand friend to you, Kate. I daresay you'd like Noah, and I'll get him to walk you out on Sundays and to sweetheart you."

"I don't want Noah," said Kate, shrinking.

"Oh yes, you do. Every girl must have her young chap. It ain't natural without. I'll speak with him. He's a terrible good chap is Noah; he'll do anything I ask him. I made him knock the workbox under the bear's feet, and if he'd do that much for me, I'm sure you need not be afraid but he'd sweetheart you at my axing. Besides, he'll be tremendous thrown out when he sees me take up with Jan again, and he'll want some one to walk with, and may just as well take you as another."

"No; please, Rose, do not. I had rather be left alone."

"Stuff and fiddlesticks! It is not right that you should be without a sweetheart. You leave all that to me."

"No, dear Rose, no. You be my friend; that suffices."

"It is because I am your friend that I will do a friend's part."

"No, no, Rose."

"Well, you always were queer; I can't understand you. But never mind; we are friends, though you make me a helpless one. What is the good of a friend but to assist a girl to a lover?"

CHAPTER XXX

UNDER THE MULBERRY TREE

Kate disengaged herself from Rose, and hastened to the Rectory. She opened the garden gate. She was a privileged person there, coming when she liked about choir matters, sent messages by her uncle, who was churchwarden, running in when she had a spare hour to look at Mr. Fielding's picture-books, in strawberry time to gather the fruit and eat it, in preserving time to collect his raspberries, currants, plums, for the cook to convert into jams.

She saw the rector sitting under a mulberry tree on his lawn with a book on his lap. He had removed his hat, and the spring air fluttered his silver hair.

He saw Kate at once, and, smiling, beckoned to her to come and sit by him on the bench that half encircled the old tree.

This she would not do, but she stood before him with downcast eyes and folded hands, and said, "Please, sir, I am afraid you will be cross with me."

"I am never that, Kitty."

"No, sir, never." She raised her flashing blue eyes for a moment. "Perhaps you may be vexed with me. I've just gone and done clean contrary to what you said."

"What did I say?"

"You said after my holiday I was to go home, and obey my uncle and aunt in everything."

"I am sure I never said that."

"It was something like it—be obliging and good."

"Well, have you not been obliging and good?"

"No, sir."

"What have you done?"

"I've crossed them, and I fancy father will be cross too."

"What have you done to cross them?"

"Refused Jan Pooke."

The rector drew back against the tree and smiled.

"Refused? I don't quite understand."

"Please, sir, Jan wanted to make me his wife."

"Well?"

"And I said 'No.'"

"You had made up your mind already?"

"I knew I must say 'No.' Do you know, sir, Jan thought that silver peninks came from daffodil roots."

"Oh! and accordingly you could not say 'Yes'?"

"It was silly; was it not?"

"And that was your real, true reason for saying 'No'?"

Kitty looked down.

"You are not angry with me, sir?"

"No. Are your relations so?"

"Yes; uncle and aunt are dreadfully vexed, and that is what has made me cry. I came home wishing to do everything to please them, and the first thing I did was to make them angry and call me a little viper they had brought up in their bosom. You do not think I did wrong? You are not angry also?"

"No; I do not think you could have done otherwise, if you did not care for John Pooke."

"I did, and I do care for John Pooke."

"Then why did you not take him? Only because of the silver peninks?"

"No, sir; not that only. I care for him, but not enough; I like him, but not enough."

"Quite so. You like, but do not love him."

"Yes, that is it." Kate breathed freely. "I did not know how to put it. Do you think I did right?"

The rector paused before he answered. Then he said, signing with his thin hand, "Come here, little Kitty. Sit by me."

He took her hand in his, and, looking before him, said, "It would have been a great thing for this parish had you become John Pooke's wife, the principal woman in the place, to give tone to it, the one to whom all would look up, the strongest influence for good among the girls. I should have had great hopes that all the bread I have strewed upon the waters would not be strewn in vain."

"I thought you wished it," burst forth from the girl, with a sob. "And yet I could not—I could not indeed. Now I have turned everyone against me—everyone but Rose," she added, truthful in everything, exact in all she said.

"No, Kitty, I do not wish it. It is true, indeed, that it would be a rich blessing to such a place as this to have you as the guiding star to all the womanhood in the place, set up on such a candlestick as the Pookes' farm. But I am not so sure that the little light would burn there and not be smothered in grease, or would gutter, and become extinguished in the wind there. The place is good in itself, but not good for you. It might be an advantage to the parish, but fatal to yourself. John Pooke is an honest, worthy fellow, and he has won my respect because he saw your value and has striven to win you. But he is not the man for you. For my little Kitty I hope there will come some one possessed of better treasures than broad acres, fat beeves, and many flocks of sheep; possessed of something better even than amiability of temper."

"What is that, sir?"

"A well-stored intellect—an active mind. Kitty, no one has more regard for young John than myself, but it would have been terrible to you to have been tied to him. 'Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together' was the command of Moses, and we must not unite under one yoke the sluggish mind with that which is full of activity. No, no, Kitty. You acted rightly. The man who will be fitted to be coupled in the same plough with you will be one of another mould. He will be"—

The garden gate opened, and Walter Bramber entered. A twig of laurel caught his sleeve, and he turned to extricate himself, and did not perceive the rector and Kate. A sudden confusion came over the girl, caused—whether by her thoughts, whether by the words of the rector, whether from natural shyness, she could not tell, but she started from the seat and slipped behind the mulberry.

The schoolmaster came up to the rector when called, and found the old man with a smile playing about his lips.

"I have come, sir," said Bramber, "to ask your advice."

"In private?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Then I cannot grant you an audience now. If you will run round the mulberry, you will discover why."

Bramber was puzzled.

"Do what I say. There is someone there, someone who must retire farther than behind a tree if you are to consult me without being overheard."

The schoolmaster stepped aside to go about the mulberry, and saw Kate standing there, leaning against the trunk, holding together her skirts, and looking down.

"Oh!" laughed Walter; "this is the audience! I do not in the least mind a discussion of my concerns before such an one."

"Come out, Kitty! You hear your presence is desired," called Mr. Fielding, and the girl stepped forward. "Take the place where you were before on one side of

me, and Mr. Bramber shall sit on the other, and we will enter on the consideration of his affairs. What are they as to complexion, Bramber, sanguine or atrabilious?"

"Not cheerful, I am afraid. I have my troubles and difficulties before my eyes."

"So has Kitty. She comes to me from the same cause." Then he added, "Well, let us hear and consider."

"It concerns Mr. Puddicombe. I do not know what I ought to do, or whether I should do anything. There is an organised opposition to me, and the late schoolmaster is at the bottom of it. I can clearly perceive that not parents only, but children as well, have been worked upon to offer stubborn opposition to all my changes, and to make myself ridiculous. I need not enter into details. There is this feeling of antagonism in the place, and it paralyses me. If the children were left unmanipulated, I could get along and gain their confidence; but at home they hear what their parents say, what is said to their parents, and they come to school with a purpose not to obey me, not to listen to my instructions, and to make my task in every particular irksome and distasteful. I see precisely what Puddicombe is aiming at—to force me to use the cane, not once or twice, but continuously, and to force me to it by making discipline impossible without it. Then he will have a handle against me, and will rouse the parish to hound me out. What am I to do?"

"Have you called on him?"

"No, sir, I have not. I really could not pluck up courage to do so. I hardly know what I could say to him that is pleasant if we did meet."

"You have not yet met him?"

"No. I do not know him by sight."

"He is not a bad fellow; jovial, a sportsman at heart, and his heart was never in the school; it was to be sought in the kennels, in stables, in the ring, anywhere save in class. That was the blemish in the man. His thoroughness was not where it should have been. His centre of gravity was outside the sphere in which it was his duty to turn. But he is not a bad fellow, good-hearted, placable, and only your enemy because his vanity rather than his pocket is touched by his dismissal. I hear he has announced his intention of becoming a Dissenter; but as he hardly ever came to church when he was professedly a Churchman, I do not suppose chapel will see much of him when he professes himself a Nonconformist. It is a great misfortune when a man's interests lie outside his vocation."

"What shall I do, sir?"

"Call on him."

"What shall I say to him?"

"Something that will please him—nothing about the school; nothing about your difficulties."

“I am supremely ignorant of the cockpit and the race-course. It is very hard when two men belonging to different spheres meet; they can neither understand the other.”

“My dear young man, that is what I have been experiencing these many years here; we must strive to accommodate ourselves to inferior ways of thinking and speaking, and then, then only, shall we be able to insinuate into the gross and dark minds some spark of the higher life. Kitty, have I your permission to tell Mr. Bramber what it is that you have just communicated to me? It will be public property throughout Coombe in half an hour, if everyone does not know it now, so it will be revealing no secrets.”

Kate looked, with a startled expression in her eyes, at the rector. Why should he care to speak of this matter now? Why before Bramber? But she had confidence in him, and she did not open her lips in remonstrance.

With a quiet smile, Mr. Fielding said: “You have not yet heard the tidings with regard to our little friend here, I presume?”

“Tidings—what?” The schoolmaster looked hastily round and saw Kate’s head droop, and a twinkle come in the rector’s eye. A slight flush rose to his temples.

“Merely that she has received an offer”—

“Offer?” Bramber caught his breath, and the colour left his face.

“Of marriage,” continued Mr. Fielding composedly. “A most remarkable offer. The young man is eminently respectable, very comfortably off; age suitable; looks prepossessing; parents acquiescing.”

“Kate! Kitty!” Bramber’s voice was sharp with alarm and pain.

“I do not know whether the attachment has been one of long continuance,” proceeded the rector. “The fact of the proposal—now passing through Coombe—is like the dropping of a meteorite in its midst. Popular fame had attributed Rose Ash to John Pooke.”

“John Pooke, is it?” gasped the schoolmaster, and he sprang to his feet.

“John Pooke the younger, not the father, who is a widower of many years’ standing. The disparity of ages makes that quite impossible. The younger John it is who has aspired.”

“Kate, tell me—it cannot be. It must not be,” exclaimed Bramber, stepping before the girl, and in his excitement catching her hands and drawing them from her face, in which she had hidden them. She looked up at him with a flutter in her eyes and hectic colour in her cheeks. She made no attempt to withdraw her hands.

“By the way,” said the rector, “I will look up cockfighting in my *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and make an extract from the article, if I find one, that may be serviceable to you, Bramber, when you call on Mr. Puddicombe. I’ll go to my library. I shall not detain you many minutes.”

The many minutes were protracted to twenty. When Mr. Fielding returned, the young people were seated close to each other under the mulberry-tree, and still held hands; their eyes were bright, and their cheeks glowing.

"I am sorry I have been so long," said the rector; "but there was a great deal of matter under the head of 'Cock-pit' in the *Encyclopædia*; and I had to run through it, and cull what would be of greatest utility. I have written it out. Do not rise. I will sit beside you—no, not between you—listen! 'It must appear astonishing to every reflecting mind, that a mode of diversion so cruel and inhuman as that of cockfighting should so generally prevail, that not only the ancients, barbarians, Greeks, and Romans should have adopted it; but that a practice so savage and heathenish should be continued by Christians of all sorts, and even pursued in these better and more enlightened times.' That is how the article begins—very true, but won't do for Mr. Puddicombe. 'The islanders of Delos, it seems, were great lovers of cockfighting; and Tanagra, a city in Bœotia, the Isle of Rhodes, Chalcis in Eubœa, and the country of Media, were famous for their generous and magnanimous race of chickens.' I don't think this is much good. Puddicombe, though a schoolmaster, will hardly know the whereabouts of Delos, Tanagra, Rhodes, and Chalcis. 'The cock is not only an useful animal, but stately in his figure, and magnificent in his plumage. His tenderness towards his brood is such, that, contrary to the custom of many other males, he will scratch and provide for them with an assiduity almost equal to that of the hen; and his generosity is so great, that, on finding a hoard of meat, he will chuckle the hens together, and, without touching one bit himself, will relinquish the whole of it to them. He was called *the bird*, κατ' ἐξοχήν by many of the ancients'—But, bless me, are you attending?"

"Mr. Fielding," answered Bramber, "I do not think I shall have much trouble in finding a topic on which to speak with my predecessor in the school. He was Kitty's schoolmaster. She will introduce me to him. We will go to him at once; and when he hears what we have to say,—that I, the new schoolmaster, am going to take to me the favourite, most docile, the best scholar of the old one; and when he learns that he is the first person to whom we make the announcement, and that he is at liberty to run up and down, and in and out of every house, communicating the news,—why, I am pretty sure that he will be won."

"Well, now!"

"And Kitty will cease to be Kitty Alone some time next year."

CHAPTER XXXI

ON MISCHIEF BENT

When Pasco returned from Newton, he drew up his tax-cart close to the door of the storehouse, took the horse out, but did not unharness him; he merely removed the bridle and gave the brute a feed.

Then he entered the dwelling-house and seated himself at the kitchen table without a word to his wife, and emptied his pocket on the board. A couple of sovereigns and a few shillings clinked together. With his forefinger he separated the gold from the silver coins.

"What! money come in, in place of going out?" asked Zerah. Then, looking over his shoulder, she said, "And precious little it is."

"Little is better than nothing," growled Pasco. "I got this from Cole, the baker. I'd somehow forgot he owed me a trifle, and he stopped me and paid his account. I owe something to the miller, so I'm no better off than I was. In at one pocket, out at the other."

"Now look here, Pasco," said his wife. "For first and last I say this. I have laid by a trifle that I have earned by cockles and winkles, whilst you have been chucking away in coals and wool. If you will pass me your word not to run into extravagance, and not to listen to any more of Jason's schemes, I will let you have this. No"—she corrected her intent; "you are not to be trusted with the money. It shall not leave my hand to go into yours. And your word ain't of any strength, it is as weak as your resolutions. I'll settle the matter of the coals with the merchant at Teignmouth; that is the great call at this moment. I don't do it for you, but to avoid the scandal of having bailiffs in the house—a house where I've kept myself respectable so many years, and where my Wilmot was born and died. I wouldn't have the brokers sell the bed she laid on when dead, not for all my savings. So I'll over to Teignmouth and see what I can manage about the coal merchant's bill; and you, just take that money and pay Ash the miller, and have done with him."

Again the thought rose up in the mind of Pasco that the Evil One was making sport of him. At one time he was in a condition of hopelessness, in another moment there was a lightening in the sky before him. The means of striking fire had been put into his hands at the same time that he was shown that his difficulties were not insurmountable. But the heart which has once resolved on a crime very speedily comes to regard this object as a goal at which it must necessarily aim, and to look with impatience upon all suggestions of relief, upon all dissuasives, and stubbornly, with shut eyes, to pursue the course determined on. The struggle to form the determination once overpassed, the mind shrinks from entering into struggle again, and allows itself to be swept along as though impelled by fatality, as though launched on a stream it is powerless to oppose.

Now his wife's suggestion that she should go to Teignmouth and settle with the merchant for the coals opened up to him a prospect, not of relief from his pecuniary difficulty, but of getting rid of her to enable him the more easily to carry out his intention unobserved. He put his shaking hand into his breast-

pocket for his handkerchief, and in pulling this forth drew out also the lucifer match-box, that in falling rattled on the table.

“What have you there, Pasco?” asked Zerah.

“Nothing,” he answered, and hastily replaced the box.

“Don’t tell me that was nothing which I saw and heard,” said his wife testily.

“Well—it’s lozenges.”

“Didn’t know you had a cough.”

“Never mind about that, Zerah,” said Pasco. “If you go to Teignmouth it must be at once, or the tide will be out, and I don’t see how you can get back to-night.”

“I’ve my cousin, Dorothy Bray, there. I’ll go to her. I’ve not seen her some months, and she has a room. I’ll leave Kitty at home now, to attend to the house, and you won’t need me to the morning flow. I suppose, between you, you can manage to light a fire?”

Pasco started and looked at his wife with alarm, thinking that she had read his thoughts; but he was reassured by her changing the topic. “There—I’ll give you three pounds towards the miller’s bill.”

Pepperill was now all anxiety to hurry his wife off. He urged precipitancy on account of the falling tide. He bade her row herself across, and leave the boat on the farther shore till the next morning.

His impatience in a measure woke her suspicion.

“You seem mighty eager to get rid of me,” she said querulously.

“’Tain’t that, Zerah,” he answered; “but I want myself to be off to Brimpts.”

“To Brimpts?—and leave Kitty alone in the house?”

“No; I shall take her with me.”

“What!—leave the house to take care of itself?”

“What can harm it? No one will break in. They know pretty well there is nothing to be got but bills that ain’t paid.”

“I don’t half like it—and the stores?”

“There is no moving wool or coals without waggons, and I shall lock up.”

Zerah stood in uncertainty.

“I wish you’d not go, Pasco.”

“I may or may not—but be off, or you’ll get stuck in the mud, as did Kitty.”

In ten minutes Pasco was alone. He stood on the platform where were the tea-tables and benches, and watched till his wife was half-way across. Then he drew a long breath, and passed through the house, went out at the main door, and hastened to the cart. Again he stood still, and looked searchingly in every

direction; then he let down the flap behind, drew out first the sack of shavings and carried it within, and then he cleared out all that remained. He was not satisfied till with a broom he had swept every particle of chip within, leaving not a tell-tale white atom without. Then he tacked some scraps of sacking over the window that no one might look within, and he proceeded to place bundles of the shavings among the coals, not in one great heap, but dispersed in handfuls here and there, and he broke up some pieces of board into splinters and thrust them among the shavings.

He was startled by a voice calling in the door, "Uncle, are you here?"

Hot, agitated, and alarmed, Pasco hastened to the entrance, and saw Kate.

"What do you want? Why are you shouting?"

"Where is aunt? I want to see her. I cannot find her in the house. I have something to tell her."

"You are not like to find her," said Pepperill, coming outside and locking the door behind him. "She is gone over the water, and will stay at Cousin Bray's; and I'm off to Brimpts again, and mean to take you."

"Why, uncle! we have but just returned from there."

"Well, that's no concern of yours, where you are, so long as you have your eatin' and drinkin'. I must go, and your aunt thinks I mustn't leave you alone. So be sharp; run and put what things you require together, and I will harness the cob."

"How long shall we be away, uncle?"

"We shall be back to-morrow evening, or the day after. I can't say. Come, be quick. I can't wait talking with you; it is late already."

Kate obeyed, a little surprised. She speedily returned, with her little bundle tied up in a scarlet kerchief.

Pasco was ready and waiting. He was looking up at the drift of the clouds. The wind was from the east and blowing strongly.

Pepperill drove through the village. He halted at the public-house to call out the taverner, ask for a glass of ale, and tell him he was bound for Dartmoor. At the mill he again drew up, and shouted for the miller, who, on emerging from his door, saluted Pasco with the remark, "Why, you are on the road to-day a great deal. I thought you had gone this way already."

"So I had—to Newton; but there I learned something. The Government has come round to a reasonable mind, and will buy my timber. Not at Devonport, but at Portsmouth; and I am going to measure up. I ran home to tell my old woman. And now, by the way, I will settle that little account between us, if agreeable to you."

"Always right with me to receive," said the miller.

Pasco drew out a handful of money and discharged his debt. “Just receipt it, will you, with the date, and say what o’clock in the afternoon also—that there may be no mistake.”

“You are not going to Brimpts to-night?”

“Yes, I am. Business must be attended to.”

“Rather late for the little maid by the time you get there.”

“That can’t be helped—she is strong now.”

Then Pepperill drove on. He continued his course without interruption, as the country he passed through was sparsely populated.

Kate’s heart was full. She was in doubt whether to tell her uncle that which had taken place between herself and Walter Bramber. She would greatly have preferred to have made the communication to her aunt and let her inform Mr. Pepperill. She was afraid of Pasco. He was violent and brutal. Her aunt was merely harsh. Pasco had been very angry with her for refusing Jan Pooke, and she did not believe that he would receive with favour the communication she had to make relative to the schoolmaster. She dreaded another outburst. Yet her strong sense of duty pressed her to communicate to him what he must learn within a short time, from other lips if not from her own. Then ensued a painful struggle in her breast, and she was constrained to free herself at length, and to say—

“Uncle, you know I refused Jan Pooke, but since then, what I could not say to him I have said to Walter Bramber, the schoolmaster.”

“Oh, ah! Jan Pooke—yes, to be sure.”

“No, not Jan, but the schoolmaster.”

“Drat it!” exclaimed Pasco, stroking his head; “I’ve forgotten to lock up the house. I let the door stand as it was when you came out. Now anyone can go in and take what they like, break into my bureau and steal my money, get hold of Zerah’s silver spoons. I say, Kitty, jump out and open that field-gate. There is a linhay there. I’ll put up the trap and horse, and you shall wait by ’em whilst I run back to Coombe Cellars and lock the house.”

“But how is aunt to get in when she returns?”

“You be easy. I’ll put the key in the little hole over the lintel. She knows where to find it. Look alive, jump and open the gate. Drat it! what a way I shall have to run!”

“Why not drive back, uncle?”

“Why not?—Because the cob must be spared. I’ve been into Newton already to-day, and the distance he has to go is just about enough to rub his hoofs down.”

Pepperill drove the cart into the field indicated, whilst Kate held wide the gate. Then he took the cob out and ran the cart under cover.

“You keep in shelter, and mind you do not show yourself. If anyone pass along the road, be still as a mouse. Never mind who it may be. I shall be gone perhaps an hour, perhaps a little more. It will be dark before I am back. You keep close. There is some straw in the corner, lie on that and go to sleep. We have still a long journey to take, and get on we must, through the night, and this is a darned matter detaining me. Hush!”

They heard something like a cart rattling along.

“Git along, Neddy! ‘If I had a donkey ’wot wouldn’t go’—you know the rest, Neddy.”

“It is my father, I believe,” said Kate.

“I don’t believe it is. Anyhow, be still,” whispered Pasco. “Your father is at Brimpts. He can’t be returned here. It’s some other chap with a donkey.”

The sound of the wheels was lost, as at the point where they had turned in at the gate there was a sweep in the road between high hedges and overarching trees.

“I think it was father,” said Kate.

“And I say it was not. However, whoever it was, he’s gone now. You bide here. I’m off—mind don’t be seen or heard by nobody till my return.”

Then Pasco departed.

He did not take the way by the road. He crossed the field, scrambled over a hedge, and directed his course towards the river. This was not the shortest way, and it was certainly the most arduous, for it entailed the breaking through of several hedges, and the scrambling over many banks.

The evening was rapidly closing in.

He saw—or heard—the keeper, and crouched under a hedge, holding his breath. Happily for him, the man passed at some distance. His dog barked, but was called to heel, and Pasco did not venture from his lurking-place till ten minutes after the man had gone his way. Then he sprang up and ran, and did not relax his pace till he had reached the river bank, having first floundered through a backwater deep in mire. On the bank was a foot-path, somewhat frequented by lovers at dusk, and Pasco advanced along it stealthily, listening and peering before him at intervals, to make certain that no one approached.

The tide was out, the mud exhaled its peculiar and not pleasant odour. Something flopped into it near at hand—whether a bird had dropped, or a stone had been flung, or a flounder had been left by the tide, and beat the mud with his tail, Pasco could not tell. The sound sent the blood with a rush to his heart and turned him sick and giddy.

Looking at him over a rail was a white horse. He did not see it until close upon the bank, and then the apparition of the great head turning to him and rubbing its chin on the rail gave him another start, and he almost slipped into the mud beside the path.

At length he reached the field adjoining the spit of land on which stood Coombe Cellars; here the path turned towards the village, but there was a way through the hedge to his own house. Pasco took this track, emerged in front of the Cellars, and found the door open, a light shining through the window of his kitchen and Jason Quarm inside.

CHAPTER XXXII

JASON IN THE WAY

Jason had lighted a candle, and had made himself comfortable in the settle. Pepperill stood staring at him in speechless anger and uncertainty.

"Where's the sister? Where's Kitty?" asked Jason in unconcern.

"What are you doing here?" roared Pasco, convulsed with sudden rage. "Is this your house, that you dare come in and use it as your home?"

Quarm looked at his brother-in-law in surprise.

"Get out of the place at once," shouted Pasco. "If I happen to go away for ten minutes, is that a reason for every Jack and Tom to come here, as if it was 'Beggars' Hall'?"

"Why, what on earth has put you out?"

"What has put me out? you—by coming in here. This is my house, not yours."

"Brother-in-law," said Jason, puzzled at the strange humour of Pasco, "is not that a sufficient answer, when I give you that title? Zerah is my sister—I have ever been welcome here. Kate is my daughter—she lives with you. Why am I here? Put it—I have come to see my sister, come to kiss my child."

"Neither is in the house."

"Then where are they?"

"I am not bound to answer you," shouted Pepperill in anger, vexation, and fear, aggravated by the coolness with which Quarm answered him.

"Yes, you are. I have ties of blood, and ties of affection, your bad temper can't snap. I ask, where is my daughter?"

"Gone back to the moor."

"That can't be—alone."

"She is not alone."

"Is Zerah with her?"

"No, she is not; Zerah is at Teignmouth, gone there to get me out of one of the difficulties into which you have plunged me."

"I—I got you into difficulties? I am always showing you rope's-ends by which you may crawl out."

"Who else but yourself has now put me in such an upsetment that I do not know under what stone to look for money; that I'm threatened with legal proceedings; that the bailiffs are on the way to my house?"

"It is your own doing, not mine. Who threatens you?"

"There is my bill for the wool unmet. There is my account for coals unpaid."

"I have had to do with neither. You acted like a fool about Coaker's wool—buying when in all the papers it was told how that there had been an importation from New South Wales."

"I never read the papers."

"Then you have no right to do business. You do it at inevitable loss. But this is neither here nor there, above nor below. Where is Kate?"

"I have told you—gone to the moor."

"When?"

"An hour or two ago."

"With whom?"

"With me."

"Then how came you here?"

"Because I had left the doors unlocked against impertinent fellows coming in. I left Kate with the trap whilst I ran back. Now, are you content? Out of my house immediately. I want to lock up and go back to her."

"This is a queer tale," said Quarm. "I have myself but just arrived. I must have passed you on the way."

"Not at all, if we had gone into a friend's for a cup of tea."

"With what friends were you?"

"I shall not stand and be catechised by you. I say, get out. I am going to lock up."

"Now look here, Pasco, and be reasonable. I would not have returned to Coombe and left the men at Dart-meet unlooked after, had I not good news to communicate."

"Good news?" mocked Pepperill. "The best of news would be that you were going to take yourself off."

"I believe we shall sell the oak."

"I have heard of that already—from Coaker."

"Well, I tell you it is so. The authorities at Portsmouth will take it at a reasonable price, if we deliver it."

"There is the thing we can't do—that spoils it all."

"Yes, we can—deliver it here in the Teign. There is the Stover Canal—we can send it down by that and ship it all to Portsmouth right away."

Pepperill was silent. This was indeed a rift in the cloud. "The only difficulty is not this—it is that we must have the timber sawn at Brimpts, and sent down and put on board in planks. They cannot freight a vessel with rude oak timber unsawn. Now I have a scheme—there is the river Dart pouring down its volumes of water of no good to anyone. Let us put up a saw-mill, and we shall have the oak run into planks and ready for transport in a jiffy."

"And the cost?"

"Forty pounds."

"Forty pounds?" roared Pasco, and thrust Quarm from him by a rude stroke on the shoulder. "Where am I to look for forty pence?"

"It is our only chance. I must agree to-morrow, or the thing is off. If I engage to saw up the timber and despatch it by water, we shall get a very tidy profit—not what we had hoped, but something. If I do not accept the offer, then I really do not see my way to disposing of the oak at all. The felling of the Okehampton Park oaks has spoiled the market in this country. Come, what say you, Pasco—shall I settle?"

"I cannot do it," answered Pepperill, a cold sweat breaking out over his brow.

"There is an old mine wheel available. I can buy it for a song," said Quarm.

"I have no money. Have I not told you that—or must I knock it into your brain with my fist—or the house key?" He raised his hand threateningly.

"Be reasonable, Pasco. I cannot tell what has come over you to-night. You are not yourself. If you do not care about the outlay for a saw-mill, we must saw all up by hand, and that will come costlier in the end. I fancy if you bestirred yourself you could raise a loan."

"I will not. I will have but one thing now—your absence. Get out of my house!"

"Where be I to go to?" asked Quarm, settling himself from one leg to the other. "There's Jane Redmore in my cottage, with all her children."

"Well"—

"I can't go there—the place is full."

"You are a fool to have suffered it."

"Kate begged and prayed of me"—

"Take the consequences, and be homeless."

"I cannot, for to-night. You are going to Brimpts, and it is as well the men should see you. I shall return to-morrow, but to-night I must house me

somewhere. Let me stay here; there is no one in the place, and I'll keep guard for you if you wish."

"There is nothing here to guard, but emptiness. I want no help of yourn."

"But I must have a roof over my head at night."

"Any roof but mine. Will you go, or must I fling you out and down the steps?"

"You're in a wonderful queer temper to-night. What is up?"

"My temper, as you say, is up; and like to be so—when it is through you I am brought to ruin and beggary."

He caught Jason by the shoulders, whirled him round, and with hands and knees thrust him out of the door, and then he slammed it behind him and turned the key. Next moment he blew out the light. Then he threw himself panting on the settle and buried his head in his hands.

He had not sat there many minutes before Quarm was kicking at the door, and calling him by name. Transported with anger, Pasco sprang to his feet, took down the blunderbuss that was over the kitchen fire, and, going to the door, half opened it and thrust forth the muzzle of his piece.

"Go away, or I will shoot."

"This is rank folly!" bawled Jason. "Are you gone demented? Give me shelter for the night; I will do no harm. What do you mean by refusing me such a reasonable request? I tell you I can't go home—all the Redmores are there packing every corner."

Jason thrust up the end of the blunderbuss, and put his shoulder to the door.

"I'll kill you if you trouble me further," said Pasco between his teeth. "Take the consequences of befriending scoundrels and their families."

He drove Quarm back and refastened the door, then he stood at the door listening, with the butt of the gun on his foot. He heard his brother-in-law growl and pass remarks upon him. He heard him limp away, and then all was still.

Pepperill stepped to a window and looked out, to observe the direction taken by Quarm, but the darkness was too great for him to see anything. He went back to the settle and tried to think.

The elaborate precautions he had taken to dissemble his return, to make believe that he had departed before sunset, had been made futile by the appearance of Jason on the scene. Should what he purposed take place—then he could not declare that he had been from home at the time. What availed it that he had paid the miller's bill at a quarter to seven, when his brother-in-law could aver that he had been back at the Cellars an hour later?

What was to be done? Should he abandon his intention because of this mischance? Rage against his brother-in-law ate into his heart. All had promised so well. Everything was moving with such smoothness, till Quarm appeared.

What but a malevolent mind could have brought this fellow back from Brimpts to cross him?

What was to be done? It was of no practical use storming against Jason. Should he abandon his purpose or defer it?

To abandon it seemed to him an impossibility. By carrying it out alone could he be released from his present pecuniary difficulty. To defer it was difficult, for he wanted immediate relief; moreover, when again could he calculate on having the ground so clear now—his wife as away in Teignmouth, his niece waiting at a distance with the cart?

What if Jason had seen him? Would he dare to give evidence against him—his own brother-in-law? Was it not to Jason's interest that he, Pasco, should be flush of money, and ready to embark in the proposed scheme of erecting a saw-mill?

Even if Jason spoke of having seen him, he could deny it. Pasco sprang from the settle. He would run the risk. It was worth it.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ONE CRIME LEADS TO ANOTHER

Pasco remained in the dark in his house for about half an hour, waiting till he supposed that Jason was far away. He allowed him time to harness his ass, put it into the cart, and depart. He went once or twice to the door to listen, but did not venture to open it, lest Jason should be without, and should take advantage of the occasion to burst in. He remained all the while bathed in a clammy sweat, his hair stuck to his skull as though plastered about his temples with fish-glue, he felt it heavy and dank on his head like a cap.

Repeatedly did he try to collect his thoughts and to coolly consider whether it were not advisable for him, under the circumstances, to abandon his scheme. But his thoughts were in a condition of dislocation, he could not gather them and fit them together into consecutive order. He felt himself impelled, having formed his resolve, to proceed with it, and to leave to the future the removal of such difficulties as might spring up, as came in his way.

He was restless, yet afraid to be stirring. He was impatient for the time to pass, and counted the ticks of the clock, yet forgot after a few minutes the number he had reached.

The seat was hard and bruised him, he leaned back, and his back ached. He held out his hand, placed it on the table and endeavoured to steady it. He was aware that it shook, and he used all the power of his will to arrest its convulsive quiver, but ineffectually. At length, unable longer to endure inaction, and convinced that sufficient time had elapsed for his brother-in-law to have got away, he cautiously unlocked the door and looked out.

In the dark he could see no one; he listened and could hear no sound.

Then he stepped back to the kitchen table and removed the candle-end from the stick, and put it into his pocket. No sooner had he reached the door again, however, than it occurred to him that a candlestick without a tallow candle in it, if left on the table, would attract attention and comment. He therefore returned for it, and placed it on the mantelshelf above the hearth. In doing this he knocked over a canister that fell at his feet. He groped and found the canister; the cover had come off, and some of the contents were spilled. This was gunpowder. Greatly disconcerted, Pasco felt for a brush and swept all the grains he could into the hollow of his hand, and shook them into his trousers-pocket, then he swept the brush vigorously about, so as to disperse over the floor any particles that had escaped him in the dark. After which he proceeded carefully to replace the canister. He now again made his way to the door, passed without, locked the door behind him, and placed the key in a hollow above the lintel, known to Zerah and himself.

Then he stealthily crossed the yard to his great warehouse, but at every second step turned his ears about, listening for a sound which might alarm him.

He did not breathe freely till he was within his store. He had not locked it—indeed, of late he had been wont to leave it unfastened, labouring under the hope that the hint thrown out to Roger Redmore might be taken by the fellow, thus relieving himself of his self-imposed task.

Without, there was a little light from the grey sky. Within was none. What amount might have found its way in through the window was excluded by the sacking that Pasco had nailed over the opening.

He now proceeded to light his candle end. When the wick was kindled, he looked about him timidly, then with more confidence; lastly with a sensation of great regret and even pity for the fabric in which he had so long stored his supplies that he retailed to the neighbourhood.

But no thought of retreat came over his mind now, he was impelled forward irresistibly. The doubt was past that had tortured him, after his interview with Jason Quarm.

He stuck the candle-end upon the ground, and went about among the coals, examining the places where he had put the shavings, adding here and there some bits of stick, or rearranging the coals, and then strewing over them

the contents of his out-turned pocket. Then he sat down and panted. He must rest a moment and wipe his brow before the irrevocable act was accomplished.

Presently, slowly, painfully, he rose from the block of coal on which he had seated himself. The sack lay hard by into which he had stuffed the shavings. It was now empty.

He took up the candle-end and went towards the nearest mass of shavings, stooped—the grease ran over his fingers. The wick had become long and the flame burnt dull. He thought to snuff it with his fingers, but they shook too much to be trusted. He might extinguish the flame, and he shuddered at the thought of being left there—in his old storehouse—in the dark. He again set down the candle, and with a bit of stick beat the red wick, and struck off sparks from it, till he had somewhat reduced the length of the snuff.

He was about to take up the candle to apply it to the shavings, when he heard a sound—a strange grating, rattling sound behind him.

He looked round, but could see nothing, his great body was between the light and the rear of the shed, whence the sound proceeded. He was too much alarmed to perceive the cause of the obscurity. Then he heard a voice—

"Pasco, I never thought you a scoundrel till now—but now I know it."

Pepperill recognised the voice at once—it was that of Jason Quarm.

Immediately he realised the situation. Expelled from Coombe Cellars, debarred from sheltering in his own house, Quarm had entered the store-shed, and had climbed the ladder into the loft to lie among the wool, and there sleep.

A sudden wild, fierce thought shot through Pasco's brain like the flash of summer lightning. He sprang to his feet. The terror that had momentarily unnerved him passed away. Leaving the candle burning on the ground, without a word, he strode to the ladder, which Quarm was descending laboriously, owing to his lameness.

With clenched teeth and contracted brow, and with every muscle knotted like cord, Pepperill threw himself on the ladder, just as Jason got his head below the opening of the loft, and shook it.

"For Heaven's sake! what are you about?" screamed Jason.

"I'll rid myself of a danger," answered Pasco between his teeth and lips, indistinctly, and he twisted the ladder, and kicked at its feet to throw it down.

"Pasco, let go! Pasco, will you kill me?" shrieked the crippled man, catching ineffectually at the floor through which he had crawled, then clutching the side of the ladder.

Pepperill uttered an oath; he ran under the ladder, set his back against it and kicked with his heels.

"Pasco! I'll not tell—I swear!"

“I won’t give you the chance,” gasped Pepperill. The ladder was reeling, sliding, the feet were slipping on the slate floor. A piercing scream, and down came ladder and man upon Pasco, throwing him on his knees, but precipitating the unfortunate cripple with a crash on the pavement.

Pepperill, though shaken and bruised, was not seriously hurt. He gathered himself up, stretched his limbs, felt his arms, and with lowering brow stepped towards his prostrate brother-in-law, who lay on his back, his arms extended, the hands convulsively contracted. His chin was up, and the dim glow of the candle cast its light below the chin, and had no rays for the upper portion of the face.

Pepperill felt in his pocket for the lucifer matches, and, stooping over Quarm, lit one, and passed the flame over his countenance. Jason was apparently insensible. Blood was flowing from his mouth at the corners. The flame of the match was reflected in the white of the upturned eyes.

Pasco held the match till it burnt his fingers, then he let it fall, and remained considering for a moment. Should he let his brother-in-law lie where he was? Could he be sure that he would not awake from a momentary daze caused by the blow on his head as he fell on the stone floor?

Pasco picked up a huge lump of coal and stood over Jason, ready to dash it down on his head, and make sure of his not awaking. But though his heart was hard, and he was launched on a course of crime, yet conscience makes strange distinctions in crime, and shrinks from doing boldly the evil at which it aims covertly.

Pasco laid aside the block of coal. He would not dash out his brother-in-law’s brains, but he would by other means make sure that he should not rouse to give him future trouble.

He took the sack, in which had been the shavings, and proceeded to thrust into it the legs of Quarm, who offered no more resistance than would a dead man, and gave no sign of consciousness. With much labour, Pasco drew the sack up, enclosing the body; he pulled down the arms and forced them into the sack also. But he was unable to envelop Jason completely. The sack was not of sufficient length for the purpose. It reached to his breast and elbows only.

There was a rope hanging in the store to a crook in the wall. Pepperill disengaged this, and with the cord bound Jason’s feet, then tightly strapped him about the arms so as to make it impossible for him to free himself, should he return to consciousness.

The exertion used by Pasco had steadied his nerves. He no longer trembled. His hand had ceased to shake, and his heart no longer contracted with fear.

Greatly heated by his labour, he stood up and wiped his brow with his sleeve. Then he was aware of a cool current of air wafting across him, and he saw that in this same current the candle-flame consumed its wick and swaled away profusely. He turned in the direction of the draught, and found that the door into the shed was partly open. He had not locked it when he entered, but had closed

it. The night wind had swung it ajar, and then by its own weight it had opened farther. Pepperill shut it again, and placed a lump of coal against the foot to prevent a recurrence of the same thing.

As he returned to where Jason lay, he heard a slight noise overhead, and saw a white and black pigeon perched on a swinging pole.

The bird was young. It had been given to Pasco the week before, as he had expressed a wish to have pigeons. He had shut the bird up in his shed to accustom it to regard the shed as its home, and to remain there. He had fed the bird himself with crumbs, and had entertained an affection for it.

Now a qualm came over his heart. He could not bear to think of this innocent bird falling a victim. He had compunction for the pigeon, none for the unconscious Jason. Therefore, rolling a barrel under the perch, he climbed upon it, captured the sleep-stupid bird and carried it between his hands to the door, pushed aside the lump of coal, and threw the pigeon into the open air without.

That act of mercy accomplished, he shut the door and went back to where the candle was. This he now detached from the floor and the mass of melted tallow around it, and applied the flame to one, then to another, of the little parcels of combustibles in various places. Flames danced about, and for a minute Pasco looked on with satisfaction, assuring himself that the shavings had ignited the sticks, and the sticks had kindled the coals. When well satisfied that all was as he desired, he knelt down, and by sheer force rolled the heavy, lifeless body of Jason Quarm from the floor, up the slope of the coals, and lodged it among large blocks on the top.

Then Pepperill turned, extinguished his candle, went out through the door, locked it, and started at a run across the fields in the direction whence he had come an hour before.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AND YET ANOTHER

Pasco ran on, easily surmounting the hedges which he had clambered over with difficulty on his way to Coombe Cellars. He reached the track by the water's edge, and ran along that without once looking behind him, and only paused when he arrived at the point at which he must strike inland, to his left, leaving the river margin to ascend the sloping shaws in the direction of the shed where tarried Kitty with cob and cart. Here he halted, and a chill ran through his arteries, making him shiver and his teeth chatter. He was hot with running, yet withal in an icy tremor, and with a feeling of swimming in his head and sickness at his heart.

The thought had risen up in him, an almost tangible thought, like a great beast coiled in his heart, stretching itself, getting on its feet, and turning. The thought was this—that it was not too late to save his brother-in-law. He might return, unlock the store, rush in, and drag the unconscious man down from the heap of coals, through the smoke and flame. The fire had not yet reached him; it was tonguing up the heap, sending the tips of its flames tastingly towards him; the fire was hot beneath, but the crust still upheld the man in the sack; would it be so much longer? As the coals were consumed beneath, there would be formed a great core of red fire, and if Jason moved, the crust would give way, and then, shrieking, unable to assist himself, he would drop into that glowing mass, where the cords would be burnt to free him, but only when it would be too late for him to escape.

Had Jason already woke from his trance, and was he cuddled up in his sack, watching the approaching flames, crying for help, and getting none? Was he tearing at his bands with his teeth, writhing—trying to precipitate himself down the black mound of combustible material, in the hopes of being able to roll along the floor to the door? And if he succeeded so far—what more could he do? Nothing but watch the fire grow, break out in gushes of scarlet and orange, pour forth volumes of stifling smoke, and then lie with his mouth below the door, gasping for the air that rushed in beneath.

Shuddering, Pasco Pepperill stood with eyes open, looking into the night, seeing all this as really as though the vision were unrolled before his naked eyes. He dared not look behind him, his neck was stiff, and he could not turn it—he could not even turn his eyes in the direction of the Cellars.

Should he retrace his course and free Jason? Could he not rely on Jason to remain silent after this terrible experience? But what if he arrived too late? What if the fire had already broken out, and had laid hold of its prey? Why should he give himself the lasting horror of seeing what he must then see? And of what avail would it be to the burning man?

It was too late. Pasco had taken his line, had cast his lot, and there was no return. He resumed his run up the hill, through the meadows; the wind blowing off the river assisted him. When he reached the field in which was the shed, he knew that Coombe Cellars was no longer visible. There was a shoulder of hill between.

But though the Cellars might not be visible, the sky overhead might show redness, might throb with light; and lest he should see this, he fixed his eyes resolutely in an opposite direction.

In crossing the field he no longer ran. He had lost his breath ascending the hill; he walked slowly, panting, and ever and anon stopped to wipe his brow, and remove his hat, that the cool wind might play about his wet hair.

The qualm of conscience relative to Jason was overpassed, and now Pepperill congratulated himself on his success. Now—all was as could be desired, there was nothing to inculpate him, no one to turn evidence against him, except—

There was one person, and one only, who was a danger to Pasco; one person, and one only, who knew that he had been to Coombe Cellars after having ostensibly left it; one, and one only, that he had been on the spot precisely at the time when, presumably, the fire broke out.

If Kate Quarm were to speak, then what he had done was done in vain; the Company would refuse to pay the sum for which his stock was insured, and he might be suspected of having caused the death of his brother-in-law. Would not Kate speak—when she knew that her father was dead? Might she not make dangerous admissions should there be an inquest? The charred corpse or burnt bones would be discovered when the ashes of the store were removed, and Jason's cart and ass being in Coombe, would lead to the conclusion that he, Jason Quarm, had caused the conflagration and had perished in it. It would be supposed that he had gone to the Cellars, and, finding it locked and no one within, had taken shelter for the night in the warehouse, where he had lit his pipe, gone to sleep, and inadvertently had set fire to the coals and wool.

But then—what might Kate be brought to say if questioned by the coroner?

Pepperill entered the shed and called the girl. He called twice before he received an answer. Then he struck a light, and as the match flared he saw before him the drowsy face of Kate.

“Oh, uncle! What a long time you have been away! I fell asleep.”

“Long time? I have not been a quarter of an hour. I ran to the Cellars and ran back the whole way.”

“It has been more than a quarter of an hour, Uncle Pasco. I waited, watching for ever such a time, and then I went to sleep.”

“You are mistaken. Because you shut your eyes you think the time was long.”

“What is that, uncle, you are burning?”

“A lucifer match.”

“How did you get it alight?”

“By striking it on the box.”

"How could that light it? Is there a bit of tiny flint on the match and steel on the box?

“No, there is not. I don't know how the fire comes—but it comes somehow.”

“That must be a very curious contrivance, uncle.”

“Whether curious or not is no concern of yours.”

He struck another match and held it aloft. The girl stood on one side of the cart, he on the other. The lucifer flame twinkled in her eyes. Her hair was ruffled with sleep.

As Pasco looked at her by the dying flame, he was considering what to do. He had no doubt that he was insecure so long as she lived. Desperate, hardened, projected along an evil course, could he withhold his hand now and not make

himself secure? Would it not be weakness as well as folly to allow this testimony to remain who could at any moment reveal his guilt? But if he were to strike her down with a stake or stone, what could he do with the body?

“Take care, uncle,” said Kate. “There is dry furze here. If the spark falls, there may be a blaze.”

He extinguished the match with his fingers. He did not desire that his course should be marked by fires.

“Is there much furze here, Kitty?” he asked in a smothered voice.

“Oh no! only just under foot.”

“No great heap in a corner?”

“None, uncle.”

“Not enough to cover you over if you were asleep.”

Kate laughed and answered, “I would never lie on furze if I could help it, and be covered with it—I should be tormented with prickles. I sat down and laid my head against the hedge that makes the back of the linhay.” He was prodding the bedding of furze with his whip. “It is all fresh,” said Kate. “I reckon Miller Ash is going to turn his cow in here, when he has taken away her calf.”

“Ah! she has calved?”

“Yes; last week.”

“True—the cow will be here to-morrow, or in a couple of days.” To himself he muttered, “It won’t do”—then aloud, “Jump into the cart, Kitty. We must push on. You drive out, I will open the gate.”

In another minute Pasco Pepperill was in his seat with Kitty at his side, driving in the direction away from the Cellars.

He feared every moment to hear her say, “Uncle, what is that light shining over Coombe? Can there be a fire?”

Instead of that she said, “Uncle, did you see nothing of my father? I am quite sure that was he who drove by after we had got into Mr. Ash’s field. I heard his voice. I know his way with the donkey. I am quite certain that was father.”

“Your father?—no. Never set eyes on him. You were mistaken.”

“I am sure it was my father. I know the rattle of the cart wheel.”

“I say it was not; and take care how you say a word about ever having gone into the field, and about my having returned to the Cellars.”

“Why, uncle?”

“Because Ash will summons me for trespass, and because my horse ate the grass. That’s one reason; but there’s a better one—I don’t choose that you should speak.”

Kate was accustomed to his rough manner, and she did not answer.

Then Pasco's mind began to work on the theme that had occupied it before. He had been seen driving out of Coombe with Kate at his side. But what of that? Would it not be a sufficient answer to give, were she not to be seen again, that he had met Jason Quarm on the road, and that the man had taken his daughter with him, and that thereupon both had perished in the flames?

The more he considered the matter, the more essential to his security did it seem to him that Kate should be got rid of. The only embarrassment he felt was as to the means to be employed, and the place where it was to be done. Not till she was removed could the weight now oppressing his mind be cast off.

"Uncle," said Kate after a long course in silence, "I cannot think how that lucifer acts, if there be no flint and no steel. How else can the match be made to light?"

"How is no matter to me—kindle it does, somehow." Then, abruptly, "Have you got your cotton dress on? The wind is from the east and chilly."

"Oh no, uncle, I have on my thick woollen dress, and am very warm—thank you kindly for considering me."

"The thick wool, is it?"

"Yes, uncle—very sure, very thick and warm."

Then that would not do. It had occurred to him to drop a lighted match on her frock, set her in flames, and throw her out into the road at a lonely spot. No, that would not do. He reversed his whip and beat the cob with the handle.

"Diamond is not going badly, uncle," said Kate in mild remonstrance.

He was in reality trying the weight of the whip handle and the stiffness of the stem. That would not effect his purpose; there was no metal to signify at the butt-end. The horse did not greatly mind a blow dealt it with a full swing of its master's arm.

Pasco bore no malice against his niece. In his cold fashion he liked her. She was useful in the house, and saved him the expense of a maid. It was doubtful whether any servant would have been as submissive to Zerah as was Kitty, whether any would have continued so long in service to her. He had forgotten his momentary resentment at Kate refusing the offer of John Pooke. He wished the girl ill for no other reason than his own safety. Had he been able to send her away, out of the country, that would have satisfied him. But as there was no opportunity for getting her out of the way without hurt to himself, she must be removed by such means as were possible to him.

How to do this, and where to do it, remained undecided. Not where he then was could it be attempted, for he was now approaching Newton. The lights were twinkling through the trees, cottages were passed with illumined windows, and sometimes with persons standing in the doors.

On entering Newton, Pepperill turned his horse's head to make a detour, so as to avoid passing the inn that had been rebuilt after having been burnt down. For

some reason undefined in his own heart, he shrank from driving before that house.

In a few minutes the cob was trotting along the Ashburton road. Pasco looked behind him. He heard the sound of the hoofs of another horse, and the rattle of other wheels. Some traveller was on the road that night.

“Uncle,” said Kate, “I think the moon is going to rise.”

“I suppose so.”

“Will it not be grand on the moor, with the moon shining over it, and the Dart flowing like silver below?”

“Silver? I wish it were silver, and I’d pocket it,” growled Pasco. “Dang it! what is that which is following?”

He slackened his pace, but the conveyance did not pass him; it approached, and the driver was content to keep in the rear.

“Will you go on?” shouted Pasco, turning his head.

“No, we’ll remain as we are,” answered the driver.

“How far are you going?”

“To Ashburton.”

Well, thought Pasco, the loneliest, wildest part of the road is that between Ashburton and Brimpts.

CHAPTER XXXV

UNSUCCESSFUL

On leaving Ashburton, Pasco Pepperill was relieved of the attendance which had been so irksome to him. He would not, probably, have carried out his purpose between Newton and Ashburton, as that was a high road, much frequented, running through cultivated lands, and with farms and cottages along it at no great intervals. Nevertheless, the knowledge irritated him that someone was following him, that should an opportunity otherwise propitious arise, he could not seize it because of the man in the trap at his heels. Never able clearly to bring all contingencies together before his inward eye, in the conduct of his business, he was now more dull and confused in mind than usual.

He took it into his head that there was something menacing in the pursuit; that the man in his rear was aware of what he had done at the Cellars, that he foresaw his present purpose, and was intentionally following him, keeping him

in sight, either that he might deliver him up to justice for what he had done, or to prevent the execution of his present design.

It was consequently with immense relief that he heard the man's cheery "Good-night," and his wheels turn off by a by-street, as he trotted through Ashburton and along the road leading to Dart-meet and Brimpts.

At a distance of rather over a mile from Ashburton the Dart is crossed, then the road climbs a steep hill, cutting off the great sweep made by the river as it flows through Holne Chase, and it crosses the river again as it bursts from the moor at Newbridge. Nearly the whole of this way is through woods, and does not pass a single human habitation.

Directly New Bridge is crossed, the character of the surroundings changes. In place of rock and woods of pine and oak and beech, succeed the solitude and desolation of moorland, heather, and furze brake, with at one spot only a cluster of small cottages about a little inn, with a clump of sycamores behind them and a few acres of mountain pasture before them, laboriously cleared of granite boulders. Immediately after passing this hamlet, the road traverses moorland entirely uninhabited. Tors rise to the height of from twelve to fifteen hundred feet; their sides are strewn with rocky ruin. Dense masses of furze cover the moorland sweeps, and between the clefts of the rocks whortleberry grows rankly into veritable bushes, hung in June with purple berries. Below, at the depth of a thousand feet, foams and roars the Dart amidst boulders and bushes of mountain-ash and thorn.

It was obvious to the clouded mind of Pepperill that if he was to get rid of Kitty, it must be done either in the Holne Wood or on the moor. One place was as good as the other for disposal of the child's body; the dense forest growth or the equally dense whortle and furze would effectually conceal it.

When the first Dart bridge was crossed, and the steep ascent begun, Pepperill said roughly to his niece—

"You ain't going to sit here and make the horse drag you all the way up this tremendous hill, be you?"

"No, uncle dear; I was only waiting for you to draw up that I might jump out. Do you see the moon coming up behind the trees, shining through them, like a good thought in the midst of dark imaginings?"

"Dang the moon and your imaginings! Get out."

"I was thinking of something my book says," apologised Kate, descending to the road.

"Your book? What do you mean?"

"I mean that which the schoolmaster gave me, which I have read and read, and in which I always find something new, and always am sure of something true."

"What does the book say?"

"I learned it by heart—

‘Within the soul a faculty abides,

That with interpositions’—

That means things which come between. He explained that to me. I cannot always make out what is said till it is explained; but when it is, then the full truth and loveliness rises and shines into me like the moon when it has got over the hills and the woods.”

“Go on.”

“‘A faculty abides,

That with interpositions, which would hide

And darken, so can deal that they become

Contingencies of pomp, and serve to exalt

Her native brightness.’

I did not understand what contingencies meant, but he told me, and now all is quite plain as it is quite true. And it goes on—

‘As the ample moon

Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,

Burns like an unconsuming fire, light

In the green trees’”—

“Cease this foolery,” said Pasco impatiently. He was fumbling in his pocket for his clasp-knife, and was opening it.

“Do look, uncle dear!” exclaimed Kate, turning to observe the moon as it mounted over the rich Buckland Woods on the farther bank of the Dart.

“Halt,” shouted Pasco to the horse.

They had reached an eminence. The girl stood wrapped in delight, with the silver shield of the moon before her, casting its glorious light over her face and folded hands. Pasco had his knife out. She heard the click, as the spring nipped the blade firmly, but did not turn to see what occasioned the sound.

“The moon has come up out of the trees just as he said—I mean the poet—like a power in the heart and soul that has been entangled in all kinds of dark and twisted matters of every day. Oh, uncle, what is that?”

Pasco drew back. A white dog—a mongrel, short-haired lurcher—crossed the road. Simultaneously a whistle was heard, and this was answered by another in the distance.

“There are poachers about,” said Pepperill. He shut his knife, pocketed it, and called Kate to get into the trap. He was not going to halt to see a darned moon rise, when all kinds of vagabonds were about, and there was no safety for honest men.

Pasco drove rapidly down the hillside into the Dart Valley at New Bridge. The road was mostly in shadow, but the bare moor on the farther side was white in the moonlight, as though it had been snowed over. The horse was tired, and tripped. Pasco had to be on his guard lest the beast should fall. In the shadow of the trees it could not see the stones that strewed the way. At the bottom of the valley flowed the Dart; the rush of the water breaking over the rocks was audible.

“If a harm came to you or me in the river, I reckon the body would be washed right away to Sharpitor,” said Pepperill.

“Uncle!” said Kate, with a laugh, “that would be going up hill.”

“I’m getting mazed,” growled he; “so it is. Well, folk would say one or other of us had come by an accident among the rocks o’ Sharpitor, and tumbled into the river and been carried down by the stream. That’s likely—eh?”

“I suppose so, uncle. But if anything were to happen to one, that the other would know, and do all he could to help.”

“Of course.”

Pepperill was looking at the brawling torrent.

“And if anything were to chance to one here, the body would be carried right down the Chase for miles till it came to the other bridge.”

“I daresay, uncle. But don’t talk like that. Let us look at the moonlight. There is a man yonder—by the side of the river.”

“A man—where?”

“By that large stone.”

“He is catching salmon. Not a fish has a chance up here on the moor. What a parcel of rascals there be!”

Pepperill drove across the bridge. He had intended—he hardly dared articulately to express to himself his intention. Again he was frustrated—just at a suitable point—by this fellow catching salmon by night.

Beyond the bridge the road rose rapidly. Both uncle and niece were forced to descend from the cart, and relieve the horse. Some six hundred feet had to be mounted without any zigzags in the road. Kate walked along cheerily. Pasco lagged behind. The horse, with nose down, laboriously stepped up the steep incline. Pasco took out his knife and cut a branch of thorn from the hedge, and in doing so tore his fingers. He put the thorn behind the seat.

When the summit of the hill was almost reached, he said to Kate, “I shall turn to the left, and leave the road.”

“What—out on the moor?”

“Yes; I think we can cut off a great curve and avoid the cottages. You walk by the horse’s head; I will mount and hold the reins. There are large stones in the way.”

This was the case. Kate thought that her uncle was rash in taking the track across the moor at night, a way he could not know, merely to save a mile that the road made in detour. But she said nothing. She was pleased to go by a way that commanded the gorge of the Dart, and had no fear, as the moon shone brilliantly, and every bush and stone was visible as in the day. The mica and spar in the granite made each rock sparkle as though encrusted with diamonds. A heavy dew had fallen, cobwebs hanging on the furze were as silvery fairy tissue.

Rabbits were out sporting, feeding, darting away with a gleam of snowy tail when alarmed. Owls were flitting and hooting in the ravine. The wind from the east hummed an Æolian strain in the moor grass and heather.

The moon rose high above all obstruction to its placid light, and Kate breathed slowly, and in the chill air her breath came away as a fine shining vapour. Every now and then the cob struck out a red fire-spark from the stones against which his shoe struck. Kate held the reins at the bit, and paced at his head, her heart swelling with happiness, as she drank in the loveliness of the night, till she was so full of the beauty that her eyes began to fill. Pasco Pepperill was silent. He was knotting the thorn-branch to his whip. His eye was on her.

Presently the track on the turf ran at the edge of a steep slope. Rocks from a tor overhead had fallen and strewn the incline, and formed fantastic objects in the moonlight, casting shadows even more fantastic. A sheep that had been sleeping under one of the rocks started up and bounded away. The spring of the sheep close beside him alarmed the horse, and he started back, plunged, and dragged Kate off her feet.

Then, with a cry of rage, Pasco rose in the cart, whirled his whip about, and lashed the cob with the full force of his arm, at the same time that he raised the reins in his left and beat with them as well, and jerked at the brute's mouth.

Kate was down. She had slipped; she was before the plunging beast. Pasco saw it. He swore, lashed this side, that, then at the flanks, at the head, at the belly of the tortured brute, that leaped and staggered, kicked and reeled under the strokes of the thorns which tore his skin. He snorted, reared, put down his head; the steam came off him in a cloud.

There was one thing the beast would not do—rush forward and trample on the fallen girl. Pasco saw it, and cursed the horse. He flung himself from the trap, he rushed at the bridle; his foot was on Kate's gown.

"Uncle! uncle!" she cried.

With one hand he dragged the horse forward, with the other he swung the thorn-bush. A step, and the hoofs and wheels of the horse and cart would be over the girl. Then a thrust would suffice to send her down the side of the slope into the torrent below.

But the brute leaped into the air before the swinging thorn-bush, swerved up hill, dragging Pasco at his head, and flung him over a rock. His hand became entangled; he could not for a moment disengage it; he was dragged forward; the

head-gear gave way, and Pasco fell among the bushes, crying out with rage and pain. Next moment Kate stood before him.

“What is the matter, uncle dear? Are you hurt? I am safe.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

ALL IN VAIN

Pasco Pepperill staggered to his feet, and at once felt pain in one ankle.

“Are you hurt, dear uncle?” again inquired Kate.

“Hurt? I’ve strained and bruised myself all over. My right arm—my leg—I can hobble only. Where’s the trap?”

“If you have no bones broken, uncle, sit down, and I will see after Diamond.”

The horse was browsing unconcernedly at no great distance. Too tired to run far, too hungry to heed his wounds, he had at once applied himself to the consumption of the sweet moorland grass. Happily the cart was uninjured. It had not been upset, and no more of the harness was broken than a strap at the head. The cob allowed Kate to approach and take him by the forelock without remonstrance. He knew Kate, who had been accustomed to fondle him, and who, in the absence of friends of her own order, had made one of the brute beast. She managed to fasten up the broken strap and replaced the headstall; then she drew the horse along to where her uncle sat rubbing his leg and arm.

“It’s the right arm, drat it!” said Pasco; “won’t I only give that cursed beast a leathering when I can use my arm again!”

“Surely, uncle, poor Diamond was going on all right till you beat him. He is so patient that he does not deserve a beating. There is a thorn branch about which the whip has become entangled. I suppose that must have hurt him, poor fellow. He was good, too; when my foot slipped and I fell, he would not trample on me. You were beating him, uncle, and did not see where I was. Just think how good he was!—notwithstanding the thorns, yet he would not tread on me.”

“Oh yes, that is all you think about, you selfish minx, your own self. Because you are uninjured, you don’t care for me who am bruised all over.”

It was of no use pursuing the matter. Kate knew her uncle’s unreasonable moods, so she changed the subject and asked, “What is to be done now? shall we go on along the moor or turn back?”

"It is of no use going along the moor now. We may come to some other darned accident with this vile brute. Lead him back along our tracks to the road. I don't want to be thrown out again. This is the second time he has treated me in this manner. If I had a gun, I'd shoot him."

"Uncle, that other occasion was no fault of his. You were driving the schoolmaster, and Walter Bramber told me about it—you sent the wheel against a stone."

"Of course the blame is mine, and this time also. The horse is innocent."

"If you had not beaten poor Diamond"—

"Go on with the cart, and hold your tongue."

But Pasco walked with pain. He had not taken many steps before he asked to be helped up into the trap.

Kate led the horse and spoke caressingly to the brute, that was greatly fagged with the long journey without a break he had taken that evening. Usually he would be given an hour's rest and a feed at Ashburton, before the worst and most arduous portion of the journey was taken; but on this occasion he had been urged on at his fastest pace and never allowed to slacken it, and not given any rest, not even a mouthful of water, at Ashburton. No wonder that he tripped.

Pasco looked sullenly before him at the girl walking in the moonlight, speaking to the horse. The chance of doing her an injury was past. He could with difficulty move his arm. If he drew his knife on her and attacked her there on the moor, she could run from him, and he would be unable to pursue her, owing to his sprained ankle.

There was no help for it, he must make the best of the circumstances, threaten her if she showed an inclination to speak and compromise him. Perhaps, taken all in all, it was as well that his purpose had been frustrated. There was no telling; he might have got into difficulties had he killed her. In escaping from one danger, he might have precipitated himself into another.

He saw now what he had not seen before. It had been his intention to attribute the fire to Jason Quarm. Had Kitty disappeared according to his purpose, then he would have said she had returned to Coombe with her father. It was known that she had left the place in his own company in the trap. She had been seen by the publican and by the miller. But it was possible, it was probable, that Jason had been seen as he drove through Coombe to the Cellars. If so, then it would have been observed that he was alone; accordingly his—Pasco's—story of her return with her father would have been refuted. Then, what explanation could he have given of her disappearance?

Pepperill drew a long breath. He had been preserved from making a fatal mistake. He was glad now that his attempt on Kate had been frustrated.

Then, again, a new idea entered his brain. Could he not have attributed her death to accident on the moor, had the horse trampled on her? He might have

done so, but then, would not folks have thought there was something more than coincidence in the death, the same night, of father and daughter?

"I believe I'd ha' been a stoopid if I'd ha' done it," said Pasco, and resigned himself to circumstances. "Be us in the road? I reckon us be."

"Yes, uncle; here is where we turned off from the highway. Which turn shall I take—on to Brimpts or back to Ashburton?"

"On ahead, Brimpts way. There's a little public-house at Pound Gate, and I be that dry, and the cob, I reckon, be that lazy—we'd best turn in there and rest the night. The shaking of the cart hurts me, moreover."

Kate got up into the vehicle and drove. Her uncle gladly resigned the reins to her. He could have held them, indeed, but not have used the whip, and Diamond would not go with him unless he used the whip.

Before long the little tavern was reached—a low building of moorstones, whitewashed, with a thatched roof, and a sign over the door.

To the surprise of Pepperill, he saw a chaise without horses outside.

At the inn he drew up. The landlord came to the door and helped him to descend.

"What! hurt yourself, Mr. Pepperill?"

"Yes; had a spill."

"On your way to Brimpts, I suppose? I hear you are selling the timber."

"Yes, to Government. Have you visitors?"

"Ay! Some one come after you."

"After me?"

Notwithstanding his bad ankle, Pasco started back. Had his face not been in shadow, the landlord might have observed how pale he had become.

"What! come from Coombe?" he asked in a faltering voice.

"Hardly that, master," answered the landlord. "Not likely *that* when you be come from there. No, o' course, came t'other road. He asked about you at Brimpts, and then drove on. He's purposing to sleep the night here, and was intending to push on to Coombe to-morrow. He's ordered some supper, and my old woman ha' done him a couple of rashers and some eggs. Have you a mind to join him?"

"But who is he? What does he want?" Pasco was still uneasy.

"A sort of a lawyer chap."

"A lawyer?" Pepperill hobbled to his trap. "I'll push on, thank ye, I'll not stay."

"Nay, you'd better. I hold wi' you, master, that it is best in general to give clear room to lawyers. But this time I don't think but you'd safest come in. He'll do you no hurt, and maybe he brings you good, Mr. Pepperill."

"I'll go on," said Pasco decidedly. "I hate all lawyers as I do ravens."

"Halloo! What is this?" A gentleman put his head out of the bar parlour window, which was open. "Who is it that hates lawyers? Not Mr. Pepperill?"

Pasco attempted to scramble into his trap.

"Is that Mr. Pepperill, of Coombe Cellars? You must stay. I have a word to speak with you."

"I won't stay—not a minute."

"I'll not charge you six-and-eight. Yet it is something to your advantage. I'm Mr. James Squire, solicitor, Tavistock. I have come about your affairs. Your old uncle, Sampson Blunt, is dead—died of a stroke—sudden—and you come in for everything. What say you now? Will you stay? Will you put up your horse? Will you come in and have some of my rasher and eggs? I'm drinking stout—what will you take? You won't drive any farther to-night, I presume? Sampson has died worth something like three thousand pounds; and every penny comes to you, except what Government claims as pickings—probate duty, you understand."

"Three thousand pounds?" gasped Pasco.

"Ay, not a guinea under, and it may be more. His affairs haven't been properly looked into yet. I came off post-haste, took a chaise from Tavistock, didn't think to meet you. Was coming on to-morrow. An apoplectic stroke. No children, no one else to inherit but yourself, the only heir-at-law. Now, then, what do you say? Rum and milk, they tell me, is the moor tipple, but I go in for stout."

With glazed eyes and open mouth stood Pasco Pepperill, his hands fallen at his side; he seemed as though he had been paralysed.

"Three thousand five hundred—there's no saying," continued Mr. Squire, through the window. "Look sharp, come in, or the rashers and eggs will be cold. I asked for a chop. Couldn't have it. Pleaded for a steak. No good. No butchers on the moor. So ham and eggs, and ham salt as brine. Never mind—drink more. Come in."

Then the head of the lawyer disappeared behind the blind, and the click of his knife and fork was audible.

Pasco tried to raise his right arm, failed, then he clapped his left hand to his brow.

"Good heavens!" he almost shouted; "I've done it all for naught."

"Done what?" asked the innkeeper.

Pasco recovered himself.

"Nothing. I am stunned. This has turned my head. Lend me your arm. I must go in. No—I must return home—get me another horse—I cannot stay. Quick; I must return—oh, be quick."

"Well, that's coorious!" said the landlord. "I reckon you ought to go in and listen to what the lawyer has to say, first. As for horses, I don't keep 'em, and the lawyer's post-horses be gone into the stable for the night."

"Lend me your arm," said Pepperill. "I don't know right what I'm about. This has come on me quite unexpected."

"I wish three thousand pounds'd come unexpected on me," replied the host.

Pasco entered the room where the lawyer was eating.

"That's right," said the latter. "Take a snack. There's some for all, I say, with my rasher, and you may say so with your legacy, and give me a slice off your dish. Polly—a plate and knife and fork for the gentleman."

Pepperill seated himself. He was as if stupefied. Then he put both elbows on the table, though the movement of his right arm pained him, and began to cry.

"That's what I like," said the lawyer. "Feeling, sentiment. It's what we all ought to do. Amen. When grieving is done, there's a couple of eggs left. But I like that. Heart in the right place. Quite so. What is your tipple? That's very nice. Feeling—I love it. I didn't know, though, that you had seen your uncle for twenty years, and cared twopence about him. P'r'aps you didn't in times gone by; now, of course, it's different with three thousand pounds. I respect your emotion; I love it. But cry when you go to bed. Eat now. There is a place and there is a time for everything. It does you credit, I shall make a point of mentioning it—no extra charge."

END OF VOL. II

KITTY ALONE

A STORY OF THREE FIRES

BY

S. BARING GOULD

AUTHOR OF

“IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA” “THE QUEEN OF LOVE”

“MEHALAH” “CHEAP JACK ZITA” ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

METHUEN & CO.

ESSEX STREET, W.C.

LONDON

v

CONTENTS OF VOL. III

CHAP.

XXXVII. THE ANSWER OF CAIN

XXXVIII. WANTED AT LAST

XXXIX. ONE FOR THEE AND TWO FOR ME

XL. A GREAT FEAR

XLI. TAKING SHAPE

XLII. AN UGLY HINT

XLIII. MUCH CRY AND A LITTLE WOOL

XLIV. PUDDICOMBE IN F

XLV. DAYLIGHT

XLVI. A TRIUMPH

XLVII. PARTED

XLVIII. A SHADOW-SHAPE

XLIX. *FLAGRANTE DELICTO*

L. THE THIRD FIRE

LI. THE PASS'N'S PRESCRIPTION

LII. IN COURT

LIII. JASON'S STORY

LIV. *CON AFFETTUOSO CAPRIZIO*

KITTY ALONE

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE ANSWER OF CAIN

The accommodation of the little inn was not extensive, so Pasco had to be put into the same room with the lawyer, and Kitty slept with the innkeeper's daughter.

Pasco would have greatly preferred a room to himself. He was in a condition of unrest. As it was not possible for him to return to Coombe Cellars that night, he was in ferment of mind, uncertain whether it were advisable that he should return there that week, whether he should not go with Mr. Squire to Tavistock to make provision for the burial of his uncle, and to see after his estate. He had added crime to crime to save his credit as a man of substance, and all had been in vain. The succession to his uncle's estate supplied him with what he required. Why had not the old man died a day earlier? Why, but that fate had impelled him into crime only then to mock him. If fate could play such malicious tricks with him, might it not pursue its grim joke further, lift the veil, disclose what he had done, and just as the property of his relative came to him, just as the money from the insurance company was due–strike him down, drive him into penal servitude, if not send him to the gallows? He tossed on his bed; he could not sleep.

At one moment he resolved to go with the solicitor to Tavistock, and remain there till the funeral, or till he received news of what had taken place at home. But a devouring desire to know what had happened, what was the extent of his crime, to know whether Jason had escaped, whether the fire had been put out, what his wife thought, what was the general opinion relative to the fire,–all this drew him homewards.

Moreover, his sprained ankle and arm were painful, and he could lie on one side only. In the night he put out his hand for his coat, drew it to him, and groped for the box of lucifer matches. He desired to light a candle, rise, and bind a wet towel round his foot.

But the box was missing.

Alarmed, he started from bed and explored the pockets of his trousers and of his waistcoat, and then again went through all those of his coat, but in vain. He had lost the box.

Here was fresh cause for uneasiness. Where had he lost it? Surely not at Coombe Cellars. With a sigh of relief, he recalled having struck a light in the linhay in Miller Ash's field, and that it had excited the interest of Kate. He had then slipped it back into his pocket, as he believed. In all likelihood it had fallen out when he was thrown from the cart on the moor.

Towards morning he dropped into broken sleep, from which he started every few moments in terror, imagining that a constable was laying hold of him, or that he saw Jason Quarm leaping upon him enveloped in flames.

When he woke, he saw the lawyer dressing himself and shaving. His face was lathered about chin and neck and upper lip. He turned towards Pepperill and said, "You are a nice fellow to have as a comrade in a bedroom."

"Am I? Well, I daresay I am," answered Pasco, always prepared for a recognition of his merits.

"I was speaking ironically, man," said Mr. Squire. "By George! how you did toss and tumble in the night. If I had had an uneasy conscience, you would have kept me awake. What was the matter with you?"

"With me? Nothing. I never slept sounder."

"Then you must give your wife bad nights at home. I thought it might have been your spill."

"Oh yes, to be sure it was that. I suffered in my arm and foot; and look, I'm all black and yellow this morning. I shall go back at once to Coombe Cellars."

"You will? Why, man alive, we want you at Tavistock. There is your poor uncle's funeral, you know, to see to. I say, if we are to travel together, you won't cry over-much, will you? I love tears, but in moderation."

"I must return to the Cellars, if only for an hour. I wish to tell Zerah'that's my wife'our piece of good fortune'I mean, our sad bereavement. And I must put together my black clothes and get my hat."

"If it must be, it must. I wish you had been communicated with earlier."

"Earlier? Was that possible?"

"Of course it was; the old gentleman died two days ago."

"Two days ago? Why, to-day is Wednesday."

"Well, his decease took place at five in the morning of Monday."

"Why did you not tell me at once?" almost shrieked Pasco, swinging from his bed, and then collapsing on his crippled foot.

"Bless you, man, it was not my place to do so. I knew nothing of you; the housekeeper was the person he trusted. I came to know of it, as I managed your uncle's affairs. When I inquired about relatives, then I heard of you, or rather

got your address, and came off. You see, as he died on Monday, it won't do for you to be away long. The housekeeper has instructions, and is a sensible woman, but you are the proper person to be on the spot."

"Is she honest? Will she make away with things?"

Mr. Squire shrugged his shoulders.

"I will run to Coombe; we will go in the chaise, and return to Tavistock directly I have been there. Kitty shall be driven by the boy to Brimpts in my trap."

Pasco would not have his niece at Coombe for some time if he could help it.

As soon as he was dressed he was impatient to be off. He hurried breakfast, and hardly ate anything himself. He gave instructions that Kate was to be sent on at once, and was not content till he had seen her off. He had not deemed it prudent to warn her again not to speak of his return to the Cellars after leaving Coombe. To do so might excite her suspicions. Besides, she would be at Brimpts, where there was no one interested in the affairs of Coombe'no one who belonged to it. It would suffice to caution her when she came back to the Cellars, and that return he would delay on one excuse or another.

When Pasco seated himself in the chaise beside the solicitor, an expression of satisfaction came over his face. He was returning to Coombe as a man of consequence, and in good society. How the villagers would stare to see him in a carriage drawn by post-horses. An April weather reigned in his heart, now darkening with apprehension, then brightening with pride and self-satisfaction.

Ever and anon the ghastly figure of his brother-in-law in the sack, burning, rose before his mind's eye, but he put it from him.

As the chaise entered Ashburton, Pepperill said to his companion'"Will you accommodate me with a sum of money till I come in for my inheritance?"

"With the greatest pleasure, but I have not much loose cash about me."

"You have your cheque-book. The circumstances are these'I owe money for wool to a fellow named Coaker, and gave him a bill'unfortunately, I could not meet it, the bank returned it, only a few days ago, and this has made me very angry. I should like to show the bank and Coaker that I am not the moneyless chap that they choose to consider me."

"I shall be happy to assist you. Let us go to the bank at once; I'll settle that little matter with them. Shall I do it for you?"

"I shall be obliged, but I think I must go also."

It was possible that the tidings of what had taken place might have reached Ashburton'possible, though hardly probable.

His uneasiness was relieved when he entered the bank. No allusion was made to any fire. The banker was profuse in his apologies. He could not help himself. There were certain rules in his affairs that he was bound to follow. He had no doubt it was an oversight of Mr. Pepperill not to pay in the sum required, but a man so full of business as he was reputed to be was liable to such slips of

memory. The banker knew Mr. Squire by reputation, was quite sure all was as it should be. He would at once communicate with Coaker'indeed, Coaker was sure to be in Ashburton that day, and let him have the money of the bill.

For some distance Pasco held up his head, and talked boastfully. He had taught that banker what he really was. Everyone else knew he was a man of his word and a man of substance. The solicitor was glad of this change in his companion's mood, and talked chirpily.

But the change in Pepperill's manner did not last long. As he neared Newton, he leaned back in the carriage. He did not desire to be recognised and saluted with the news of the fire. The chaise drew up for the horses to be watered at the inn which had been rebuilt after a fire.

"Will you have a drop of something?" asked the solicitor. "I shall descend for a minute. I suppose we have not got far to go now?"

He left the chaise, and left the door open. Pasco closed it, and being affected with sneezing, opened his pocket-handkerchief and buried his face in the napkin, as the landlord came to the door.

He did not lower the kerchief, he listened from behind it to the host conversing with Mr. Squire.

"Fine morning, sir'come from far?"

"No, nothing very great to-day. Off the moor and through Ashburton."

"Going on to Teignmouth, sir?"

"No, only to a place called Coombe."

"Coombe-in-Teignhead? You haven't many miles more. Nice place. Just heard there has been a fire there."

"Indeed. Insured?"

"Can't say, sir. My little place was burnt down. A tramp slept in the tallat over the pigs and set it ablaze with his pipe. Happily, I was insured, and now I have a very respectable house over my head. What will you please to take, sir?"

"Some rum and milk, I think."

Then Mr. Squire and the landlord went within, and Pasco lowered his kerchief. He wished he had heard more'that the man had entered into particulars, and yet he dared not inquire.

Presently the lawyer stepped into the carriage. The host attended him, and in shutting the door, caught sight of Pasco.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Pepperill, have you heard the news?"

"News'what news?"

"Why, rather bad for you. There's been a terrible fire at your place."

"The house?"

“I really don’t know particulars. They say it’s been dreadful. I’m sorry to have to say it, but I hope there’s no lives lost, and that you are insured.”

“Drive on!” shouted Pasco to the postilion. “Drive on’lose no time. There is a fire at my house.”

The horses whirled away, and Pasco no longer disguised his nervousness. It was natural that he should be uneasy.

“You needn’t trouble yourself,” said Mr. Squire. “If lives had been lost you would have heard, and if you are insured to full value, well”’

On reaching the summit of the hill whence Coombe was visible, a sickly scented smoke was wafted into the carriage windows.

“By George, I can smell it!” exclaimed the solicitor. “It is a sort of concentrated essence of burnt wool.”

“Then my stores are gone!” cried Pepperill. “And all the fleeces for which I have just borrowed two hundred pounds of you to pay’all lost. I’m a ruined man.”

“Not a bit,” answered the lawyer. “You are insured.”

The postilion needed no urging; he cracked his whip, and the horses flew down hill, the chaise rattled through the village, past the church and the inn, whence the host came out to see whether a distinguished guest was coming, and drew up at the entrance to the paddock before the Cellars.

A crowd of villagers, men, women, and children, was assembled round the wreck of the storehouse, from which volumes of smoke still ascended. Every now and then stones and bricks exploded, and the children shouted or screamed if a hot cinder flew out and fell near them.

Pasco burst out of the carriage and rushed towards his house, pushed his way through the assembled crowd, and ran to his door.

There stood Zerah, ghastly in her pallor, her usually well-ordered hair dishevelled, with clenched hands held to her breast, a look of despair in her face. Directly she saw her husband, she shrank from him, and when he put out his hands to her, she thrust him away, with an expression of horror.

“I will not be touched by you,” she said hoarsely. “Where is Jason?”

“Jason? Am I his keeper?”

“The answer of Cain,” retorted Zerah. “This is your doing. I knew it would come, when you insured. And you have destroyed my brother also. O my God! my God! Would that I had never seen this day!”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WANTED AT LAST

Pasco thrust his wife within and shut the door behind. Zerah had returned early in the morning, and had found that her husband and Kate were away, and the house locked, whilst the stores were in conflagration. Half the parish was present. The fire had broken out some time after nightfall'at least, it had been observed about nine o'clock by a boy connected with the mill, who ran to the alehouse and roused the village orchestra, which was practising there, and in ten minutes nearly everyone in the little place was at the Cellars. The fire was pouring in dense sheets of flame out of the windows. It had apparently begun below, the wool above dropped into it as the rafters and boards gave way. Nothing could be done to arrest it, but precautions were adopted to prevent the fire communicating with a little rick of straw that Pepperill had for litter near the stables. The flames and smoke were carried inland, and no apprehensions were entertained of the house becoming ignited.

Much comment was made on the absence of Pasco, his wife, and niece. But that which excited most uneasiness was the presence of Jason Quarm's cart and donkey in the yard. If they were at the Cellars, then Jason could not be far distant. Was it possible that, finding the house locked up, and his relatives absent, he had made his way into the store-shed and perished there? This was the question hotly debated.

When Mrs. Pepperill arrived from the other side of the river, and saw the conflagration, and heard that there was a probability that her brother had fallen a victim, she was driven frantic with terror and grief. In her mind connecting her husband with the occurrence, she charged him with the firing of the stores and with the death of her brother.

Pepperill endeavoured to pacify her. He protested his innocence; he declared that he had left the house soon after herself, and by entreaty, remonstrance, and threat urged Zerah to hold her tongue and not recklessly put him in peril by rousing against him suspicion which was without grounds.

As to Jason, he knew nothing about him. He had probably left his trap at the Cellars and crossed the water on some business of his own. He would return shortly. The fact of his cart and ass being there was not sufficient to cause alarm for his safety. If anything transpired more grave, Pasco would be the first to take the necessary steps to investigate what had become of him. Meanwhile, let Zerah moderate her transports and listen to the news he had to tell. He must

leave her, and that immediately, to go with the lawyer to Tavistock, and make provision for his uncle's interment and for securing his property.

Pepperill was unable to get away as soon as he wished. He was forced to show himself among the crowd, to give expression to consternation, to answer questions as to his surmises about the origin of the fire, to explain how he had left the place before it broke out, and to offer suggestions as to the whereabouts of Quarm. He scouted the idea of his brother-in-law having been burnt in the stores; he said he suspected the fellow Redmore of having set fire to his buildings. Redmore was at large still; he, Pasco, had given him occasion of resentment by sending the workmen at Brimpts in pursuit of him. The man was a bitter hater and revengeful, as was proved by his having burned the stack of Farmer Pooke. What more likely than that he had paid off his grudge against himself'Pepperill'in like manner?

As soon as ever Pasco was able to disengage himself from the crowd, he re-entered the chaise and departed with the lawyer, glad to escape the scene. When the chaise had got outside Coombe, he leaned back with a puff of relief and said, "That is now well over."

"I should hardly say *that*," observed the lawyer, "till you have the insurance money clinking in your pocket. Now look here, Mr. Pepperill; it may be you will have a hitch about the same. If so, apply to me."

Among those looking on upon the mass of glowing, spluttering combustible material was the rector, with his hands behind him, and his hat at the back of his head. He was touched on the arm, and, turning, saw the pretty face of Rose Ash looking entreatingly towards him.

"What is it, my child?"

"Please, sir, do you think anything dreadful has happened to Kitty's father?"

The rector paused before he answered. Then he said leisurely, "I do not know what reply to make. I saw him last night about seven. I was at my garden-gate when he drove by, and we exchanged salutations."

"The neddy is in the stable here, and there is his cart," said Rose.

"He may have crossed the water."

"But, sir, Mrs. Pepperill had the boat."

"True—is there no other?"

"Yes; the old boat. I did not think of that. I'll run and see if her be in place."

Rose left, and returned shortly, discouraged, and said'

"The old boat be moored to the landing-stage as well as the new boat. And, sir, I do not think he could have got across the water after seven by any boat. The tide was out. By nine, when it was flowing, the people were running about here because of the fire."

"I will go and see Mrs. Pepperill."

"May I come with you, sir? Kitty is my very dear friend."

"Kitty?—I thought she had no friends?"

"It is only quite lately we have become friends. I would do anything for her. I am not happy. I think she ought to know what has taken place, and yet I wouldn't frighten and make her miserable without reason. That is why I so much wish to know what is really thought about poor Mr. Quarm. It would be too dreadful if he had come by his end here, and it will break Kitty's heart."

"You shall come with me, certainly, Rose."

On entering the house, they found Mrs. Pepperill moving restlessly about the kitchen. Her mood had gone through a change since the visit of her husband. The wildness of her first terror and grief had passed away, and given place to great nervous unrest. She had smoothed her hair as well as she could with her trembling fingers; her lips quivered, her eye was unsteady, and she could not remain in one posture or in one place for more than half a minute.

She had hitherto appeared a hard, iron-natured woman without sympathy, but now the shock had completely broken her down. She had rushed to the conclusion that her husband had deliberately set fire to his warehouse, and without scruple had sacrificed her brother. The horror of the death Jason had undergone, and the greater horror to her of the thought that this was the callous act of her own husband, had shaken the woman out of all her self-restraint and rigidity of nerve. She was morally as well as physically broken down. A woman stern, uncompromising, strictly honest and upright, harsh and unpitying in her severity, she found herself involved in a terrible crime that touched her in the most sensitive part. It was the conceit mingled with stupidity in Pasco, his recklessness in speculation, and his obstinacy in refusing to listen to her voice, which had hardened and embittered the woman.

Something he had said, something in his manner, had led her to fear he contemplated an escape from his difficulties by dishonest means, and it was to avert the necessity of his having recourse to these that she had produced her little store, the savings of many years. When she returned from Teignmouth to find that her husband, notwithstanding, had carried out his purpose, and in doing so had swept her own brother out of his path'then all her fortitude gave way.

After the first paroxysm of resentment and despair had passed, she felt the need of using self-control, and of concealing what she thought, of endeavouring to avert suspicion from falling on Pasco. Now also, for the first time in her life, did this stern woman crave for sympathy, and her heart turned at once instinctively to the girl she had disregarded and despised. Dimly she had perceived, though she had never allowed it to herself, that there was a something in her niece of a strong, noble, and superior nature to her own. And in this moment of terrible prostration of her self-respect and weakness of nerve, her heart cried out with almost ravenous impatience for Kate. To Kitty alone could she speak her mind, in Kitty's breast alone find sympathy.

When, therefore, the door opened and the rector entered with a girl at his side, her eyes, dazzled by the sunlight behind them, unable to distinguish at the moment through the haze of tears that formed and dried in her eyes, she cried out hoarsely'

"It is Kitty! I want you, Kitty!"

"I am not Kitty," said Rose. "I am only her dear friend. If you want Kitty, I will fetch her."

"I do want her. I must have her," said Zerah vehemently. "I have no one. My brother is dead, my husband is gone. My Kitty'where is she? I do not know if it is true that she is on the moor. She may be burning yonder, along wi' her father."

The woman threw herself into the settle, and burst into a convulsion of tears.

Mr. Fielding spoke words intended to console her. She must not rush to a conclusion so dreadful without sufficient cause; it was possible enough that in the course of the day something might transpire which would give them reason to believe that Mr. Quarm was safe. Then, to divert her mind from this point to one less distressing, as he thought, he inquired whether she had any idea as to how the fire had originated.

He could hardly have asked a question more calculated to agitate her. Zerah sprang from the settle, walked hurriedly about the room, hiding her eyes with her hand, and crying'

"I know nothing. I cannot think. I want Kitty."

Then Mr. Fielding put forth his arm, stayed her, and said'

"Mrs. Pepperill, remember, however dear to you your brother may be, he must be dearer to Kitty, as he is her father. You are advanced in life, have had your losses and sorrows, and have acquired a certain power to sustain a loss and command sorrow, but Kitty's is a fresh young heart, that has never known the cutting blows to which yours has been subjected. Spare her what may be unnecessary. Let us wait over to-day, and if nothing happens to relieve our minds of the terrible fear that clouds them, we will send to Dart-meet for the child. Indeed, she must be brought here'if our fears receive confirmation. All I ask is, spare her what, please God, is an unnecessary agony."

Then Rose Ash came up close to the bewildered woman.

"Mrs. Pepperill, I will go after Kitty, I promise you, if you will wait over to-day. I am Kitty's friend, as I was once the friend of your Wilmot, and if you will suffer me, I will remain in the house with you, to relieve you, all day, and do what work you desire."

"No, no!" gasped Zerah; "I must be alone. I will have no one here but Kitty."

"You consent to the delay?"

The woman did not refuse; she shook herself free from Rose and the rector, retreated to the window, and cast herself on the bench in it, and cried and moaned in her hands held over her face.

When Rose proposed to Mrs. Pepperill that she should go to Brimpts to fetch Kate, a scheme had formed itself in her brain. She would ask Jan Pooke to drive her. At the time of our story two-wheeled conveyances, gigs, buggies, tax-carts, were kept only by the well-to-do, and there were but three in all Coombe'the parson's trap, and those of Pasco Pepperill and yeoman Pooke. Her own father, the miller, though a man of substance, had not taken the step of providing himself with a trap; to have done so would have been esteemed in the parish an assertion of wealth and importance that would have provoked animadversion, and might have hurt his trade. The miller is ever regarded with mistrust. His fist is said to be too much in the meal-sack, and had he dared to start a two-wheeled conveyance, it would at once have been declared that it was maintained, as well as purchased, at the expense of those who sent their corn to be ground at his mill.

But now that Rose considered her scheme at leisure, it did not smile on her as at first. At the moment she proposed it, the prospect of a long drive by Jan's side, of union in sympathy for Kitty, had promised something. Now that she reviewed her plan, she foresaw that it might be disastrous. Kate, when she heard the tidings of the fire and the news of the disappearance of her father, would be thrown into great distress, and a distressed damsel is proverbially irresistible to a swain. It might undo all that Kate had done, make Jan more enamoured than ever, and he as a comforter might gain what he had failed to win when he approached as a lover. Rose was a good-hearted, if a somewhat wayward girl. She desired to do a kind thing to Kitty, but not at such a cost to herself.

She turned the matter over in her head, and finally reached a compromise. She would ask Jan to drive her to Brimpts so as to fetch Kate, but lay the injunction on him, for Kitty's sake, not to say a word relative to the loss of her father. Grieved Kate would be to hear of the burning of the storehouse, but not heart-broken. The consumption of so much coal would not extort tears. A sorrowful girl is only interesting'a heart-broken one is irresistible.

XXXIX

ONE FOR THEE AND TWO FOR ME

Rose and Ja by side in the trap that belonged to the Pookes. In his good-nature and readiness to do whatever was kind, Jan had promptly acceded to Rose's request that he should help her to bring Kitty home. It was not right, she said,

that the child should be left on the moor, when her father was dead, and her aunt in despair.

“You know, Jan,” she said, pressing against the driver’s side, and speaking low and confidentially, “I am dear Kitty’s very, very best friend,’I may say, her only real friend,’and have to fight her battles like a Turk.”

“I did not know that,” observed Jan in surprise, ill-disguised, for his mind ran to the incidents of the Ashburton fair.

“You boys don’t know everything. I love Kitty dearly, and I believe she loves me. We have no secrets from each other, and now that she is in trouble, my heart flies out to she, and I want to be with her, and break the news to her very, very gently.”

“I thought”’began Jan, then paused.

Rose looked up in his dull, kindly face, and said roguishly, “Oh, Jan, a penny for your thoughts. No, really; I will give half a crown’a thought with you must be *so* precious, because so rare.”

A little nettled, Jan said, “I thought this, Rose: from your treatment of Kate the other day at the fair, that you were her enemy rather than her friend.”

“That is because you are an old buffle-head. Of course we are bosom friends, but I’m full of fun, and we tease one another’we girls’just as kids gambol. You are so heavy and solemn and dull, you don’t understand our gambols. You are like a great ox looking on at kids and lambs, and wondering what it all means when they frisk, and you take it for solemn earnest.”

“But about the quarrel at the stall’the kerchief?”

“That was play.”

“And the workbox that Noah knocked from under her arm? Was that play?”

“Purely. Jan, I had a much better workbox which I wanted to give Kate, and you went and spoiled my purpose by giving her that trumpery affair. I am not ashamed to own it. I told Noah to strike it from under her arm, that I might give her the box I had put aside for her.”

“And she has it?”

“Yes; oh dear, yes!’of course she has it.”

Jan shook his head; he was puzzled, but supposed all was right’supposed, because he was too straightforward and good-hearted to mistrust the girl who spoke so frankly, with great eyes looking him full in the face, and smiling. Impudence is more convincing than innocence.

Then Rose said, “How good you are, Jan’how tremendously good! Really, it is a privilege to live in the same parish, and drive in the same buggy beside so excellent a Christian.”

“What are you at now?” was Jan’s outspoken response.

"I mean what I say, Jan. Considering how you've been treated, I declare that by your conduct you do a lot more good to me than any number of sermons."

"How so? You are making game of me."

"Not a bit; I'm serious. How is it you show your goodness? Why, by driving me to Brimpts."

"Oh, I have nothing else to do, and I like a drive."

"With me?'or perhaps I just spoil the pleasure," Rose asked, with a roguish look out of the corners of her eyes.

The young yeoman was unaccustomed to making gallant speeches, and he let slip the opportunity thus adroitly offered him. Rose curled her lip, as he replied'

"It is always pleasanter to have someone to talk to than to be alone, especially for a long drive."

"But it is so good, so *very* good of you to fetch *her*."

"Why should I be such a churl as not to go when asked?"

"After what has occurred, you know. What a fellow you are! In the orchard, you know."

Pooke turned blood-red. A fly was tickling him; he raised the butt-end of his whip and rubbed his nose with it.

"Get along, Tucker!" he shouted. Tucker was the horse.

"I hope I shall profit better from your example than I have from all the parson's sermons," pursued Rose.

"What are you at?" asked Pooke uneasily, conscious that some ulterior end was in his companion's view, as she thus lavished encomiums on him, and then dug into his nerves a needlepoint of sharp remark.

"What am I at? Oh, Jan! nothing at all, but sitting here with my hands in my lap, so happy to have a drive'and in such excellent company'company so good."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"It is not every man would lend his cart, nay, drive himself, to do a favour to a girl who had treated him outrageously."

"When did you treat me so?"

"I'oh, Jan'not I! I could not have done that. A thousand times no"' Rose spoke in pretty agitation, and fluttered at his side. "I mean Kitty."

"Kitty? Get along, Tucker!'it's no use your trying to scratch yourself with your hind hoof, and run at the same time." He addressed the horse, which was executing awkward gymnastics. "Excuse me, Rose; I must dismount. There is a briar stinging Tucker."

Jan drew up, descended, and slapped with his open hand where a horse-fly was engaged sucking blood. The fly was too wide awake to be killed; it rose, and sailed away. Then young Pooke mounted again.

"Get along, Tucker!" he said, and applied the whip.

"I mean," pursued Rose, as if there had ensued no interruption. "I mean, after you had been treated so shamefully."

"I didn't know it."

"Really, Jan! Everyone knows that Kitty refused you. It is the village talk, and everyone says it was scandalous."

"Drat it! there is that fly again at Tucker."

"Oh, if you can think of nothing but Tucker, I'll be silent."

"Don't be cross, Rose, I must consider Tucker, as I am driver. There might be accidents."

"Not for the world. Of course you must consider Tucker, and poor little I must be content to come into your mind in the loops and gaps not took up by the horse and the gadfly."

"What do you suppose Tucker cost father?" asked Pooke, clumsily endeavouring to change the topic.

"I really don't know."

"Eight pounds, and he is worth twenty. That was a piece of luck for father."

"Luck comes to those who desarve it," said Rose. "I am not surprised at you and your family being prosperous in all you undertake. There's no knowing, Jan,"'she spoke solemnly,'"you may feel low and discouraged at being, so to speak, kicked over the orchard hedge by Kate, but it may be a blessing in disguise, who can tell? but Providence may have in view someone for you much better suited'*much* in every way, than Kitty."

"Drat it! there is that fly again."

"Mr. Puddicombe'what a good soul he is!'has been about the place spreading the news."

"What news?"

"About Kitty and the schoolmaster."

"Kitty and the schoolmaster?" echoed Pooke. His brows went up, his jaw dropped, and his cheek became mottled.

"Haven't you heard? Why, poor dear Jan, she went helter-skelter away from the orchard where she had trampled on you to fling herself into the arms of Mr. Thingamy-jig. I cannot tell his name'I mean the new schoolmaster."

"How do you know?"

“Of course I know. Mr. Puddicombe is brimming with the news. They went like a pair of turtle-doves cooing and billing to Mr. Puddicombe, and he has nearly run his legs down to stumps since. The schoolmaster”’

“But I don’t mean about the schoolmaster.” Pooke spoke with a tremble in his voice.

“Oh! about that affair, that comical affair in the orchard? Half the village, I reckon, was out behind the hedges looking and listening. There was Betsy Baker, and there was Jenny Jones, and that sprig of a chap, Tommy Croft’I won’t be sure they heard, but I fancy so’anyhow, everyone has been talking of it, and pitying you that you were made ridiculous; and then to go off, right on end, and accept a schoolmaster.” In a tone of infinite contempt, Rose added, “A schoolmaster! It takes ten tailors to make a man, and ten schoolmasters to make a tailor; Puddicombe excepted’that was a man, and was so highly respected, he knew how to make himself looked up to, and folk forgave him his profession for his own sake. But this new whipper-snapper! And to be rejected for *him*!”

Jan Pooke writhed. He had not heard the news of Kate’s engagement. Somehow it had been kept from, or had not reached, him. The fire had distracted men’s and women’s thoughts from the affairs of Kate, Bramber, and himself. His colour changed, and he flushed purple. He shared the prejudice entertained by farmers and labourers’by all who were semi-educated and wholly uneducated’for the man of culture that was striving to enlighten dull minds and wake torpid intelligences. Parsons and schoolmasters are in the same category. The heavy soul resents being raised to spiritual life, and the heavy mind resents being wakened to intellectual life. It ever will be so, and it ever has been so. A man going along a road found a sodden toper lying in a ditch. He tried to pull him out. “Leave alone!” roared the drunken man. “I likes it, I enjoys it. I’ll knock you down if you don’t let me lie in my ditch. There are effets there, and slugs there, and frogs and toads; get along your own way and leave me where I am.”

Pooke and Rose Ash had imbibed the views of their parents and companions, and the prevailing atmosphere in a country parish. They had not risen above it, and their ideas took colour from it.

“It was scandalous conduct, was it not, Jan?” asked Rose. “If I were you, I wouldn’t stand it, not half an hour.”

“But what can I do?”

“What’? do’? Oh, lots!”

“I can do lots. I do not see it. If Kitty chooses”’His lips quivered, and he gulped down something.

“If Kitty chooses a beggarly schoolmaster instead of you, you must not let the neighbours see you are crestfallen. It will never do in coming out of church for everyone to point at you and say, ‘Poor chap! There he goes, Jan Pooke, whom Kitty Alone would not have; and here comes Mr. Thingamy-jig, whom she

prefers so highly, looking like the cock of the walk.' It would be very shaming, Jan, and I don't think your dear father would like it terrible much."

"I can do nothing," said Jan, looking wistfully at the horse's ears: "if Kitty likes Mr. Bramber, and don't care for me."

"And if the story of the silver peninks gets about?"

"Don't, Rose!" His face expressed pain.

"I don't wish to hurt you, I wish you well, Jan, you know. I was anxious that you should not be the laughing-stock of Coombe and the neighbourhood. That would be too dreadful. I have such a regard for you. Mind you, I love dear Kitty, but I cannot blind my eyes that her has made a mistake'a happy mistake for you, because, dear, good girl as she is, I do not think that she could ha' made you happy."

"Why not?"

"She would have been eternally axin' questions which you could never answer."

"There is something in that."

"She'd have been wanting to take you to the bottoms of wells, you know, so as to see the stars by day. You would not like that, Jan?"

"No'there is something in that."

"And to make you read that stupid book'Wordsworth, her calls it'in the evening, whilst she knitted. You couldn't have stood that, Jan?"

"Horrible!'I should ha' died."

"Then you may rejoice that Providence has ordained that she should go after the schoolmaster. Now you must look out and see what step you can take to recover the respect of the parish."

"How can I do that?"

"Oh, there be more fishes in the sea than come out of it, I reckon."

Jan remained in meditation, speechless. Rose pressed close to his side.

"Have you no room?" he asked.

"Oh, 'tisn't that altogether; my feelings overcame me. I do so, so pity you, you dear, poor Jan."

Presently, as he continued silent, she said, "If I were you, when shortly you meet Kitty, and when she will be in my place at your side, and I ride behind, I would not look like an apple that has gone under the rollers, nor hang my ears like a whipped dog, but laugh and joke and whistle and be jolly, you know."

"That don't seem right, with her father burned to death."

"She knows nothing of that, and is to know nothing of it from us. The proper person to tell her is Mrs. Pepperill. So mind, Jan, not a word about Mr. Quarm. Understand, not a word. So look cheerful and whistle."

"What shall I whistle? Jackson's 'Tee-dum'?"

"Of course not, something lively. The 'Green Bushes.'"

"Why the 'Green Bushes'?"

"Oh, silly Jan!" Then she began to sing'

"'The old lover arrived, the maiden was gone;

He sighed very deeply, he stood all alone,

"She is on with another, before off with me,

So adieu ye green bushes for ever!" said he.'

"Green bushes'that is the orchard, Jan, where grow the silver peninks."

"Drat that fly!" exclaimed Jan, flicking with his whip. "Her's at it again."

CHAPTER XL

A GREAT FEAR

Kate was among the felled timber at Brimpts, skipping about the logs, stooping, then rising again, and withal singing merrily, when Jan and Rose, having put up the horse at Dart-meet, came up the valley to join her.

The peeled trunks lay white as bones on the surface of the moor, and a fresh and stimulating odour was exhaled from them. The bark was piled up in stacks at intervals. The whortleberry was flowering in the spring sun. The heather was still dead. Horns of ferns, brown, and curled like pastoral staves, stood up between the trunks.

After the first greetings had been exchanged, Rose asked Kitty, "What in the world are you doing here'bobbing about? In search of long cripples (vipers)?"

"No; I do not want them. I have started some basking in the hot sun, but they slip away at once and do no harm. I am counting the rings on the trees."

"What for?"

"To learn their age."

"Who cares how old the trees are?"

"I do; and thus one can find out in what years the trees grew fast, and which summers were wet and cold."

“Really, Kitty, you are going silly.”

“It is interesting,” pursued Kate; “and then, Rose, I do not altogether believe in the rings telling the age truly. I think the oaks are much older than they pretend to be.”

“Like old maids?” suggested Rose.

“Yes, Rose; after a certain age they cease to grow’cease to swell, they just live on as they were, or go back in their hearts, then they make no rings. The rings tell you for how many years they went on expanding, but say nothing about those when they were at a standstill. Then, look here: the rings are on one side much thicker than on the other, and that is because of a cold and stormy wind. They thicken their bark against the wind, just as I might put on a shawl.”

“Oh,’by the way’touching a shawl”’

But Kate was too eager and interested in her subject to bear interruption.

“I have the oddest and most wonderful thing to show you, Rose. You do not care about the rings, but this you will be truly pleased to see.”

“What is that?”

“Follow me.”

Kate skipped among the prostrate oaks till she reached one large trunk. As she skipped, she sang merrily’

“’All in the wood there grew a fine tree.‘”

“What song is that, Kate?” asked Rose.

“It is one that the head woodcutter taught me.

’All in the wood there grew a fine tree,

The finest tree that ever you might see,

And the green leaves flourished around.‘

All on this tree there grew a fine bough, and all on this bough there grew a fine twig. Then it goes on to tell how on this twig there was a fine nest, and how in this nest there was a fine bird, the finest bird that ever you did see; and on this bird there grew a fine feather, and out of the feather was made a fine bed, and on this fine bed was laid a fine babe, and out of the babe there grew a fine man, and the man put an acorn into the earth, and out of the acorn there grew a fine tree, and the tree was of the acorn, and the acorn of the man, and the man was from the babe, and the babe was on the bed, and the bed was of the feather, and the feather of the bird, and the bird was in the nest, and the nest was on the twig, and the twig was on the bough, and the bough was on the tree, and the tree was in the wood.

’And the green leaves flourished around’around’around,

And the green leaves flourished around.‘”

“What nonsense, Kate!”

“It is not nonsense. There is a great deal in it. The song goes on without an end, always the same; just as at the end of the psalm, ’As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.‘ See!’this is what I have to show you.”

She pointed to some lettering that ran round the white peeled trunk, brown as coffee; somewhat large and strained the characters seemed, and Rose was not able to decipher them, but she said’

“However came letters to be there, under the bark?”

“That is the great curiosity,” answered Kate. “Someone cut them in the bark with his knife when the tree was young, two hundred years ago. The tree has grown big since then, and has healed up its wounds, but still bears the scars; and it has drawn its bark round it, and for years upon years has hidden what was written from the eyes of man. Only now that the dear old oak is hewn down, and the bark stripped away, is the writing revealed which was cut on it two hundred years ago.”

“What are the words?”

“Listen—I have spelled them out.

’O Tree defying Time

Witness bear

That two loving Hearts

Did meet here.

1643’

Is not this wonderful? The tree was trusted, and it has fulfilled its trust, and would have done so till it died. Two hundred years ago, two young lovers met here, and the youth cut this on the bark. Two hundred years after, it gives up its witness. If it had not been cut down, two hundred years hence it would have done the same.”

Rose looked at Jan, and took his hand and sighed.

“Jan, let us sit down on this tree. This touches me; does it not you, Jan?”

“What’your hand?”

“No, silly; I mean this about the lovers.”

Then Kate began to sing’

"'All in the wood there grew a fine tree,
The finest tree that ever you did see,
And the green leaves flourished around.'"

Then Kate said, clapping her hands'

"Is there not a great deal in that song of the tree in the wood? I suppose in paradise that Adam stood by the tree of life and felt happy when he held Eve by the hand and looked into her eyes. If he could have written, he would have cut these same words in the bark of the tree of life. And years went by, and it was always and ever the same story: the young grew old, and then others came in their places, and loving hearts met, and again and again in an endless whirl, and an ever-returning tide, and a perpetual circling of the stars in heaven, and the new flowers coming after the old have died''As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.'"

Then Jan started up, drew his hand from Rose, and said'

"We have come for you, Kitty. As soon as the horse has had a feed, we must be off."

"Is there such a terrible hurry?" asked Rose with a tone of reproach in her voice.

"We have no time to lose."

"Lose, Jan?"

"To waste, I mean."

"Waste, Jan?"

"I mean'bother it!'we must be off as soon as the horse is a bit rested. We have a long journey to take, up and down, and little trotting ground. We have come for Kitty. You must return with us," looking at Kate. "There has been something"'

"Let me speak," interrupted Rose, afraid lest Pooke should let out too much. "Kitty, your uncle and aunt have met with a great loss. The stores have been burnt, and Mrs. Zerah does nothing but sob and cry after you."

"Auntie cry for me?"

"Yes. She will not be at rest till you return."

"I'll go at once," said Kate, flushing with pleasure. "When did this happen?"

"Tuesday night."

"That is the night we came here. Is my father at the Cellars?"

"I have not seen him. Now, Jan"'Pooke was about to speak. Rose stopped his mouth. "Leave me to speak. You are a blunderer."

"But I know he passed us going to Coombe," said Kate.

"Passed you'where?"

"On the hill. We were in the linhay."

Rose held out a shawl.

“Kitty, is this yours?”

“Yes; it is. I lost it on my way here. Where did you find it?”

“In the linhay in Furze Park. I went there with our cow, Buttercup. The calf is taken from her. There I found it.”

“We turned into the field, and I remained a long time in the linhay,” said Kate.

“And your uncle?”

“Oh, he went back to the Cellars.”

“What, by the road?”

“No; by the waterside. I was tired, and the time was long, or I thought it was; so I folded my shawl to keep the prickles from my head,’there is so much furze there,’and I lay down and slept.”

“I found this also,” said Rose, extending a match-box. “I don’t understand what it is.”

“It is a lucifer-box. My uncle had it. He pulled a match across something, and it blazed up. I suppose he dropped it in the linhay, also, whilst getting the horse and cart out.”

“What! you had horse and cart there?”

“Yes.”

“And your uncle went back to the Cellars?”

“Yes; just before. Indeed, as we turned into the field, I heard my father go by; I heard him speak to Neddy. He always talks to the donkey as he goes along.”

“You did not speak to your father?”

“No. Uncle was impatient, and father was rattling along at a fine pace, and you know from that place it is all down hill to Coombe.”

“Your uncle returned to the Cellars after that; you are quite sure of it?”

“Yes; certain. He told me he had forgotten to lock up.”

“Why did he not go by the road?”

“I cannot tell’perhaps he thought the other way shortest.”

“It is not that. Was he long away?”

“I cannot tell. I fell asleep. Have you not anything to tell me of father? I know he went to Coombe.”

“I have told you’I have not seen him.”

“Where can he be?”

Neither answered that question.

Even into Jan's dull brain there penetrated an idea that some mystery connected with Pasco Pepperill was involved'that it was singular that he, his wife, and niece should have all left the Cellars before the fire broke out, and that Pasco should have returned there secretly after having left. He said nothing. If he tried to think, his thoughts became entangled, and he saw nothing clearly. An uneasy feeling pervaded him, which he was unable to explain to himself.

During the first part of the journey back to the Cellars, Kate talked. She sat beside Jan Pooke. Rose was behind, keeping a ready ear to hear what was said, and interfere should she deem it expedient.

"Where can my father be?" asked Kitty.

As no answer was given to her query, she said further'

"It is very strange, and I cannot understand how he is not there. He must have been at Coombe just before the fire broke out. I know he passed along the road. Where are the donkey and cart?"

"They are at the Cellars," answered Jan.

"Then my father must be there. He cannot be far off. He cannot get about easily, as he is so lame."

"I suppose he must be somewhere," was the wise observation of Pooke.

"Hasn't my aunt seen him?"

"No, Kitty."

"Nor anyone."

Jan hesitated, and presently said'

"I did hear something about the parson having spoke with her, but I don't know the rights of it."

"He must be there. He cannot be far off. We shall see him when we arrive. I daresay he had some business that took him off; but if he heard of the fire, he would come back at once. He will be a loser by it as well as my uncle."

"Folk say there will be no loss, as Mr. Pepperill insured so terrible heavy. They do tell that he has insured for two thousand pounds, and that only about fifty pounds worth of goods is burnt."

Kate shrank together. Rose touched Pooke significantly to hold his tongue.

After that Kitty remained very silent. A feeling of unrest took possession of her, even of alarm, at some impending catastrophe. That her uncle had been in difficulty she knew. That he was in want of money to pay for the timber before he could realise on it, and to meet his dishonoured bill for the wool, she knew. A chill ran through her veins.

After a long period of silence Rose said to her'

"Kitty, is it true that you and the schoolmaster went to old Mr. Puddicombe about being engaged?"

"Yes," answered the girl addressed.

"He took it as a mark of proper respect?"

"Yes."

"Jan, dear," said Rose, touching Pooke, "as soon as we get to Coombe, you and I will go and call on Mr. Puddicombe. It will please him. He was the first who heard about your engagement, Kitty?"

"Not quite that'we told Mr. Fielding."

"Oh, the parson! But everyone respects Mr. Puddicombe *so* much, that I think Jan and I will go to him first. You know, Kitty, we have settled it between us'I mean, Jan and I'on our way to Brimpts, and Mr. Puddicombe ought to know."

CHAPTER XLI

TAKING SHAPE

It was evening when Kate was driven up to the Cellars, yet not so dark but that she could see the donkey in the paddock, and dark enough to make the glow of the still smoking heap visible, here and there, in red seams and yellow sparks.

"There is Neddy," exclaimed Kate. "My father must be here."

As she was descending from the cart, she said, "Why, he may have crossed the Teign in the boat."

"No, Kitty," answered Jan; "I don't think that."

"Why not?"

Pooke was afraid of answering lest he should involve himself; and Rose had jumped down at the mill, and so was not there to prevent him from committing an error.

Before entering the house, in her anxiety about her father, Kate ran to the mooring-place of the boats, and came back in some exultation to Jan. "I said so. He has crossed. The old boat is gone."

"It was there yesterday. It was there all the night of the fire and next day. It has been taken since," answered Pooke.

Kate was downcast. She held out her hand to Jan, took her little bundle, and entered the house. Her aunt had not come out to meet her. That she had not expected. No one in that house had shown her graciousness and desire for her presence, and she had ceased to expect it.

When she entered, it was with a hesitating foot. She thought that Rose, out of good nature and desire to please, had represented her aunt as more desirous to

have her than she really was. Having never met with affection on the part of Zerah, hardly with recognition of her services, she did not anticipate a complete change in demeanour. She was surprised to find that her aunt had not lighted a candle.

She called to her, when Zerah replied, with a cry that thrilled Kate to her heart's core, "Is that my Kitty? My child come back to me?"

In another moment aunt and niece were locked in each other's arms, and sobbing out their hearts,'Kate, through joy, dashed with dread of evil; Zerah, through joy at seeing her niece again, a joy that sprang out of despair.

A singular relation now developed itself between them. After a very short while, Kitty perceived that there was something on her aunt's mind, that Zerah was weighed down with a sense of some calamity far exceeding that of the loss of so many tons of coal and so many fleeces of wool. The woman was suddenly become timid and apprehensive. It gave her pain to speak of what had taken place, and she avoided by every kind of subterfuge expressing an opinion as to the cause of the fire, and as to the extent of the damage done. She had for some years faced the prospect of financial ruin, and if this had come upon her, Kate was sure she would have met it, not indeed with equanimity, but with sullen assurance that it was inevitable, and have prepared herself to accept the new position of poverty.

But that which occupied and disorganised the heart of Zerah was something else, something more tearful. Kate saw that she shrank not only from allusion to the fire, but from inquiries as to the fate of her brother, and whenever Jason was named or referred to, the woman caught her niece to her bosom and covered her with kisses, wept, trembled, but said nothing.

Mrs. Pepperill took Kate from her little attic-room to share her bed during the absence of Pasco, and the girl found that the trouble which weighed on her aunt during the day haunted and tortured her during the night. Zerah slept little, tossed in her bed; and if she slept, broke into moans and exclamations.

Meanwhile, Kitty did not rest from making inquiries relative to her father. She visited the rector, and ascertained from his lips that he had seen and exchanged words with Jason Quarm on the evening of the fire, in fact, only an hour or two before the fire must have broken out.

But where was her father? The old boat was gone, that was true; but it was in its place on the morning after the fire, as well as all that night. It had been taken later; and there was, perhaps, not much to marvel at in this, when the Cellars were crowded with all conditions of sightseers and mischief-doers pervading the precincts. Dishonest men might have taken advantage of the confusion to purloin the boat, or mischievous boys to have loosed the cable and let her drift with the tide where it chose to sweep her.

Inevitably Kate became aware of the opinion prevailing in the village, that her father was burned to death in the storehouse, and it was hard for her to come to any other conclusion. She went to Mrs. Redmore to inquire whether he had

been to his old cottage, but the timid, not very bright woman nervously denied any knowledge of him.

Her distress was very great, but she sought to conceal it from her aunt, who wanted nothing to augment her own trouble.

Hitherto the fire had smouldered on in the ruins, but it became less, and though the charred masses still gave out gusts of heat, there was no more smoke rising from them, only a quivering of the air above the ashes.

The fire was naturally the main topic of conversation in the neighbourhood. Minds as well as tongues were exercised. Comments were made on the absence of Pasco, which were rendered hardly more favourable by the knowledge that he had gone to a funeral. He knew nothing of his uncle’s illness and death when he started. Why had he sent his wife away? Why had he carried his niece back to Dartmoor, from which she had been recently brought?

Incautious exclamations of Zerah, when first made aware of the fire and of her brother’s disappearance, together with her reticence since, were discussed.

Prowlers came round the house, peering into this part, then another. An agent from the insurance office suddenly presented himself, listened to and noted down the various rumours in circulation, and threw out a hint that his office would consider before it paid the sum for which the storehouse and its contents were inscribed.

The rector called on Mrs. Pepperill, and without appearing to intrude on her troubles, endeavoured to gain from her something which might elucidate the mystery of Quarm’s disappearance. Her mouth remained shut, and her eyes scrutinised him with suspicion.

Mr. Pooke senior was constable, and he considered it his duty to intervene. He owed a grudge, nay, two, to Pasco Pepperill, and this fire was an opportunity for paying it off. He was angry with Pepperill because he had not shown him the deference that Pooke considered his due, and had wrested from him the office of churchwarden. A triumph indeed would it prove were he to be able to make Pepperill amenable to the law. Moreover, Pepperill was uncle to the chit who had dared’positively dared!’to refuse his son. He had not desired the engagement’he had disliked the idea of it’he would have vastly preferred his son’s union with the miller’s daughter. But that Pepperill’s niece’the daughter of that donkey-driver, Jason Quarm’should have the temerity to refuse his son was a fact he could not stomach; it was a spot in his mantle of pride.

When he heard the talk about Pepperill, he considered himself justified’nay, called upon by virtue of his office’to make himself acquainted with all the facts, and, if possible, to get his rival into difficulties. A rival Pepperill was. Pooke regarded himself as a sort of king in Coombe, where his family had held lands for centuries; never, indeed, extending the patrimony; never suing for a grant of arms, but holding on to the paternal acres as yeomen’substantial, self-esteeming, defiant of new-comers.

Pasco was not exactly in this latter category, but he was a man who gave himself great airs, who showed the yeoman no deference, and took a delight in thwarting him, and heading a clique against him at vestry, and generally in the parish.

Pooke listened attentively to all that was said relative to the fire, and prejudice against the man induced him to believe that Pasco had fired his own stores in order to obtain the insurance money; by what means Quarm was made the victim he could not tell. If he could prove Pepperill to be a rascal, it would be great satisfaction, but if he proved him to be a villain guilty of murder, that would be ecstasy.

Without warning given to Mrs. Pepperill, Mr. Pooke made a descent on the Cellars, attended by four of his men armed with shovels and picks. He did not even ask her leave to overturn the ruins and search among the heaps of ash for the remains of the man who, it was surmised, had perished in the fire. With an imperious voice and a consequential air he gave his orders; and when the men were engaged in testing the cinders to find whether they were cool, and might safely be turned over, and in hacking and removing the beams charred and menacing a fall, he betook himself to the outhouse, where was the cart, so as to examine that.

He returned speedily, carrying a bundle fastened in a handkerchief, and this he proceeded to open. It contained a clean shirt, stockings, a razor, and other articles such as a man would be likely to take with him when about to stay abroad a night or two.

“There!” exclaimed Pooke. “I have found at once what no one else saw’indubitable evidence not only that Jason Quarm came here, but that he never left this place. If he is not under these cinders, I ask, where else can he be?”

Kate and her aunt looked out at the door timidly. They knew that Mr. Pooke was constable, and they had no idea of any limit to his authority. He came towards them.

“I must know all about it’the ins and outs; the ups and downs. No blinking with me’no rolling of the matter up in blather. What do you know of Jason Quarm?” He turned to Mrs. Pepperill.

“Nothing at all,” she answered. “I do not even know that he came here.”

“Come here he did,” said Pooke. “Here is the donkey’here the cart’here his bundle of clothes. Now, did he go away?”

“I was not here; I was at Teignmouth. I know nothing,” said Zerah in nervous terror.

“The girl’the girl who had the impudence’to’to refuse my son’she knows something about this! She was with her uncle. Why did he ask Mr. Ash, the miller, to not only date his receipt of a trifle by the day of month, but by the hour of the evening? That is not ordinarily done. And why did he sneak back to

the Cellars, after he had got a little way along the road, putting his trap up, and leaving it with the girl? I want to know all that!"

"Here is my uncle; he will answer you himself," gasped Kitty, perplexed and alarmed at the string of questions, and then relieved to see Pasco arrive.

"What is the meaning of this?" shouted Pepperill, jumping out of a hired conveyance. He was in profound mourning, very new and glossy. "What is this you are doing, Pooke? Where is your authority?"

"I am constable."

"A constable without a warrant! Off!'leave my ground at once! I'll communicate with my solicitor, and have a summons taken out against you. My solicitor is not a man to understand jokes'nor am I."

"You may be in the right for the moment," said Pooke, becoming purple with vexation at being caught going beyond his powers, and with anger at being sent off, when he had come to the spot with such blare and blaze of authority. "But I'll tell you what it is, Master Pepperill, there are queer tales abroad about you and this fire, and we want to know, where is Jason Quarm?"

"Quarm?'gone to Portsmouth."

"To Portsmouth?"

"Of course; we are in treaty with the dockyard for our timber at Brimpts."

"I don't believe it! He is burnt!'here!"

"Burnt? Fudge! He said he was going to Portsmouth."

"He said that? When did you see him?"

"I mean I heard from him to that effect. Now be off! I'll have no overhauling of my premises! I'll have no cross-questioning here! I have a solicitor of my own now, and he shall know the reason of everything. Get you gone!'and be blowed!"

CHAPTER XLII

AN UGLY HINT

Talking loudly, laughing noisily, boisterously threatening proceedings against all trespassers, Pasco Pepperill came in at his door.

"For heaven's sake, what are you doing?" was his first salutation from his wife. "How dare you behave as you do? You'you?"

He saw at once that she believed in his guilt, and designed to caution him against overacting his part.

A great transformation had taken place in Pepperill. Now that he had done the deed, all dread of the consequences seemed to have been swept away; he must assume an innocent part, look people full in the face, and resent suspicion as an insult. The fact that he had come in for a handsome legacy assisted him to shake off the consciousness of guilt. He was now a man worth three or four thousand pounds, and when the assurance was paid he would be worth an additional thousand.

What could be proved against him? Nothing. Suspicion might be entertained, but what was suspicion when it had nothing substantial as a basis?

“Give me a jug of cider,” he commanded, and Zerah hastened to obey. She put a tumbler on the table beside the jug.

Pasco leisurely poured out a glass, and held it up between himself and the light, and was pleased to observe how steady his hand was.

“Zerah! come and look here. There is rope in the liquor’it is turning sour.”

Kate looked fixedly at her uncle’s face. The child was in distress and doubt. Was her father alive, or had he died a death of the worst description? Was he away on his business, carrying out some risky speculation, or did his bones lie resolved to ash in the great cinder-heap that had smouldered on so long, and was but just extinct?

She had not met with anything in her uncle’s character which would justify her in attributing to him so deliberate and desperate a crime as firing his own warehouse, and sacrificing, intentionally or accidentally, the life of his brother-in-law; and yet his wife, who ought to know him best, had arrived at the worst conclusion, and though she said nothing, Kate saw by her manner that she was for ever estranged from her husband, and regarded him as guilty of the crime in its worst form.

Zerah had retained Kitty in her room, and had more than once said to her that after the return of Pasco she would make him occupy Kate’s old attic; she would no longer treat Pasco other than as a stranger. Her reception of him now showed repugnance and restraint; the shrinking of an upright nature from one tainted with dishonesty, and exhibiting restraint from saying all that was felt.

Kate looked on her uncle with his self-satisfied expression, holding the glass between him and the light with a steady hand, concerning his mind about the ropiness of the cider, and in her simple mind, ignorant of evil, direct, with no trickiness or dissimulation in it, she felt vast relief. She could not believe that Pasco had done wrong, nor that he had any misgivings as to the well-being of her father.

She drew a long sigh, and passed her hand across her brow, as though to brush away the cloud that had hung over it and darkened all her thoughts.

In the new confidence established between herself and her aunt, Kate had whispered to her that she was engaged to Walter Bramber, but the news seemed to make as little impression on Zerah as it had on Pasco, and for the same reason, that each mind was engrossed in other more immediately interesting

matters. The girl submitted with that resignation which characterised her. She made little account of herself, and did not suppose that what concerned her could excite lively emotions in the hearts of her uncle and aunt. Even Mr. Puddicombe had shown more sympathy and pleasure. But then, Kate could make allowance for the preoccupation of her aunt's mind consequent on the fire.

Kate now timidly approached her uncle, keeping her eyes riveted on his face, and, standing on the other side of the little round table on which was his jug, she asked'

"Are you quite sure my dear father is all right?"

Pasco looked sharply at her.

"Questions again?" he said hastily, and a flush came into his cheek.

"I have a right to ask this question," said Kate firmly.

His eye fell under hers; he set down the glass unsteadily and upset the cider.

"Hang it! why have you a right?"

"I want to know that my father is alive."

"I say he's gone to Portsmouth."

"But how did he go?"

"That was his affair, not mine; the Atmospheric, I suppose."

"He could not cross during that night'at least, not till near dawn, and so must have been here when the warehouse was burnt."

"I don't see that; there are other ways of getting away. He went on to Shaldon."

That was certainly possible. Quarm might have pursued the right bank of the river to where it could be crossed at any tide, but this was not probable.

An interruption was occasioned by the entry of the rector. After the usual salutations, he at once turned to the topic which had been engaging thoughts and tongues before he appeared.

"I have no desire to intrude," said he, "but I have come to prevent a scandal, if possible, and perhaps a quarrel. Mr. Pooke is in a great heat, and vows he will have a search-warrant to turn over the heaps, as you have refused him to explore them. You are churchwarden, Mr. Pepperill, and I not only desire to prevent unpleasantness on your own account, but on that of the Church. You have, I believe, sent Mr. Pooke off?"

"I have."

"But why so? He may have acted irregularly, but it was with good intentions, and you were absent."

"He had no right to touch what was mine."

“No doubt he erred, but you were absent, consider; and your wife, your niece, the whole village, were in excitement and alarm. He did what seemed fit to allay this unrest; to find out whether Mr. Quarm had been here or not.”

“It is no good. He’ll get no warrant, unless magistrates be fools. He has no case’not a ghost of a case. Jason went to Shaldon, and so over the water.”

“You are sure?”

“I fancy he did. I heard he wanted to reach Portsmouth, and the tide was out when he got here, so he could not cross in the ferry. He went on. At Teignmouth he would get into the Atmospheric.”

“That is readily ascertained. We have but to send to Shaldon and inquire. The boatman who took him across can be found. If he crossed the wooden bridge, then the man who takes toll will be able to say something.”

“He may have gone round the head of the estuary.”

“Not likely, if he left his cart and donkey here.”

Pepperill was unable to answer. He was a heavy-headed man, not quick at invention.

“Then,” continued the rector, “the warehouse did not catch fire of itself; someone must have fired it.”

“Of course,” said Pepperill.

“I may as well tell you,” continued Mr. Fielding, “that Mr. Bramber, the schoolmaster, came to the Cellars the evening of the fire”’

“The deuce he did!”

“Just after dusk.”

“And what brought him here, the puppy?”

“He came,” answered Mr. Fielding, “because he wished to see Kitty and you.”

“Pray what did he want with Kitty?”

“Surely, Mr. Pepperill, you know that the two young people have come to an understanding.”

Pasco shrugged his shoulders. “I may have heard something of the sort, but I have other things more important to interest and occupy my mind. I gave it no heed.”

“Well, he desired to speak with you, as her father was away, and you stood in a semi-parental relation to her, living as she did in your house.”

“Well, he found no one here,” observed Pasco, with some uneasiness of manner.

“As he approached the Cellars he heard an altercation, and then the house door violently slammed. Then, thinking the occasion unpropitious, he turned back.”

“It was fancy. No one was here. My wife was over the water, and I on my way to Brimpts. If you doubt my word, ask Mr. Ash, he receipted my bill, and I had a talk as well with the landlord.”

“That is true, Mr. Pepperill, but Jason Quarm was here. I saw him drive past my gate, and I cast a good-even to him. If an altercation took place here, he was probably one of those engaged in it. I took it for granted that you were the other.”

“I’I’I?” stuttered Pasco.

“Yes, because you returned to the Cellars after you had got to the head of the hill.”

“Who said that? It is a lie!”

“Kitty, I understand, said as much to John Pooke.”

“Kitty said it?”

“Kitty told Jan and Rose as she was being driven home from the moor’so I have been informed.”

“It’s a lie!” roared Pasco, glaring round at the girl with a curl up of his thick lips, showing his teeth like a dog about to bite. “It’s a ’— lie!”

“Mr. Pepperill!” said the rector, rising in dignified anger from the seat that had been accorded him, “I will not suffer you to use such an expression in my presence, even in your own house. You do not add one jot to the force of your repudiation’to your charge against Kate’by burdening it with an oath.”

“It’s like that beggarly schoolmaster’s impudence to come poking his snout here, where he’s not wanted, where”’with some energy’“I won’t have him! I’ll have the law of him for trespass!”

“He did not trespass. It is free to anyone to approach a house door.”

“I don’t care; I’ll shoot him if he shows his face here again.”

“You are branching away from the matter in immediate consideration. There seems to be a conflict of testimony. Kitty, whom I have always found true and direct as a needle, has made one statement,’not indeed to me, but to others,’and this you contradict.”

“I’m churchwarden’I’m a man of means and in a good business. I should think my word was worth more than that of a sly, chattering, idle minx.”

“Sly, chattering, that my little Kitty is not; I have ever found her straightforward and reserved. As to her work in the house, her aunt is better qualified to express an opinion than you, Mr. Pepperill.”

“I don’t see that you’ve any call to come here, poking into matters and axin’ questions like another Kitty, if I may make so bold as to say so,” said Pasco, defiant and then qualifying his defiance.

“As I told you at the outset, Mr. Pepperill, I have come here not to make an official inquiry, but to prevent one. There is a mistake somewhere. My wish

was to clear it up before matters grew to a head. You and Mr. Pooke are both stubborn men, and may knock heads and crack skulls over nothing. A word will probably lighten what is now dark, and dissipate a growing mistrust. I cannot, and I will not, believe half of what is being said relative to you. I have come to your house as a peacemaker, to entreat you to so account for little matters which puzzle the good people here, before what is now whispered may be brayed, what is now a conjecture may be crystallised into a conviction. As far as is known, the matter stands thus: Mr. Quarm came here, and here have been found his donkey and cart and his little bundle of clothes. If he had crossed the water, he would have taken the latter with him. Two persons were heard in altercation here shortly after his having passed through Coombe, and the door was shut violently. Next morning the door was locked, and Mrs. Pepperill when she came found the key in a hiding-place known, as she then said, only to herself and you."

"Don't you suppose Kitty knew it also?"

"I daresay she did. Your wife's words, when she arrived, found the stores burnt, and the house locked, and the key in a certain place'her words were, 'Pasco has put the key where I have found it.' It was of course surmised that before you left you had locked the door, but Kitty told young Pooke that when you reached the top of the hill you returned to the Cellars, saying that you had forgotten to lock the house. It, therefore, seemed to me probable that on your return, you and Quarm came to high words about something."

"Nothing of the sort I never came back."

"Oh, uncle!" escaped Kate's lips.

He turned his menacing eyes on her, with the same snarl on his mouth.

"I'll tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said he. "That is, if you will insist on having it, and you can make of it what you like, pass'n. When I got to the top o' the hill, where is Ash's linhay, it is true that I remembered I'd not locked up the dwelling-house. Then I sent Kitty back and told her to lock and put the key where her aunt would find it, and I'd stay and mind the hoss."

"Uncle!" Kitty turned white and rigid.

"And, dash it! if someone must ha' set fire to the old place,'and I reckon there was someone, them things don't do themselves,'it must ha' been either she or Jason, or both together. And I reckon he's run away to escape the consequences."

The rector stood up. He had reseated himself after his protest. His face was very grave.

"I see," said he, taking his hat, and moving to the door. "This affair wears a different colour from what I supposed. It must be elucidated irrespective of me. My part is done. It must be taken up and investigated by the proper authorities."

CHAPTER XLIII

MUCH CRY AND A LITTLE WOOL

“Aunt!” exclaimed Kitty, blank and trembling, turning to Zerah, the moment the rector had left the house. “Oh, auntie dear, this is not true’this that Uncle Pasco says. I did not go back. I was left in the linhay with the cart. What does he mean?”

“He means to shelter himself,” answered Mrs. Pepperill. Then the woman stepped in front of her husband, and, in her harshest tones and hardest manner, said, “Pasco! A yea or nay from Kitty is, as pass’n said, worth a thousand of your protestations, though bolstered up wi’ oaths.”

“Of course Kitty is everything to you and the pass’n, and I am nothing. I know that very well. I’ve had enough of your violence o’ tongue-lash these twenty years; and let me tell you, Zerah, I’ve got hard to it and don’t care a snap for it.” And he suited the action to the word, with an insolence of expression and manner that would have made the woman blaze forth into fury at any other time. Now she passed his rudeness with disregard.

“Pasco!” she said in metallic tones, “there has been a load o’ lead crushing down my heart. I’ll shake it off and run it into bullets against you now, and every word shall be a bullet. Now, before Kitty, I will say what I have had on my mind. It is you who have lied. I have known for some time what you were thinking of. I’ve seen you hovering like a hawk, and the moment I was gone’had crossed the water’you dropped. You durstn’t do it whilst I was here. You feared me because I feared God. There’s no bigger coward on earth than the man who fears his fellow because that fellow has God before his eyes. No sooner was I out of the way than you at once seized the chance offered; and I’I had gone with all my little lay-by to get you out of your difficulties and prevent you doing what I feared was in your intent. You’d never spoke a word to me of that purpose of yourn, you durst not do it; but I saw it formin’ in you; I saw it, looking into your eyes, just as you may see the sediment settlin’ in dirty water. When I was out of the way, then you thought you could do it. You took Kitty away’who was but just home from the moor, and all for no reason save that you didn’t want any witness. Then you left her with the cart and hoss at Ash’s linhay in Furze Park, and came back here to carry out your purpose. So far I can see. Then my sight becomes thick, a mist is over my eyes, and all the rest is doubtful. What happened when you came back here’what passed between you and Jason’what became of my brother? All that I know not’but know I must and will.”

Pasco’s face grew more sullen, and his demeanour dogged to defiance. He could not look his wife in the face, he kept his eyes on the ground, and with his boot scratched the floor in fantastic figures.

“I can see all that passes in your heart,” pursued Zerah. “It’s like as if I were outside a window, and see’d shadows on the blind as this and that went by and this and that rose up or sat down. Now the folk begin to talk and to suspect you, and say how that you insured for a big sum, and when the goods weren’t paid for, burnt ’em all to secure the insurance; then you try and throw the suspicion off on to Kitty or Jason, or both together. It is like you, you black coward. But it shall not be. I will stand betwixt you and Kitty, and no harm from you shall hurt her. What I and Kitty want to know is’What has become of Jason? Where is he? If you will not answer, we will work out the answer for our own selves’she with the heable (fork), I with the phisgie (pick). We have strong arms, and we will ourselves root about in the ruins, till we learn something to satisfy our minds.”

“I don’t know how you’ve the face to talk to me like this, Zerah,” said Pasco surlily. “I’ve come into something like four thousand pounds through my uncle, and there’ll be another thousand and more from the insurance. On five thousand pounds’Lord! I’m a Christian and a gentleman.”

“Bank-notes won’t plaster sore consciences,” retorted Zerah. “You think money is everything, and no matter how it be come by. So it has ever been with you.”

“Am I like to be a villain,” queried Pasco in exasperation, “when I knew my uncle was worth a pot o’ coin that was sure to come to me?”

“You did not know he was dead.”

“I knew he was sickening and worn out. A man of means don’t do criminal acts; that’s the perquisite of beggars and labouring men.”

“I do not ask for excuses and evasions. I ask’where is my brother?” persisted Zerah.

At that moment the door was thrown open, a hand was thrust in, waving a paper, and a voice shouted’

“There you be, Pasco Pepperill. I’ve got my warranty. I said I would, and I’m the man o’ my word. I went full gallop up to Squire Carew. None can stand agin me.”

Pepperill went to the door, saw the back of Mr. Pooke as he walked away, and the faces of a number of workmen with pick and crowbar and shovel, backed by a crowd of all descriptions of persons from the village and neighbourhood.

He hesitated for some moments. He stood irresolute, holding the door-posts and working his nails at the paint, picking it off in flakes. His heart turned sick within him. If the heaps of cinders were thrown back, then surely the remains of Jason Quarm would be discovered, and with the discovery there would ensue an inquest, and much unpleasantness if not danger to himself. With low cunning he resolved to make the best of the inevitable. He shouted to his wife’

“Zerah! bring out cider for the good fellows. They are working for us, as you know. If you have saffron cake, out with that too. I daresay I shall find a shilling apiece as well.”

He went behind Pooke, slapped him on the back, and said boisterously’

"Well done, old man! That is what I wanted. If a thing has to be executed, let all be above-board and legal. That's my doctrine. I don't like no hole-and-corner proceedings. Meddlin' wi'out authority makes the end a botch. If you hadn't begun, I would have done it myself."

In the house Zerah restrained Kitty with one hand and closed the door with the other. The woman was labouring for breath, so great was her excitement. Her face was now flushed, then became wan as death.

"Kitty, my darling," she said, "I reckon I've been hard and exactin' in the past. The old pass'n were right, though I wouldn't believe him, and said he was insultin' of me to say it. 'Twas love, he told, as you wanted, and I didn't give it you. Love, the very air of heaven, wi'out which the little maid couldn't thrive. I wi'held it from you'so he told'and I shut my ears and hardened my heart. But in the end he were right. When I found out what had been done, then it broke me down. I cannot respect and love *him* no longer. I tried my best when he was foolish and unfortunate. But now he's guilty, I cannot'I cannot, and then all my love turns to you."

Kitty threw herself into her aunt's arms and sobbed.

"There's no time now for tears," said Zerah, with a gulp in her throat. "We cannot tell what is coming on us. It may be that the remains of your poor father will be found. If so, then'" Zerah shivered as if frost-smitten. "God bless us! It will be too horrible'to live under the same roof, to eat at the same table, to see the face, hear the voice of the man'" She was unable to conclude her sentence. After a long pause and a hug of Kitty, she continued: "I cannot say how it all came about. Bad as he may be, I hardly think he did it of purpose. 'Twas some accident. I don't mean the burning the stores'but of your father. No; he was not so bad as that, please God! I hope, I trust not! Now, Kitty, you and I must make up our minds to whatever happens. And I reckon there is but one thing us can do."

"What is that, dear auntie?"

"Hold our tongues."

After a long pause, whilst the girl clung to her, she added, "No good can come of us speaking what we know, and what we fancy. It can but heap up a great pile of misery and shame. If it comes to an inquiry in court'that's another matter. They won't call on me, as I am Pasco's wife, but they will on you, and you must up and speak the truth at any cost. But if there be no such inquiry, then hold your tongue, as I will mine. The mischief, so far, has come from what we have said. We can do no good; we may make the affair worse for ourselves if we talk. Leave him in the hands of God, to do wi' him as He wills."

Kate kissed her aunt and promised silence.

Then both went forth, and reached the crowd about the ruins and piles of ashes, as Pepperill was saying in a loud tone, "I don't say you won't find bones. I believe now I had a pile, but all mutton and beef bones."

"Why, what were you doing wi' bones?" asked Pooke.

"Collecting of 'em for dressing," answered Pepperill promptly. "I've been in the hide line some while, and lately I took a fancy to bones also; but I didn't do much, just begun on it, so to speak'all ox and sheep bones'nothing else. Pound bones up wi' a hammer, they're fine for turnips. Jason put me up to speculating in bones."

The mass of crumbling wall, charred beam, and cinder was speedily attacked by the workmen under the direction of the constable, who had much difficulty in keeping the curious at a distance; men, women, and children were eager to assist with their hands, or advise with their tongues. They ran into danger by approaching tottering walls. They trampled down the ashes; they got in the way of the workmen; and occasionally a scream and an objurgation was the result of a labourer casting his shovelful of cinders in the face of an inquisitive spectator who got in his way. Mr. Pooke protested and stormed, but with little avail; all were too interested to attend to his orders, and he was without assistants to enforce them.

Pepperill bustled about, vociferating, driving spectators back, encouraging workmen, running after cakes and cider, and making the confusion greater. Kate sat on a fallen beam, chin in hand, watching intently every spade as it turned the ashes, wincing at every pick driven into the cinder heaps. The tears were trickling down her cheeks.

Then Walter Bramber, who had just arrived, went up to Farmer Pooke and asked leave to run a cord across from one rail to another, and volunteered with the assistance of Noah Flood and John Pooke to keep the people from interference.

"Why should they be kept back? Don't they want to find what has become of Mr. Quarm every whit as much as me? Let 'em come on," shouted Pepperill.

But the constable saw the advantage of the proposal, and gave the order. In ten minutes the scene of the conflagration was freed from sightseers, who were confined at a distance.

Then Bramber went to Kitty and said in a low tone, "You do not think it is hopeless, I trust?"

"I do not know what to think," she answered.

"Is it true what I have heard, that your uncle returned here after dark and left you at the top of the hill?"

Kate did not answer.

"That is what is said. Jan Pooke told me he had heard it from your own lips."

She continued silent.

"I should like to know, Kitty, the truth in this matter."

"I can say nothing," she answered, and hung her head lower.

Bramber was surprised, but he had not time to expend in conversation: he had undertaken to keep off the crowd, and some were diving under the rope, others attempting to stride over it.

An hour was expended in turning about the refuse. All the coal had been consumed, but, singularly and inexplicably, not all the fleeces. Bundles of wool were found'not many, indeed, but some, singed, not consumed, which, when exposed, exhaled a sickening odour. The dangerous portions of tottering walls had been thrown down, the slate flooring exposed. Not a trace of Jason Quarm could be found.

Pasco, who had been nervous, watching all the operations of the excavators in deadly fear of a revelation of the charred remains of his brother-in-law, breathed freely, recovered all his audacity and boisterousness.

“I said as much, but none believed me. Jason is gone; he was not the man to sit quiet in a fire. How the fire came about is a question we won’t go into too close.”

“The bones you spoke of,” said Pooke, “we ha’n’t come on them. They’ve been consumed’perhaps poor Quarm as well. The fire must have been deadly hot.”

“It didn’t burn those fleeces,” answered Pasco triumphantly. “I’ll tell you what; Jason made off for reasons well known to himself. If we don’t hear of him again, I sha’n’t wonder; but burned here he certainly was not, as any fool can see. He was not the man to let himself burn. Cripple though he was, he could hop out of danger.”

Pasco turned to Bramber. “What is that you have been saying to the parson about hearing Mr. Quarm and his daughter argyfying at my door the night of the fire?”

Walter Bramber was taken aback.

“Yes, you said you had heard them in hot dispute.”

“I said,” answered Bramber in surprise and indignation, “something very different from that. I said”’

His hand was caught by Kate, who looked pleadingly into his face.

“A word alone.”

“What is it, Kitty?”

“Say nothing to anyone of what you saw and heard that night.”

CHAPTER XLIV

PUDDICOMBE IN F

The mystery of the disappearance of Jason Quarm was not cleared up; on the contrary, it had become more profound. The excavation of the ruins had revealed nothing. It had disclosed no remains of the lost man, and opinions were divided. Some contended that the intense heat of the mass of coals, a heat which had split the flooring slates and burnt the soil beneath them to the depth of six inches, reddening it like brick, that this heat had completely consumed the unhappy man. On the other hand, others asked, How could that be? Some of the wool was scorched, not burnt; a man would make his way from fire; he had eyes and arms, and though Quarm was crippled, yet he could extricate himself from danger, or at all events use his powerful lungs so as to call for help. Moreover, Quarm wore brass buttons. Even if his body had been resolved to ashes, the molten buttons would be found; but no metal of any sort had been discovered on the floor.

To this responded the first: If Quarm were not burnt, how was it that he had not put in an appearance? His bundle of clothes was found in the cart. If he had escaped, he would surely either have made known his escape, or have gone off with his parcel of necessaries. Some hinted that, finding the Cellars locked, he had made his way into the warehouse, there to spend the night, and had gone to sleep with his pipe alight, and the pipe had set fire to combustibles in the place. But then, supposing this, why was his body not found if he had been smothered by smoke? and if he had escaped, why had he not gone off with donkey, and cart, and bundle? There was the puzzle.

Others hinted that Pasco Pepperill was the gainer by the fire, and that he had had a finger in setting the stores alight. It was suspicious that he had sent away his wife, and had gone away with his niece just before the conflagration broke out. There was an ugly rumour afloat, that he had returned secretly to the Cellars, and had there met and quarrelled with his brother-in-law. This rumour was constructed out of the reported admission of Kate, and something, it was believed, that the schoolmaster had said. But neither of these, on being interrogated by the inquisitive, would say a word. The schoolmaster, with the cheek of a stuck-up creature, had answered all inquiries with the question, “Who has authorised you to catechise me? If the matter is brought into court, I will say what little I know on oath before the magistrate. I will say nothing to self-constituted inquisitors.”

Whenever this answer of the schoolmaster was repeated, and it was so a hundred times in the course of a week, it never failed to elicit an indignant remark, generally couched thus: “Them schoolmasters want setting down. They’re owdacious cocky monkeys. But they’re a low lot’they must be taught their place, which is under our heels. They gives theirselves airs, as if they was parsons and knew everything, but they lives on our voluntary subscriptions, and unless they come to eat humble-pie, we’ll withdraw our farthing-in-the-pound rate. ’Tisn’t for our pleasure or profit they exist, but just because of a fad o’ the pass’n. Mr. Puddicombe was the man for us. Him we could respect. And now they sez that Mr. Puddicombe is compoging a Tee-dum which will cut out even Jackson.”

The minds and hearts of Kitty and her aunt were sensibly relieved. The girl had watched the exploration of the cinder heaps with quivering nerves and brooding fear. What might not each spade disclose? Into what an object of horror might not her poor father be reduced? But, as the floor of the warehouse was cleared, and every mass of ash turned over, and nothing revealed, her heart swelled, and the blood began again to pulsate in her arteries. She covered her face with her hands, and lifted her heart half in thanksgiving and half in prayer. And yet, what had become of him? How was it that, if he were alive, he had given no signs of life?

It was ascertained that Jason Quarm had not crossed the estuary, either by the bridge or by boat, at Shaldon. It was inconceivable that he had traced the creek up to its head, below Newton Abbot, to cross the water there, as there was no path along the water-side, and he must have come into the road and made such a circuit as was not possible for a man in his crippled condition.

At one moment Kitty was sanguine, at the next her spirits fell. It was to be hoped'nay, believed'that he had not perished in the fire; but was it not possible'nay, probable'that he had died by some other means, that he may have fallen into the mud, and been smothered therein? That mud would swallow up the man that sank in it and never restore him again. If he had come by his end thus, had he fallen in, or had he been cast in?

Again, with a chill, as if pierced by an icicle, came the thought of her uncle. Undoubtedly, he could explain all if he chose. He had returned to the Cellars and found her father there. The altercation which Walter had imperfectly heard must have taken place between her father and her uncle. It could not have occurred at that time, in that place, between any others. Her father had passed by the road as the cart entered the linhay, her uncle had gone home immediately after. Therefore, these two had met at the Cellars. What had been the occasion of the quarrel? and what the result of that quarrel? The result was the disappearance of her father. How had he disappeared? That, she felt convinced, her uncle could answer, and he alone. But for motives which she dared not investigate, he remained silent; nay, worse, he endeavoured, by denial of his having returned to the Cellars, to cast the suspicion of having fired the storehouse from himself on other shoulders. These questions turned and twisted in Kitty's brain without rest. They occupied her by day, they tortured her by night. She did not venture to express them to her aunt. She knew that the same thoughts, the same questions, were working in her mind; and she knew also that her aunt could not endure their discussion. Meanwhile, the work of the house must be carried on, and Mrs. Pepperill called in the assistance of Mrs. Redmore. With their preoccupied minds, neither she nor Kitty was capable of doing all that had been done as in days gone by.

Pasco grumbled at the introduction of this woman into his house'the wife of the wretch who had set fire to the rick of Farmer Pooke, and who had escaped pursuit. But Mrs. Pepperill did not yield. There were no other women disengaged in Coombe, and of girls she would have none to break dishes, and throw away spoons, and melt the blades out of the handles of knives.

Pasco acquiesced, with a growl, and a malicious look at Kate, and a mutter that some folk were mighty fond of incendiaries and their belongings, backing them up, helping them to escape, providing for their families; to which neither Kate nor her aunt made reply.

Pasco found that he was not comfortable at home; his wife would not unbend, and Kate kept out of his way. To his boisterous mirth, to his boastfulness, they made no response; when he stormed, they withdrew. He was uneasy in himself, suspicious of what men said of him, and alarmed when he heard from his lawyer, Mr. Squire, that the insurance company refused to pay the sum for which he had insured. Society, distraction, were necessary for him. As he could find none at home, he wandered to the village tavern, the Lamb and Flag, to seek both there.

The first occasion was the evening of the practice of the village orchestra, and it was attended by every member of the same, not only because all desired to say something relative to the matter exercising all minds, but also because the score of a new Te Deum had been placed before them, the composition of the ex-schoolmaster. Puddicombe in F was to be rehearsed by the instruments before the vocalists were called in. Puddicombe in F was expected to be a huge success, and to make Puddicombe known through the wide world of music, and to render Coombe-in-Teignhead famous in after generations, just as Exeter was known as the place which had produced Mr. Jackson, who had won such a fame with his Te Deum.

Each instrumentalist had his separate sheet of music, and each devoted himself to his score with seriousness.

Puddicombe in F began with a movement slow and stately, with all the harmonies in thirds and fifths, and a solemn tum-tum bass. Then, precipitately, it transformed itself into something headed *Fugg*. If it had been entitled *fugue*, no one would have understood what was meant. But "fugg" signified that the instruments were to perform a sort of musical leap-frog, to go higgledy-piggledy, one after the other, like children tumbling out of school, with the master behind them threatening to whack the hindermost.

And, verily, never was a fugue more of a higgledy-piggledy devil-take-the-hindermost character than this one of Puddicombe in F, never such a caterwauling of cats that could surpass it in discords, with random gruntings in and out of the violoncello.

A villager, standing breathless outside, listening, ventured to say to the landlord, who was smoking complacently at his door, "There don't seem to be much tune in it."

"No; but there's tremendous noise."

The landlord drew whiffs, blew out the smoke in a long column, and said, smiling, "Wait till we come to the *largo molto tranquillo con affettuoso caprizio*."

"What's that?" asked the bumpkin, in an awestruck tone.

“It’s something writ on the music by the hand of Mr. Puddicombe. The Lord knows what it means!”

The hubbub of the “fugg” came to an end, and the instruments paused, drew a sort of sigh, and, with stately tread, marched in unison *largo molto tranquillo con affettuoso caprizio*, and stalked through it to the end.

“There’s tune there now, and be blowed,” said the landlord triumphantly.

“It’s the tune of ‘Kitty Alone and I,’” retorted the irreverent countryman, and he began to sing’

“‘There was a frog lived in a well,
Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone;
And a merry mouse lived in a mill,
Kitty alone and I.’”

The instruments behind the lighted window-curtains were hushed. They had heard the rustic song.

“It is that, ain’t it?” pursued the man. “I’ll sing another verse, and make sure’

“‘So here’s an end to the lovers three,
Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone,
The Rat, the Mouse, and the little Frogee,
Kitty alone and I.’”

Within, the instrumentalists looked at each other. None spoke for a minute, and then the ’cello said, in a deep voice, as from a tomb, “Puddicombe han’t riz to the theme. He’s forgot and worked in that frog and mouse tune. Not but what it’s a good ’un, only unsootable.”

“It’s easy set right,” observed the first violin. “If you’ll wait, brothers, I’ll clap on my hat and run up to his house, and get him to titch it up a bit, and git the Kitty tune out of it altogether. The fugg was famous.”

“Yes,” said the second violin; “it’s only to stir it about a bit and shuffle as you do cards. Cut along with all your legs.”

At that moment Pasco Pepperill came up, puffing, looking about him half suspiciously, half defiantly. “How are ye, gents?” said he. “What! practising? I don’t mind if I sit a bit and listen to you. I’m fond of music, especially sacred music, as I’m churchwarden.”

CHAPTER XLV

DAYLIGHT

The musicians looked at each other. They could hardly continue to practise Puddicombe in F till the little awkwardness of the passage *largo molto con affettuoso caprizio* was set to rights. It would be half an hour before this was done. Meanwhile, the orchestra might as well work their tongues as well as their arms and fingers, and blow questions and puff opinions in place of musical notes. They had assembled that evening with a double intent: the excuse for their meeting was the rehearsal; the real object, the airing of their views on the fire at the Cellars, its probable origin, and what had become of Jason Quarm.

For the gathering of information on such matters, what was more fortunate than the presence in their midst of Pasco Pepperill, the man of all others best qualified to give information relative to the matters troubling all hearts? It was true that a good many'the bassoon and the ophicleide among the orchestra'entertained grave views relative to the conduct of Pepperill. Well! there the man was. They might prove him with keen questions, catch him off his guard with sly hits, entangle him in a net of incautious admissions into which they had lured him, and then sit in judgment on him and the whole case, after he had withdrawn.

"Gents and neighbours, and friends all," said Pasco, seating himself, "as churchwarden, my place is among you, and allow me to stand treat of rum and water all round'no, better than that, a grand bowl of punch, and we'll spoon it out with our good host's whalebone ladle, and the Queen Anne shilling in the bottom. Landlord, don't spare the rum; thanks to my uncle, I'm a man of means, and can pay my way."

Marvellous as a solvent is punch. The mere mention of a bowl began to melt and break up prejudice and fixed opinions. The bassoon had been persistent in insisting on the criminality of Pepperill; he had urged every point against him, he had turned aside every argument that tended to exonerate him. As a man of strict integrity, he was now placed in a difficult position. Either he must hold to his opinion, rise, bow stiffly, and decline to drink out of the bowl, to wet his lips with the generous liquor the churchwarden provided, or else his judgment must undergo modifications, then a complete *volte face*.

The popping of a cork was heard. At once the bassoon acknowledged that he had been precipitate in forming his conclusions. A waft of rum and lemons entered the room. He began to see that there were weighty considerations which had escaped him hitherto, and which undermined his convictions. Then came the clink of the ladle in the bowl, as the bowl was being brought in. The bassoon's preconceptions went down like a pack of cards. The whole room was redolent with a fragrant steam, as the great iron-stoneware bowl was planted on the table. The bassoon was converted into an ardent, enthusiastic believer in the churchwarden.

Wondrous is the power of conscience. It may lie asleep, it may remain for long inert, but a little something comes, unexpectedly touches it, and it springs up to full energy, and resolves amidst much self-reproach to make amends for the past. So was it in the interior of the bassoon. The sniff of punch was to his

conscience what "Hey, rats!" is to the dozing dog. It was alive, it was stinging him, it had brought him metaphorically in penitence to his knees before Pasco Pepperill. He could not think, say, show himself, sufficiently convinced that that man who provided and paid for the punch was the embodiment of all virtues, with a character unstained as is the lily. He trampled on his own base self, he spurned at it, for having for a while thought evil of so admirable a man.

"Peter Squance bain't here. 'Tis a pity'our first fiddle," said the second violin. "He'll be mazed when he comes back with the *molto largo*, and finds the punch all gone."

"Gone?" exclaimed Pepperill. "Not a bit of it. When this bowl is done, we will have another."

Mr. Pepperill stood up and stirred the steaming sea before him, in which floated yellow islets of lemon. All eyes were on the bowl, all nostrils were dilated and sniffing, all mouths watering.

Pasco filled each glass, and then ensued a nodding all round; eyes were turned up, lips smacked, and the precious liquor allowed to trickle down the throats in thin rills over the tongue.

Presently the clarionet put down his glass and said, "It was a lucky job, Pasco, that your rick o' straw escaped t'other night."

"Ay, 'twas a first-rate chance," said the landlord, who had come and remained to taste his own brew and hear encomiums on it.

"You see the wind was t'other way," said the 'cello.

"And 'twasn't insured," added the clarionet.

All the rest looked round, and frowned, and reared their chins. The clarionet shrank together. What had he said? Something stupid or uncivil? He was too dull to see where his error lay.

"That had nothing to do with it. 'Twas water chucked over it as saved it," threw in the bassoon, flying to the rescue.

"My straw rick suffered more from well-intentioned assistants than from anything else," said Pepperill. "The wind was direct away from it, and so it couldn't hurt."

"It was coorious, though, the fire taking place when everyone was away from home," said the clarionet.

Again all looked indignantly at him. That instrument had a way of always sounding out of key.

"There was nothing coorious at all in it," answered the churchwarden, with promptitude. "It was just because everyone was away that the fire got the upper hand."

"There's something in that," said the hautboy.

“There is everything,” answered Pasco. “If I or my wife had been at the Cellars, we would have speedily called help and had the fire extinguished before it could take hold. No one was there, so it was allowed freedom to get the mastery, and then, no one could do nothing.”

“That’s true,” said the second violin.

“It’s true,” said the rest of the instruments in unison, looking into each other’s faces; “it couldn’t be truer.”

“You don’t happen to know how the fire came about?” asked the clarionet.

“I don’t *know*,” answered the churchwarden.

“You don’t know,” repeated the violoncello, “but you guess.”

“I have my ideas,” observed Pasco. “Gents! let me fill your glasses again.”

“And if I might make so bold to ask?” pursued the clarionet.

“My mouth is shut,” answered Pasco. “I don’t want to hurt nobody, least of all a relation. Just fancy, gents all! the insurance company have refused payment.”

“You don’t say so! Well! what is the world coming to? But it all stands in prophecy, in the Book o’ Dan’l,” said the hautboy.

“It is one of them beasts in Revelation!” said the second fiddle. “The question only is which.”

“But,” pursued Pepperill, “I’ve set my solicitor at ’em. He’ll make ’em dance a Halantow.”

“Very glad to hear it,” said the bassoon. “I drink to his and your success.”

“We’re going to institute proceedings,” continued Pasco.

“What is proceedings?” asked the clarionet under his hand of the hautboy.

“It’s a sort of blister o’ Spanish fly,” was the answer, also in confidence.

“Then it will make ’em dance, no mistake,” said the clarionet. “Do you think, churchwarden, it will draw?”

“Draw?” Pasco rubbed his hands and looked round. “It’ll draw getting on for fifteen hundred pound. If that bain’t drawin’, show me what is!”

This announcement produced a great effect.

“To go back to the p’int,” said the clarionet. “It would be a comfort to us all if you’d give us your ideas on the matter of the fire. You see, we’re all abroad.”

“I wouldn’t hurt nobody’not a fly. I was always tender-hearted,” said Pasco. “Besides, you’d talk.”

“We are all friends,” urged the bassoon. “You see, coals don’t as a rule set alight to themselves, nor wool, nor hides neither.”

“That’s what I’ve said all along,” observed the second fiddle. “Someone must ha’ done it. The question is’who?”

"I'll have another thimbleful of punch," said the bass viol. "It's uncommon good, and does credit to all parties'

'Come let's drink, and drown all sorrow,

For perchance we may not'

For perchance we may not meet here to-morrow.'"

Then the hautboy trolled out'

"'He that goes to bed, goes to bed sober

Falls as the leaves does'

Falls as the leaves does—in October.'"

"Someone must ha' done it," observed the clarionet.

"Of course some one did," said Pepperill, "and when folk begin yarnin' lies, you ain't got to go far to find the evil-doer."

"That's true," was the chorus.

"And no one was at the Cellars at the time but one or two persons," said the clarionet.

"One was Jason Quarm," said Pasco; "and burnt he was not, as was proved by the constable."

"I don't know," said the second fiddle. "The fire was so tremendous hot, and lasted so tremendous long, it would ha' burned a fatter man nor Jason Quarm."

"Jason's not burnt. He's runned away."

"Runned away?"

"Yes," pursued Pasco; "'cos he didn't want to have to give evidence as to what he knew."

"What wor that?"

"He comed to the Cellars, and found someone there doin' of the wickedness, and he runned away so as not to have to say what he didn't want to be forced to say."

"What was that?"

"It's not for me to speak!"

"Someone did it! who could ha' done it?" said the clarionet. "I thought it wor proved, if I may be so bould, that you, Mr. Churchwarden, comed back to the Cellars."

"I?" exclaimed Pasco, becoming purple in the face. "It suited somebody's convenience to say so, but I was in the linhay minding the hoss, and I put it to the company—no one can be in two places at once, can they?"

"There's something in that."

"I was minding the hoss, but I sent somebody back to lock up. I name no names, and she's gone and put it on me to clear herself."

The eyebrows of all the instrumentalists went up.

"Kitty? What! Kitty Alone?"

"I name no names," said Pasco; "but I must say this to clear myself. I've borne hard words too long for the sake of sheltering she. The schoolmaster heard her father lecturing of her for what she'd done."

"But she wouldn't do it out of pure wickedness," urged the clarionet; "and what reason had she?"

"There it is," answered Pasco. "I see I'm among friends, and it won't go no farther. I'd been speaking to her rather sharp for her goings-on with young men, drawin' on Jan Pooke, then kicking him over, then Noah Flood, and same with he. Noah, poor fellow, was took cruel bad along of she—ever since Ashburton fair had a pain in the stomach; if that ain't love, show me what love is. Then she took up with that schoolmaster chap, and when I said I wouldn't have it, and I wasn't going to have the family disgraced wi' bringing schoolmasters into it, she cut rusty, and sulked, and I believe it were naught but spite."

"But," observed the clarionet, "the tale I was told of what the schoolmaster said wasn't quite that."

"You are right there," said Pasco. "He'd alter his tale when he found what she'd been about. As is nat'ral. I put it to the company, if you was sweetheartin', and you found your love had been up to wickedness, you wouldn't tell tales of her, but would do all you could to screen her."

"That's true," was the general opinion.

"And you think Jason see'd her, and made off?" said the bassoon.

"That explains everything," observed the violoncello.

"I begin to see daylight," remarked the hautboy.

At that moment, in rushed the first violin, waving the score above his head.

"I've got it!" he said. "Nothing easier. It wasn't no fault o' Puddicombe, he said it were our stoopidity. 'What does *largo molto con affettuoso caprizio* mean?' he asked. '*Largo molto*, turn the score upside down, *con affettuoso caprizio*, and go ahead like blazes!'"

CHAPTER XLVI

A TRIUMPH

The fumes of the punch had been dissipated, not only from the room of the Lamb and Flag, but also from the brain of the orchestra.

The bassoon's scruples revived; he was still grateful for the punch, but resentful for the headache it had produced.

The several points brought out by the clarionet, that provoking advocate for Pasco, who asked awkward questions and propounded awkward suggestions, stood twinkling like sparks in tinder. The bassoon thought that punch, good thing though it might be, did but momentarily overflow, and did not drown, doubts. It darkened the burning questions, but did not quench them. The disappearance of Quarm was not satisfactorily explained. The coincidence of the voiding of the Cellars conveniently for the fire, was not explained. The contradiction between the statements made by the uncle and the niece was unsifted. The bassoon grunted in his bed a grunt of dissatisfaction with himself for having yielded his opinions, a grunt of resentment against Pasco for having obfuscated his clear judgment, a grunt of resolve never again to allow his opinions to give way before punch. Conscience, that capricious factor, which had pricked him in one direction last night, pricked him in another this morning.

The hautboy, also, was out of tune. On review of the events of the past night, he considered that the entry of Pasco was an unwarrantable intrusion. The rule was well known that during a practice of the orchestra no one should be admitted. Pepperill had entered uninvited, had forced himself into their society, and he must have done that for a purpose. For what purpose but to cajole, to hoodwink them?

In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. The hautboy was a very wideawake and watchful bird, and he saw the meshes clearly. In vain is the hook cast in clear water; and the medium was so transparent that the hautboy plainly saw the hook. He resolved to maintain an independent, observant attitude, to form his own opinion, not accept ready-made views served up to him with punch. When before had the churchwarden favoured the village orchestra with punch? Never'since Pasco had been churchwarden. Never when in a private capacity. Only when popular feeling became suspicious or hostile, did he show himself free-handed. His present liberality told against him.

The violoncello also entered into commune with himself. Was there any chance of another brew? Would another bowl of punch be produced to keep up the favourable opinion formed on the preceding evening, or would a mistrustful attitude act as a stimulant to excite greater liberality? One brew of punch was not much, it prepared the soil, a second would sow the seed, a third make it germinate, a fourth develop, and only a fifth fructify conviction in the integrity of the provider.

The words spoken by Pepperill relative to Kate had spread. The orchestra confided them to their spouses, and the wives whispered them to their intimates. There arose in Coombe-in-Teignhead two rival factions. One party contended that Pasco was guilty, the other argued that Kitty had fired the storehouse. The advantage of the latter view was that it explained what was otherwise inexplicable'the disappearance of Quarm. The story was worked into shape; it was elaborated in detail. Kitty, of a morose and vindictive nature, had been exasperated because her uncle had forbidden her engagement to the schoolmaster. Kitty had never been as other girls were. Her reserve was slyness, her bashfulness sulkiness. Her schoolfellows had disliked her. Their mothers shared the feelings of their daughters. As the proverb says, “Still waters run deep,” and of the stillness of Kitty there could be no question.

The dislike entertained of Kitty had been vague and unreasonable. Now a reason was supplied, and consistency given to what had been shapeless.

It was suspicious that Kitty had volunteered the statement relative to her being left in the linhay before she had been asked questions relative to her whereabouts. Why should she have blurted this out to Jan Pooke and Rose Ash, but for the purpose of throwing dust in their eyes?

Kitty had been unwarrantably forward in telling her tale, and the schoolmaster unwarrantably reticent relative to his experience. Why did the schoolmaster refuse to speak out what he had seen and heard at Coombe Cellars, on that eventful night. The reason was plain enough. He did not desire to compromise Kitty. But it was clear what had occurred. She had been sent back to the Cellars by her uncle, and there her malignant spirit had induced her, out of revenge, to set fire to her uncle’s stores. Her father had come on her red-handed, and had rebuked her sharply. That was what the schoolmaster had overheard. Then Quarm, finding it too late to undo the mischief done by his daughter, afraid to call in neighbours to his aid, lest Kitty should be compromised, had made his escape. There were a thousand other ways by which he might get away besides crossing the Teign. No one had thought of that. Every one had considered only whether he had crossed by ferry or by bridge. There were a score of lanes at the back of Coombe by which he might get away unperceived. All attention and investigation had been devoted to the water, and every other means of evasion left unconsidered.

Thus was the case worked out against Kitty. It assumed deeper colouring when it was remembered that she had allowed Roger Redmore to escape when entrusted with the charge of him by Jan Pooke, and Jan had said that as he left Roger he could not free himself, without Kate’s consent. It was noted, also, that she had, as her uncle had told, deliberately and of *malice prepense*, frustrated the efforts he made to catch the incendiary at Dart-meet.

She had, moreover, induced her father to give up his house to Jane Redmore. Birds of a feather flock together'and surely fireflies are actuated by mutual sympathy.

On the other hand, the party that held Pepperill to be guilty were not silent. Who was the gainer by the fire? Pasco, to the amount of twelve hundred pounds. Was it not certain that he had been greatly embarrassed for money? that a bill of his had just been dishonoured? Was it not just as probable that his story was false as that of Kate? Was it she who sent away Zerah across the water? Who persuaded Pasco to drive in the direction of Newton? Did not all his proceedings on that eventful evening show a deep-laid plan? And so on.

The pros and cons were thrashed and re-thrashed over the tavern table and the ale-mugs, and over the tea in private houses. Hardly any other topic occupied men's minds and women's mouths, till suddenly something happened which silenced everyone.

The insurance company had refused payment, and the solicitor of the company sent down an agent to Coombe that he might collect information which might justify them in their refusal. At once all became mum. No one knew anything, no one suspected anybody. Nothing had happened but what was natural and easily accounted for. This change was due to the fact that there is, and more than half a century ago there was, a strong *esprit de corps* in a secluded village, that resented any intrusion of a stranger into its affairs. The rural mind is naturally suspicious, and naturally mistrusts anyone not intimately known, and regards any questions asked as something to be evaded, and on no account to be answered.

When, accordingly, the agent came among the Coombe-in-Teignheadites, and busied himself in cross-examining the people, they snapped their mouths as an oyster snaps before a lobster; or they may be likened to hedgehogs that rolled themselves up and presented nothing but prickles to the inquirer intruding in their midst. Never in his life had the man come among people like these; they neither saw with their eyes, nor heard with their ears, nor thought with what they called their brains.

Pasco took no measures to protect himself. He knew his fellow-villagers well enough to be sure that they would say nothing against him.

After a week spent in unprofitable investigation, the agent retired. At once the whole place woke up. Everyone uncoiled, every mouth opened, and every brain worked again. The rival factions recommenced their warfare, and the difference in opinion became poignant.

In due course the case of Pepperill against the insurance company came off, or rather, was announced to come off.

Pepperill was full of consequence.

He had felt acutely that suspicion hung about him like a cloud which he could not dissipate. Men who had hitherto courted his society now avoided him. The rector was especially cold in demeanour towards him. The orchestra remained divided in opinion, agreed only in desire for more punch. When, after church, he approached a group at the graveyard gate that was in eager conversation, his approach silenced the talkers and broke up the conclave. He was certain that he had been their topic. Hands that had formerly been extended to him now

remained buried in trousers-pockets. Voices that had given him the good-day now withheld salutations. Customers were reluctant to deal with him. His appearance in the bar of the Lamb and Flag induced a hasty rise, a payment of shot, and a departure of all save sodden topers. By no other means were they to be retained save by the offer of drink at his expense. When he bragged, his boasts fell flat; when he joked, none laughed.

In ill-humour and uneasy, Pasco departed for Exeter. The case, however, never got into court. At the last moment the Company, convinced it had no grounds to go upon, agreed to pay.

This was a triumph for Pepperill. He deferred his return to Coombe for a week, that the news might be carried to everyone there, and have time to ripen in the somewhat sluggish brains of the natives, and produce the effect he anticipated.

The triumph of Pepperill was more than his own individual triumph. When the tidings had well soaked in, then Coombe awoke to the knowledge that the entire parish had achieved a victory, and that over an influential, moneyed, and powerful society. Whether Pepperill was guilty or not guilty was immaterial. The fact remained that a little parish like Coombe, by its representative, Pasco, its churchwarden, had stood up face to face with the capital of the county, represented by the insurance company, and that the latter had cringed and acknowledged defeat without daring to measure arms. That was something unheard of heretofore. If Coombe-in-Teignhead were not proud of its doughty champion, then it would cover itself with disgrace. The situation was discussed in the bar of the Lamb and Flag, and a self-constituted committee formed to celebrate this momentous achievement. The rector was to be solicited to have a special service, at which Puddicombe in F would be performed and a sermon preached. The rector had a service on Saints' Day, attended only by a few old women. Who cared for the saints? But Pepperill'who had extorted one thousand two hundred pounds from the insurance company'that was the sort of man to honour, and the service in his honour would be attended by all Coombe. The bells should be rung. There had been a disturbance with the parson about the right to the belfry on the occasion of Puddicombe's return. The parish must assert and maintain its right to ring the bells when it chose, and defy the rector if he objected.

As was feared, Mr. Fielding raised objections to both the thanksgiving service and to the peal of bells. Thereupon ensued another meeting in the bar.

Now Mr. Pooke, senior, came forward. He had been opposed to Mr. Pepperill; he had disapproved of his conduct. But when it came to a matter of ringing of bells, he felt that a principle was involved. If once the parishioners yielded that point, they might as well yield everything, and be priest-ridden. There were two church-wardens; Pasco Pepperill was one, Mr. Ash, the miller, was the other, having succeeded at Lady-Day to Whiteaway, the grocer. Let Mr. Ash insist on the bells being rung, and if the rector withheld the key, then let him authorise the blacksmith to break open the door. He, Yeoman Pooke, would back him up.

They could not force Mr. Fielding to preach a sermon, but that didn't matter; they'd have music, and have it in the road, and escort Pasco Pepperill home to the strains of Puddicombe in F.

Carried by acclamation.

CHAPTER XLVII

PARTED

If anything had been needed to clinch in Pasco Pepperill the sense of his conduct being irreproachable, the ovation on his return to Coombe-in-Teignhead would have served this purpose; but nothing was necessary after that the insurance office had thrown up the ball. The retirement of the Company from the contest, and the payment of the money for which his stores were insured, acted on his conscience as much as would a plenary papal absolution on that of a Roman Catholic.

Previous to this his conscience had given occasional twitches, now it glowed with conscious sense of righteousness. It was vexed with neither qualm nor scruple. He held his head higher, boasted louder, strutted with more consequence, and became impatient and offended at his wife's maintaining her distance. He might deceive himself, deceive the world, but he could not blind her, and this made him angry. He was slighted in his home, where he had best claims for recognition.

He was, moreover, disappointed that there was so little real enthusiasm for himself at the back of the demonstration, which was organised rather in honour of the parish than of himself. The same suspicion attended him, the same reluctance to deal with him, and the same indifference to his society.

The demonstration was destined not to pass without leaving some unpleasant consequences.

At the urgency of Farmer Pooke, Miller Ash, the second churchwarden, had forced the belfry door and admitted the ringers, and authorised them to give a peal of welcome to the returning conqueror.

Mr. Fielding was of a mild and kindly disposition, but he was a stickler in matters of discipline, and he could not suffer this high-handed conduct to pass unquestioned. Ash was cited before the archdeacon, and legal proceedings were instituted to establish the sole right of the incumbent to order when and by whom the bells should be rung. Ash was dismayed at the prospect of a suit. He

attempted to fall back on Pooke, but found that Pooke was by no means inclined to find money for the defence.

Mr. Fielding was reluctant to proceed against a parishioner and a churchwarden, and a man eminently worthy, but he considered that it would be a neglect of duty not to do so. Twice had he been defied, and twice had the bells been rung on improper occasions. He was aware that his action must produce ill-feeling against himself, but he was too conscientious a man to allow this consideration to weigh with him. Nothing is easier than for a man in authority to court popularity by giving way at every point. Mr. Fielding did not desire popularity, and he did not believe that in discharging a duty he would interfere with his ministerial influence in the place.

And, in fact, Ash did not so much resent the action of the rector as the unreliability of Pooke'a man who had urged him to act, and had promised to take the responsibility on himself for such action; a man whose son was about to marry his own daughter. Ash was bitter at heart, in the first line with Pooke, and the second with Pepperill, for having occasioned this affair. If Pepperill had never insured, never had allowed his warehouse to be burnt, never had confronted the Company, this unpleasantness would not have arisen; and only in the third line did his resentment touch the rector. Moreover, Pooke was discontented and uncomfortable. He was well aware that he was morally responsible for the infraction of the belfry, but he would not admit it, lest it should cost him money. Pooke was a man ready to admit a moral obligation up to ten-and-six; not a penny beyond. He allowed that the parson was in the right to stick out for his authority, and if the law gave him command of the bell-ropes'well, he was justified in trying to obtain it. But it was Pasco Pepperill who was really to blame. He ought not to have delayed his return from Exeter. Why did he stick at that city for seven whole days after he had got what he wanted? Had he come flying home by the Atmospheric the day he received payment, there would have been no demonstration. By dawdling in Exeter, he allowed time for the organisation of a demonstration, and he did not deserve one, Heaven knew! So Pooke's self-reproach converted itself into anger against Pepperill. In the physical world all forces are correlated, and it is so in the world of feeling. Love becomes hate, and joy turns into grief, and, as we have seen, compunction glances away from self and converts itself into a sting aimed at another.

Kitty's position in the place became one full of discomfort. Not only was she regarded as guilty of the fire by one body of the inhabitants, but she had given offence to others by her engagement to the schoolmaster.

Walter Bramber was not merely a pleasant-looking man, but a good-looking one as well, and several young and middle-aged women in the place had set their caps at him.

One of these was the distorted milliner, designed for him by his landlady, and encouraged by her in hopes of exchanging her condition of maid without a home for wife in the schoolhouse. This person went about to all the farmhouses making garments for the farmers' wives and daughters, and was able, without

allowing it to transpire that she had aspired to Bramber, to stir up a good deal of ill-feeling against Kitty, who had been lucky where she had failed.

Another was a good-looking wench with a flaw in her reputation, who had hoped that the new-comer would be ignorant of her past history, and would succumb to her charms, and enable her to repair her faulty character out of the respectability of the position she would acquire.

Another, a damsel of erratic ecclesiasticism, who became a Particular Baptist or an Anglican Churchwoman, according as desirable young men attended chapel or church.

The last was a widow on a nice income of her own, some twenty years Bramber's senior, who had made up her mind to marry again, and marry a young man.

Pasco was subjected to passive suspicions, Kate to active hostility. The art of ingeniously tormenting is one that men are too dull to acquire, and too clumsy to exercise. It is an art easily exercised and rapidly perfected by women. In a hundred ways Kate was annoyed by those of her own sex in Coombe; and these were ways skilfully contrived to excite the maximum of pain. She endeavoured to keep entirely to herself, but this was beyond her power. No mosquito curtains have been contrived which a person can draw about himself as a protection against malignant and poisonous tongues.

Without malicious interest'on the contrary, with the kindest desire for Kate's welfare'Rose Ash interfered and caused her the greatest distress.

Rose had set her mind on matching Kate with Noah; she by no means approved of the engagement to Walter Bramber. A girl like Kate, enjoying her friendship, might look higher, do better than throw herself away on a two-penny-ha'penny schoolmaster, of whose origin nobody knew anything; and when Rose took an idea into her head, she left no stone unturned till she had carried it out.

She visited Kate, she assured her that a union with Bramber was out of the question. There was so strong a feeling against her in the place that, were she to marry the schoolmaster, it would damage his prospects. The farmers would withdraw their subscriptions from the school, and the parents refuse to send their children to be educated there.

"Of course," said Rose, "I don't believe you burnt the warehouse, but a lot of people in the place do. Some say you did it out of spite, because your uncle wouldn't let you have the schoolmaster; others say he sent you back to set the wares alight, being too much of a coward to do it himself. I know better'but folks won't listen to me. I don't see how you can put the notion out of them but by marrying Noah. He's related to nearly everyone in the place, and if you became his wife, you see, all the relations of Noah would take your part; they'd be bound to do it. Noah is a good fellow, and he's terribly in love'got a pain under his ribs, and walks bent'all along of love. You'd best chuck over the schoolmaster and stop their mouths with Noah. There's no other way of doin' it."

“You really think that my engagement to Walter Bramber will injure him?”

“If it goes on, he may as well leave the place. It would be made too hot to hold him. You see, Kitty, the Coombites ha’ never taken much to him’he bain’t like Mr. Puddicombe in nothing. But they might get used to him and put up wi’ him. If you go on holding him to his engagement, then’what everyone says is’he must go.”

Zerah, moreover, sought to influence her niece. She was a selfish woman, and now that she had opened her heart to Kitty, she was jealous of anyone else claiming a share in the girl. Moreover, she could not endure to live at the Cellars if left there alone with Pasco, of that she was convinced. She therefore extorted a promise from Kate not to leave her.

Kitty had become more than ever thoughtful, and was nervous and depressed in spirits. She could not clear herself of this suspicion that attached to her without incriminating her uncle, and she greatly doubted whether her word would avail against his. She could not hear anything of her father, the same mystery enveloped his fate unrelieved. She would have liked to pour her troubles into the ear of Walter, but her uncle had forbidden his coming to the house, and she would not go and seek him, observed, watched by all, and everything she did subject to misconstruction. Kate’s time was more at her disposal than formerly, as Jane Redmore came in charing. This was a disadvantage to her, so far that it allowed her time to brood over her troubles and annoyances.

After Rose had gone, she went on the water side of the house and seated herself on the parapet above the rippling inflowing tide, with her head sunk on her bosom.

Presently the tears began to course down her cheeks. She had not been seated there long before the timid, feeble Jane Redmore came fluttering out to her, looking over her shoulder as she came. The woman touched her: “I wouldn’t take on so,” she said. “You ain’t sure Jason Quarm’s dead, you know. He wasn’t found, and for why?”

Kate looked at the poor woman with tear-filled eyes.

“I can’t say nothin’,” said Mrs. Redmore hastily. “Only’there’it makes me bad to see you cry, it do, and I reckon there’s no reason.”

Then she slipped back in the same wavering, timid manner to the kitchen, without another word.

But Kate’s distress of mind was not due solely, as the woman believed, to her anxiety concerning the fate of her father. She had been debating in her heart whether she ought to continue her engagement with Bramber, and, perhaps, never had Kitty felt how truly she was “alone” as now, when she had satisfied herself that for his sake it were well for her to release him.

She stood up, when her purpose was formed, and walked quietly, firmly, to the Rectory. One friend she had there, ever faithful’the parson. He knew that she was innocent, he alone could appreciate her difficulties, and he would approve her determination.

She entered the study where he was at work on a sermon. He smiled, and his face brightened when he saw her, and he signed to a chair.

Kate, direct, clear, and firm in all she said and did, told the rector of her intention. She informed him of what he knew already, that a body of feeling was engaged against her, that she was incapable of establishing her innocence. That, under the circumstances, it was out of the question her holding Walter Bramber to his promise. She had, furthermore, passed her word to her aunt not to leave her. Mr. Fielding, though disappointed, saw that under the circumstances nothing could be done; and he felt that Kate was acting honourably and in accordance with her conscience. He knew, therefore, he must not dissuade her from obedience to that inner voice. He took a more hopeful view than did she, and this he expressed.

"If things change, then no harm has been done," said Kate. "I have to say what is in my mind as made up on things as they are. Will you be so kind, sir, as to speak to Walter?"

"I see him coming in at the gate," said Mr. Fielding. "He is with me about this time every day for a Greek lesson'a bit of New Testament in the original tongue."

Kate stood up.

"Yes," said he. "You go to meet him at the mulberry tree."

The girl left quietly and composedly, as she had entered, and, crossing the lawn, came on the young man just as he reached the bench under the mulberry.

"Walter," she said, "I want a word with you. Have you a knife?"

"Yes; why?"

"Will you cut this in the mulberry bark? Mr. Fielding will not object'

'O Tree, defying time, witness bear,

That two''"

She hesitated, slightly coloured'

"'That two friends met and parted here.'"

"What do you mean, Kitty?"

"Ask the rector'he will tell you all."

Then hastily, unable further to control herself, she passed him, and left the garden.

CHAPTER XLVIII

A SHADOW-SHAPE

Kate walked at once to the house of Mr. Puddicombe, and, without giving any reasons, announced to him that the engagement to Walter Bramber was at an end. She calculated on his publishing the fact, but she had not calculated on his inventing and promulgating reasons of his own supposition for explaining the rupture. According to him, she had formed a preference for Noah Flood, and regarded an alliance with Noah more to her advantage than one with a person of whose origin nothing was known, and whose prospects were uncertain. One of the first to hear the news was Rose Ash, and she made an excursion immediately to the house of the Floods, where Noah lived with his mother, a widow. The Floods were a well-to-do yeoman family, with land of their own. The father of Noah had died three years previous to the events recorded in this tale. Noah was the only child, and had been the idol of his mother. That he should seek a wife, she admitted, was natural. She would greatly have preferred his taking someone of more position and means, and in greater favour than Kitty Alone, but she was accustomed to regard everything her son did as right, and she would not offer any opposition to what he determined on. As Rose Ash was not to be won, he might take Kitty; though she would have vastly preferred Rose. The old woman was, it is true, made uneasy by the reports relative to Kitty and the fire at the Cellars, but her son knew how to set her mind at rest, by ridiculing them as idle and baseless, bred of malice or stupidity.

Rose was really energetic on behalf of Kitty. She did brave battle for her, and combated every adverse opinion. She was thoroughly resolved to forward the match between Noah and Kate, and now that the field was cleared of the schoolmaster, she hurried to the house of the Floods to spur on Noah to immediate action.

The evening was already closing in, and the house of the Floods was at some distance out of Coombe; but Rose was impulsive, and what she did was done in impulse. She was generous, so far as did not interfere with her own prospects and wishes and comforts. Mrs. Flood was her aunt, and with her she was ever welcome. Noah was happily at home when Rose arrived. She was not the girl to beat about the bush, and she rushed at once upon the topic uppermost in her mind.

“You must put on your hat at once, Noah, and come with me. I’m going to the Cellars, and going to make all right between you and Kitty. The time has arrived. The door is ajar, and you must thrust your shoulder in before it is shut. It’s off with the schoolmaster, and must be on with you at once.”

“Noah hasn’t been hisself of late,” said Mrs. Flood. “I don’t think he ought to be out with the dew falling heavy.”

“Nonsense, Aunt Sally! it’s love,” said Rose. “The dew won’t hurt. It’s his disappointment has upset him.”

“He’s been off his feed terrible,” said the mother; “there is a nice piece of boiled bacon I’ve had cold, but he don’t seem to relish it.”

“That’s love,” said Rose; “and I heard Mr. Pepperill say that Noah had a pain under his ribs.”

“It’s like a hot pertater lodged here,” said Noah; “I can’t get no rest at all from it.”

“That’s love also; I know it. I’ve had the same till Jan came to his senses.”

“And I don’t seem to take no interest in the farm; do I, mother?” asked Noah.

“Indeed you don’t, Noah.”

“That also is love,” said Rose; “we’ll soon put that to rights.”

“I thought it was liver,” observed the mother; “and that blue pill”’

“Oh, nothing of the sort,” interrupted Rose. “I know all the symptoms: hot potato, distaste for biled bacon, and indifference to farm affairs’it’s love; I had it all badly till Jan came round. Love turns heavy on the chest, if disappointed. That’s what Noah feels under his ribs. Come on, Noah, take your hat, and we will go to the Cellars together.”

Noah complied with as much alacrity as he was capable of displaying. He was a docile youth; he had fallen in love with Kitty, partly at Rose’s bidding, partly out of compunction at his conduct at the fair.

That evening had closed in rapidly. There were dense clouds overhead, so that the twilight was cut off, also all danger of dew, as Rose at once pointed out to Mrs. Flood. As, however, the mother feared her dear boy might get wet in the event of rain, Noah was induced to take a greatcoat.

The young man was shy and timid.

“You know, Rose, I treated her terrible bad at Ashburton, when I knocked away the workbox from under her arm.”

“She will like you all the better for it,” answered the girl. “Young maidens like a lad of spirit, and you may be sure it gave her pleasure to see you and Jan punching each other’s heads. That schoolmaster! he ain’t up to nothing but whacking childer with a cane. If you like, I’ll try and egg him on to fight you, and then you can knock him all to pieces; and there’s nothing surer for finding your way to Kitty’s heart. If she’s like me, she’ll like to see lads fighting about her.”

“You don’t think, Rose, she really had anything to do wi’ the fire?”

“The fire?” snapped the girl. “No more than you or I. Her uncle did it. He wanted the insurance money. That’s a fine tale’that she set fire to the warehouse, because her uncle wouldn’t hear of her marrying the schoolmaster’and now, of her own accord, she throws the fellow over. If she had been so set on him, she wouldn’t have done *that*. Can’t you see, Noah, or are you stupid, that her giving up Mr. Bramber is the best answer to that

story? It shows it could not have been. And then, as to that other tale,'that Mr. Pepperill sent her back to set the place in a blaze,'no one who knows Kitty can believe *that*. She's not the girl to do a wrong thing at anyone's bidding. Besides, what good would it have been to her?"

Noah did not answer.

"You can't do better than go right up to her and ask her to be yours'now. Everything is in your favour. Folk talk a pass'l of nonsense and spiteful lies about her. It makes her cruel unhappy. She's been doing little else but cry for some days. You show her you don't mind one snap what folks say, and you don't believe a word o' the lies against her, and I tell you she'd jump into your arms. It's my belief that the schoolmaster turned nasty'that he began to show her he thought there might be something in it, that he knew people said they'd take away their subscription if he married her, and he made it so unpleasant for Kitty that she gave him up. And now you march in and conquer."

"I'll do so," said Noah.

"And," pursued Rose, "you must begin by making Kitty cry; that's the preparing of the ground."

"How am I to do that?"

"Talk about her father. Ask if she has heard any news of him."

"Why? it don't seem kind to make her cry."

"What a noodle you are, Noah! Nothing is more profitable for what you intend than to get her into a crying mood, regular soft and tender, and then pity her about her father, and so out with it when she is in tears. That's the way to win her!"

Noah mused awhile, walking by the side of Rose, in silence. After a minute he said, "What is your notion, Rose? I mean about Jason Quarm. Is he dead or not?"

"Of course he is. Burnt to ashes."

"But the ashes were not found."

"My dear Noah, you saw the fire as well as I; you know with what fury it burnt, and how it lasted three days. He was no Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego all pounded into one."

"You really think he is dead?"

"Sure of it. Would he not have turned up and let folk know he was alive, if he had not perished? Would he have allowed Kitty to go on'and not Kitty only, his sister Zerah as well'all this long time, suffering and miserable, because they believe he died a terrible death, if he could relieve their minds by a letter, or, better still, by appearing?"

Suddenly Rose started, caught her cousin by the arm, and drew back.

"What is the matter?" asked the young man.

“There is something there’moving’in the hedge.”

They were in a true Devonshire lane, with the hedges high on each side, planted with trees that extended their branches overhead, almost interlocking. Through the boughs and leaves the grey sky glimmered, and the soil in the lane here and there showed in the light from above, but all was indistinct and dark. A turn in the lane, and a fork beyond the turn, lay before them, and through one of the lanes the light of the estuary reflecting the sky made a partial gleam, as though that lane were a tube with ground glass at the end.

Both remained motionless and listened.

“Hark!” whispered Rose; “did you hear something?”

“I heard you speaking.”

“Before I spoke’a clitter, as of a foot on stones.”

“Well, what of that? This is a road, and people may go along it, I reckon.”

“Look’look!” gasped Rose, pointing down the funnel-like lane, at the end of which was the light of the steely water.

Rose maintained her grasp of Noah.

The young man looked in the direction indicated, and both saw a figure in the vista, lurching as it went along, as though lame; a thickset figure, as far as they could make out in the uncertain light. In another moment it had disappeared.

“Go after it!” said Rose, relaxing her hold.

“It? What do you mean?”

“That’s just like Jason Quarm.”

“But he’s dead. You said so.”

“I know he is, but that’s his ghost. Run, Noah, and force it to speak. It’s walking, because it can’t rest wi’out burial.”

“I won’t!” said Noah. “Go yourself.”

“You are a man. It’s vanished now. That’s the way to the cottage he had, which Kitty gave up to the Redmores. Oh, Noah, do run!”

“I’ll do nothing o’ the sort. Come on, Rose’we are going along t’other lane, thanks be. Lord, that we should ha’ seen a ghost! I shan’t be able to propose. I shall be so terrible took aback.”

“Nonsense, Noah!”

“But consider’it’s terrible frightening to propose right on end to a ghost’s daughter.”

CHAPTER XLIX

FLAGRANTE DELICTO

Noah and Rose reached the Cellars just as Pasco and his family were about to seat themselves to supper. Pepperill somewhat boisterously welcomed them, and insisted on their sharing the evening meal.

“You see,” said he, “it is dull here. Zerah ain’t much in the way of entertainment, and Kitty be just as heavy. Stupid place this, and stupid people; I shall get away as soon as possible.”

“Going to leave the Cellars, Mr. Pepperill?” asked Rose.

“I don’t find this place lively enough for me, now I’m a man of independent means. I want amusement, and can get none here; society, and here no one can talk of anything but bullocks.”

“I don’t know that,” said Noah; “there is the fire, everyone is talking of that.”

Rose cast a reproachful glance at her cousin. His remark made Pasco wince, and Zerah look down into her plate.

“You see,” pursued Pepperill, “having come in for a little property”’

“The insurance money?” asked the blundering Noah.

“My uncle’s little fortune,” answered Pasco hastily. “There’s no occasion for me to toil and drudge like a slave selling coals, and wool, and hides, and the like; so I think I’ll take a little box somewhere near Exeter, somewhere where I can amuse myself, and have agreeable neighbours.”

As soon as opportunity offered, Rose drew Kate aside and said to her cheerily, “I have brought you Noah.”

“Noah! Why?”

“I heard you were off with the schoolmaster.”

“Yes, I am.”

“Then it is high time you were on with another.”

“I want no one.”

“Oh, that’s nonsense! You must have Noah. He’s a nice fellow and has a good property; besides, he is cruel sweet on you.”

“Indeed, indeed, Rose, I wish to be left alone.”

“It won’t do, Kate. When the circus girl goes round driving two horses, she skips off one back and on to another. You can’t skip off one saddle wi’out another saddle to skip into, that ain’t reason.”

“I am not a circus girl.”

"We all are going round and round in one ring, and then comes a fool and holds up the hoop for us to go through. Jack has been my clown, and Noah shall be yours."

"I do not wish it," said Kate hastily. "I desire only to be let alone."

"My dear, I know what is best for you. I'll call Noah."

Kate sprang up. "I have to wash up after supper with Mrs. Redmore," she said, and hastened into the kitchen.

Rose was vexed. She returned to the others, and gave Noah a sign to follow the girl; and he obeyed with his usual docility. Then Rose began to propound her scheme to the uncle and aunt, to explain Noah's prospects and dilate on his attachment for Kate. The aunt alone raised objections, which Rose combated in the most airy manner. Zerah doubted whether Kate felt any regard for Noah; Rose was positive that this would come as a matter of course, now that she was free from entanglement with Bramber.

Pepperill said he would be glad, after what had happened, to have Kate married and out of his house. Whereupon Zerah caught him up and asked his meaning.

Before he could answer, Kitty came in trembling, and, standing before Rose, asked, "What does he mean? Noah says he has seen my father."

Rose tossed her head, and cast an angry glance over Kate's shoulder at the stupid young man who was following.

"Noah is a blundering fellow," she said, "and does not know what he says. Your father! Do you think that if we had seen him we would not at once have made him come on here with us?"

"You told me"'began Noah apologetically.

"Whatever I may have said, you are too dull to understand, and you turn everything cat-in-the-pan."

Apparently satisfied, Kate prepared to go back into the kitchen, and Noah would have followed her; but she stood in the doorway and said firmly, "No, I do not wish to have you in the kitchen. If you persist in following, I shall pin a dish-clout to your back. Jane Redmore wants to get home to her little ones, the night is dark as pitch. I must help her to clean up, and we can have no one to interfere with us; you nearly made me break a dish with what you said just now."

"Come here," said Rose. "You are a duffer, and don't know how to manage"; and Noah obeyed, and seated himself in the settle. Kate shut the kitchen door.

"What was that you said about my brother Jason?" asked Zerah.

"It was nonsense," answered Rose sharply.

"But Noah meant something, when he said he had seen him."

"Noah is a fool: are you not, Noah?"

"I suppose you know," answered the young man meekly.

"Tell me what it was that made Kate nigh on drop the dish," persisted Zerah, always a resolute woman to have her way.

"It was nought but a parcel of nonsense," said Rose evasively.

"There must have been something," persisted Zerah.

"Well, I don't mind saying," Rose replied,'"that is, if you will hear'but it was fancy, I reckon."

"What was fancy?"

"Thinking we saw him. I had told Noah to propose to Kate, and to get her into proper humour for accepting, first by making her cry, and then I told him he could make her cry by speaking in a sort of sympathising way about her father; and like an old buffle-head he went and said he had seen his ghost."

"His ghost?" exclaimed Zerah, and Pasco drew back in the settle with a scared expression on his face.

"We were coming down the road from Noah's, and before us was the fork of the lane," said Rose. "Well, then, if you will hear all, Noah and me, us thought us see'd someone in the lane as went towards Jane Redmore's cottage. The night was dark, but there was light at the end of the lane because of the Teign, which was full of the tide; and there was, sure enough, someone walking down that road. Us see'd him, whoever he was. He walked like a lapwing."

"'Twas Jones Maker, the roadman," said Pasco in a voice that was not firm. "He's lame."

"He goes on a crutch," answered Rose. "What we saw was different, was it not so, Noah?"

"Yes," assented the young man. "He walked lop o' this side like, just the same as Jason Quarm."

"'Twas Jonas Maker," persisted Pasco.

"It can't ha' been Jonas," answered Rose; "Jonas is tall, and this we saw was stout and thickset."

"Did he speak?" asked Zerah breathlessly. Pasco fidgeted in his seat.

"No, he did not; us weren't very near, and I axed Noah to run on and catch him up, and ax him questions why he walked, but he wouldn't."

"I reckon Mr. Pepperill would ha' been shy to do that," growled Noah.

Then a dead silence fell on all; and in that dead silence a sound like the tread of a man with a limp was audible, coming up the steps to the door. Next as if a hand were laid on the door-hasp, and all saw that the latch was raised, and cautiously lowered, without the door being opened. Then ensued the halting hobble down the steps again.

No one stirred. Every face was blank. Possibly one of those present would have started up and gone to the door to look forth into the black night, but at this moment Kate entered, and, going up to a crook, took down a lantern.

"Jane Redmore is going home," she said, "and she's axed me just to show her off the premises and into the lane, with a light; it's too dark to find the way at once, when one has been in the room with plenty of light."

Kate opened the lantern and looked in.

"There is a candle," she said, and proceeded to ignite it.

Rose looked at Noah, and Noah at Rose.

"I think," said the girl, "we will ask you, Kate, to show us a light on our way presently, after you have put Jane Redmore into hers."

"I will do so cheerfully," answered Kitty, and went back with the lighted lantern into the kitchen to fetch Jane. Then the two passed through the room where the rest sat, and Mrs. Redmore wished them all a good-night.

Silence ensued after the door was shut. The glitter of the lantern was visible through the window for a moment, and then disappeared.

Pasco looked uneasily at the door. He was the first to break silence. "I wish you to know," said he, "that if you marry Kitty, Noah, you do not take a beggar. On the contrary, you take an heiress."

"How do you make that out?" asked Zerah.

"Kitty is not of my blood," said Pasco, gaining firmness, "but I have no relations of my own, and I intend to treat Kitty as my child. Noah, you marry an heiress."

"What will you give her?" asked Zerah.

"Great expectations," answered Pasco pompously.

"I don't count much on expectations," said his wife contemptuously. "Give her something down."

"I'll do better than that," said Pasco. "I'll make my will and constitute her my heir."

"That's moonshine and tall talk," scoffed Zerah.

"It is nothing of the sort," said Pasco. "Here you are, Rose and Noah, and I'll make my will before you, and you shall witness it. Then Noah will know what he takes, when he takes Kitty."

Zerah looked at her husband with surprise. This was the first intimation she had received that he intended to do anything for his niece. She did not see deep enough into his heart to read his reasons. At that moment he was alarmed and uneasy at the story of the apparition of Jason Quarm, whom he knew to be dead, and then at the mysterious tread and the raising of the hasp of the door. He was not a superstitious man, but the guilt on his soul made him subject to terrors. He thought that the spirit of the man he had brought to his death might be walking, and would trouble him, not only on account of the wrong done to him, but also to his daughter. In his mean mind Pasco hoped that by

constituting Kitty heir to all he possessed, he might lay the troubled spirit of her father.

“I will do it at once,” said Pepperill, opening his desk and drawing forth ink and pen and paper, and laying them on the table.

“I will show you that I understand legal forms,’I keep a solicitor of my own,’and that I am the man who can deal generously and with a free hand. I, Pasco Pepperill of Coombe Cellars, being in sound condition of mind and body”’

He wrote the words, then looked round complacently and added, “I bequeath to my niece, Kate Quarm, the sum of three thousand pounds. Three thousand pounds,” repeated Pasco, looking round. “Also to my wife Zerah, two thousand pounds and my house at Coombe Cellars, and my house property at Tavistock, inherited from my uncle,”’he turned his head consequentially to look at Noah, then at Rose,’“during the term of her natural life.”

“What do you mean by natural life?” asked Zerah.

“It is an expression always used,” answered Pasco.

“It is nonsense,” said Zerah, “If there be a natural life, there must be one which is unnatural.”

“It means, plain as Scripture,” replied Pasco, “that you may have my house as long as your nat’ral life lasts, and after that lie quiet in your grave, and not walk and bother people. Your right to the house is tied up to your nat’ral life. That’s the meaning o’ that there legal term. It stops and prevents all after unpleasantness.”

“Now I understand,” said Zerah. “But you need not get hot over it.”

“I’m not hot, but some folk be stupid and understand nothing. Now I will proceed. After my wife’s decease,’that’s the legal term for death,’then all goes to my niece, or reputed niece, the aforesaid Kate Quarm. This is my last will and testament, and true act and deed. Here you see me sign it. Now then, Rose Ash, and you, Noah Flood, witness my signature. You, Zerah, cannot, because you are beneficially affected.”

Mr. Pepperill had completely recovered his self-consequence and his courage. He had shown Noah that he was a man of means, a man with house property, a man of capital as well, and he had eased his conscience by making satisfaction for the wrong he had done to Kate.

As soon as Pasco had seen the young people witness his signature, he handed the will to Zerah. “There, wife, keep it.”

At that moment the door was thrown open, and Kate entered, and stood by the table, with changes of expression flying over her countenance, like flaws of wind on the face of a pool.

She put down the lantern on the board.

“Why, Kitty, the light is out!” said Zerah, and opened the horn door. “Why, Kitty, where be the candle to? She’s gone.”

At that moment, a flare that illumined the entire room, a sheet of light, entering by door and window.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Pasco, springing up. “My rick.” Then with a scream of triumph, as he pointed with one hand to Kate, with the other to the lantern, “I told you so, now you will believe me. Caught in the act.”

CHAPTER L

THE THIRD FIRE

The light poured into the room like a flood, yellow as sunlight, and more intense in brilliancy. Kitty standing at the table had her face in shadow. Pasco opposite was as a mass of gold. The fire glittered in his eyeballs, it flashed in the new heavy gold watch-chain that he had purchased in Exeter.

“Now’now I shall be believed. Now’now the world will know how falsely I have been judged. Now’now is revealed what a viper I have nu’ssed at my hearth.”

“We had best go and put out the fire,” said Noah, and he went to the door, to see that no possibility existed of arresting the flames. The rick was all but enveloped as in a blazing sheet that was drawing round it to meet at the only side which was dark. Little wind blew, so that the flame poured up in one tongue.

Voices could be heard, loud shouts in the village, where the conflagration had attracted attention, and had broken up the session of the orchestra. The bassoon was braying a loud note, prolonged and hideous, to rouse such as were behind curtains, and did not observe the glare.

“How did this come about?” asked Rose, catching Kate by the arm.

“I’I cannot say. I cannot say,” answered the girl addressed; “but, indeed, I am not guilty.”

“Is it insured?” asked Noah.

“No, it is not insured,” answered Pasco triumphantly. “I hope now you won’t go and say *I* did it’and that I did it to get money out of a company.”

Except the words recorded, nothing further was spoken. The little party was too dismayed at the occurrence, and at the prospect of what must spring from it, to stir, to speak. It was in vain to think of doing aught to the rick. No outbuilding was endangered. An attempt to tear down the stack would result in spreading the fire.

Then in at the door burst the constable.

“Halloo! what is the meaning of this?” he shouted. “Insured again?”

“I am not insured,” answered Pepperill. “If you want to arrest the culprit’there she is.”

“How came this about?” asked Pooke. “I’m not going to arrest nobody without a cause.”

“There is cause enough,” said Pasco. “Kitty is the person who has set fire to my rick. I have plenty of evidence for that. And now that I have, you’ll all see I’m innocent’white as driven snow.”

“What is the meaning of this?” asked the constable, turning Kitty about that the blaze might illumine her face. In the yellow glare it could be seen that she was deathlike in complexion, and that her eyes were wide distended in terror. She trembled, and seemed unable to stand without the support of the table.

“I’ll tell you all,” said Pasco majestically, “and then, perhaps, Mr. Pooke, you’ll believe my word in preference to that of such as she.”

“What is it?” asked Pooke. “I’ll not arrest nobody without good cause shown, as satisfies my judgment. I said so before.”

“Look at that lantern,” said Pasco.

“Well, I sees it.”

“Open it. There’s no candle in it’is there? But there was’a quarter of an hour ago.”

Numerous voices were now audible around the burning rick. The constable looked out, and hesitated whether to go forth and ensure order without, or to hear what had to be said within.

He saw that there was not much chance of further mischief, the intensity of the fire kept everyone at a distance.

“Go on,” said he. “What have you to say against the girl?”

“She was in the kitchen with Jane Redmore. And Jane Redmore asked her to go along with she on her way home, wi’ a lantern, because of the pitch darkness. Was it not so, Zerah?”

“I can’t say. I wasn’t in the kitchen,” answered Mrs. Pepperill reluctantly.

“Was it as he says?” asked the constable, turning to Kate.

“Yes.” Then suddenly, she woke out of a condition of almost stupefaction; and throwing herself on her knees before her uncle, she entreated, “Do not say that I did it!”

“I leave that to the magistrate, when he tries, and commits you to prison.”

“No, no, you will not send me there!”

“I shall certainly have you tried and punished.”

“Uncle! I beseech you! Let me speak to you alone. I did not do it. I must have a word with you, where no one can see, no one can hear.”

“Indeed, I shall not consent. You want to induce me not to prosecute. I know what you will say. I know how you will appeal to my feelings. You know well enough what a lovin’ and tender and feelin’ heart I’ve always shown. But this won’t do. It won’t do. I’ve borne the slights and the slanders because o’ the last fire, and folk cried out again’ me’I did it for the insurance; and now’now I hope I’ll make all believe I’m not the guilty party. They must look elsewhere. Take her in charge as an incendiary, constable. Do your duty.”

“Uncle! I beseech you! For my sake, for your own, go no further in this.”

“I must proceed, if only to clear myself.”

“Uncle!” In her anxiety she held him. “You do not know my reasons. I pray you, I pray you on behalf of me and dear aunt, as well as yourself’some terrible thing will happen otherwise!”

“I’ll look to that’that no more terrible things happen. Now, constable, she’s threatenin’ to burn the house down over my head, to burn me and my missus in our beds. You heard her. You all heard her threaten us. I call you to witness.”

“I will do no harm to anyone. I entreat a word, a word in private,” urged Kate.

“I’ll have no word in private,” said Pepperill. “What you have to say, say out; lies, lies all it will be,” he added.

“I cannot say it before all. I must speak it in your ear.”

“I won’t listen to nothing,” said Pepperill.

“And I,” said Pooke, “I won’t allow of no tamperin’ wi’ justice, no persuadin’ not to prosecute. We’ve had enough of these little games here. This is the third fire, and we’ll have someone punished for this if I can manage it.”

“You do not know what you are doing, uncle,” gasped Kitty, staggering to her feet.

“I reckon I know pretty well,” he answered coldly.

“You do not. You will bitterly, bitterly rue it. Do not rush on what must happen, and then tear yourself in grief and dismay that you did not listen to me.”

“Listen how she threatens. Tell’e what, Mr. Pooke, there’ll be no safety for none i’ the parish so long as she’s at large. Silence, Kitty! Neither the constable nor I will hear another word but what concerns this fire, and what will serve to convict you.”

“Did you go with the lantern all along wi’ Jane Redmore?” asked Pooke.

Kate recovered her composure, and, with a despairing action of the hands, dashed the tears from her eyes.

“Answer me,” said Pooke; “no prevarication.”

“I went out with Jane.”

“Did you accompany her home?”

“No, only a little way.”

“How far?”

“To the gate.”

“What! not into the lane even?”

“No.”

“How long was she absent?” asked Pooke.

“Long enough for me to draw up a document,” said Pepperill. “What should you say, Zerah? Half an hour?”

Zerah was in no condition to answer.

“And why did you not go on with Jane Redmore?” asked the constable of Kitty.

“Because’I cannot say.”

“Oh, you cannot say? Mind, what you speak now may be used again’ you at your trial. I’m bound to tell you that, and you ain’t obliged to answer. Nevertheless, if you can give a reasonable account of yourself, I’m not called on to think you guilty, and arrest you. What was you a-doing of yourself all that half an hour, when you wasn’t with Jane Redmore, a-seeing of her home?”

He paused for an answer, and received none.

“Am I to understand you won’t say? You ain’t forced to do so, you know.”

“I had rather not say,” replied Kate in a low voice.

“I suppose there was a candle in the lantern when you went out?”

“Yes.”

“Was it burnt out?” Pooke looked into the socket in the lantern. “No,” he said; “it has illicitly been removed. There is no guttering of grease. How do you account for that?”

Kate made no answer.

“We know very well how your rick was fired,” said Pepperill. “It seems to me, Mr. Pooke, that mine was set alight to in much the same way.”

“How do you account for the candle being gone?” asked the constable.

Again no answer.

“Now, look here,” said he. “You’re a little maid, and I don’t want to deal hard with you. If you can give me an explanation of your conduct as will satisfy, why, I’ll not proceed to extremities. But I must say that things look ugly. If you was innocent, you could say so.”

“I am innocent.”

“Then how came the rick to be fired?”

Kate made no reply. She was trembling, and nervously plucking at her light shawl, tearing away and unravelling the fringe.

"You alone had the lantern. It wasn't Mrs. Redmore now'eh?'or her husband?"

"Oh no, no!" replied Kate eagerly. "She had nothing to do with it. She had gone away along the lane, some time before"'She halted.

"Oh! you know how the fire arose?"

Kate gave no reply.

"I'm afraid it's a bad case, and I must do my duty, and convey you to the lock-up."

"Oh, aunt!" cried the girl, turning towards Zerah, who stood cowed, speechless, in the background. "Oh, aunt! let me speak with you alone."

"No! it is of no use," said Pasco, stepping between the girl and his wife. "Nothin' that she can say to Zerah will avail, and certainly nothin' that Zerah can say will persuade me. Remove her at once."

The constable laid his hand on Kate's shoulder.

"One question more. Mind, I caution you not to answer unless you choose. If Mrs. Redmore was not with you, she had gone on. Were you alone, Kitty, in the stackyard after she left; and how was it you were there so long? Say, was there anyone with you?"

"Aunt, let me speak to you!" in a despairing cry.

Zerah made a movement towards her niece, but Pepperill intercepted her, and, catching her by the shoulders, rudely thrust her back. "You shall not speak with her." Then, turning his head, with a coarse laugh, "So, someone with her! The schoolmaster, I suppose. She had given him up, and was inclined to take him on again. Women change like weathercocks."

"Mr. Bramber was not there," said Kate, a flush mantling her brow.

"Then who was it?"

Dead silence.

"Come, Kate Quarm, with me. I must do my duty," said the constable.

"Stay!" said the rector, who had entered unperceived. "Trust her with me. I solemnly promise that I will keep her secure. Let her go with me to the parsonage, and do not, in pity, take the frightened, innocent child"'

"Innocent?" in a mocking tone from Pasco.

"Innocent child," repeated the rector, with his eye on Pepperill, who dropped his at once. "Mr. Pooke, rely on me to produce her when you require. In pity, do not frighten her; she may be able easily to clear herself. That she is innocent, I stake my word. Trust her to me."

The constable hesitated. The lock-up was in a bad condition. It had not been occupied for years, and had been turned into a poultry-house.

“Come, Kitty,” said the rector. “I have made myself answerable for you. And I am proud to do so.”

CHAPTER LI

THE PASS’N’S PRESCRIPTION

Not a word on that evening would the old rector allow himself to speak to Kitty relative to the fire, nor would he suffer her to speak about it. He saw that she was in a condition of nervous excitability, and that she must be tranquillised. But, indeed, she made hardly an attempt to speak about the rick, and how it was set on fire; and directly the rector put up his hand to indicate that the topic was taboo, she submitted with a sense of relief.

Mr. Fielding had a kind, motherly housekeeper, with tact, and, at a word from him, she understood how that Kate was to be treated. The rector was, indeed, alarmed lest the fright and mental excitement he found the girl labouring under might throw her into fever. He knew that she was not strong in constitution, and that she was endowed with high-strung and sensitive nerves.

Walter Bramber, having heard of the fire, of the threatened arrest of Kate, of her having been taken to the Rectory, hastened to the parsonage in the hope of seeing her. But this Mr. Fielding would not allow. The young man was greatly agitated, grievously distressed. He entreated to be permitted an interview, but the rector was peremptory in refusing it.

“Remember, all is off between you, at all events for a time. That she likes you, has not ceased to like you, I am convinced. In her present trouble the sight of you would but increase her distress. There is something behind all this’something of mystery, which I do not fathom. Kitty cannot justify herself; not that she is guilty, that neither you nor I credit. There is something that ties her tongue. She is, perhaps, afraid of compromising another, and who that is I do not know.”

“I believe,” said Walter impetuously, “that this is a wicked conspiracy against Kitty. Mr. Pepperill, to clear himself of the suspicion that he caused the burning down of his stores, painfully laboured to spread the report that Kitty had done it, and done it out of revenge because he refused to allow of my suit. And now he has contrived, by some means or other, to get his rick fired’which is not insured’in such a manner as to make it appear that Kitty, and Kitty alone, could have done it. It is a vile plot to ruin her, and she is innocent as a lamb.”

“That she is innocent I am assured,” said the rector. “How this last fire has come about I cannot even venture to guess. The material for forming an opinion is not to hand. Till Kitty speaks we probably shall not know, and I do not know what will induce her to speak. Of one thing be confident, Walter: whatever

Kitty believes is right, that she will do. I would not urge her to speak, because her sense of duty, her conscience, tells her to be silent. I have that perfect, unshaken trust in her, that I simply leave matters alone, and all I seek is to relieve her of unnecessary trial."

"I am a poor man," said Bramber, "but I will give every penny I have,'I will sell my books, ay, and my violin, to secure the best counsel for her defence, if it comes to that."

"You need not trouble yourself on that score," said Mr. Fielding, with a smile. "Kitty has other friends besides you. There is her aunt, who loves her, and there is her pastor, who watches over her with much care."

Bramber moved in restless unhappiness. The rector saw how wretched the young man was, and he said gently, "Bramber, do you not see that the case is taken almost completely out of our hands?"

"I suppose it is'to some extent."

"Almost entirely. I will not urge Kitty to say what she thinks should be withheld. There is but one thing you and I can do, and that is what I shall advise Kitty, before she goes to bed, that which will be better than any sleeping draught, that which alone will strengthen her to bear what is to come, that will cool the fevered heart, and calm the working brain."

"What is that? I have tried my violin'music will not ease my mind."

"No, it is something else. A prescription I had long ago from a Great Physician: one I have often tried, and never found to fail."

"What is that?"

"Cast all your care upon God, for He careth for you."

Walter clasped the old rector's hand, he could not speak, something rose in his throat. He turned away, and found that the prescription availed.

Before Kitty went to bed that night, the rector sought her. She had been standing for an hour at a window, looking in the direction of the Cellars.

In the few hours that had passed she had become whiter, more sunken under the eyes, more tremulous in her limbs and mouth. It was with her as the rector surmised. Her mind was torn with doubt as to what course she should pursue. If she were to save herself, it must be at the cost of others.

"Mr. Fielding, is it possible to prevent my being brought before the magistrates? that is, can I see my uncle in private here, and induce him to withdraw what he has said?"

"I do not think it is possible."

"I could tell him something which would make him most anxious to hush the matter up."

"Nevertheless, he cannot withdraw. He has made a charge against you. It has gone beyond the stage at which a recall is possible. Remember, Kitty, this is not

a mere prosecution for injury done; it is a criminal charge, and your uncle dare not now hold back without making himself guilty of compounding a felony. I am nothing of a lawyer, but I fancy such is the law. Even if your uncle did not take the matter up, Mr. Pooke would be bound to do so. You must make up your mind to that."

"Then something dreadful will happen."

"Kitty," said the rector, "you will have to take my prescription'not mine, but one given by the Greatest of physicians. Unless you do that, you will have no rest for mind or body, no sleep, and you will be worn out before the trial."

"What is that?"

He told her. "The matter, you see, is taken out of your hands. You can do nothing by torturing your brain with thoughts how to avoid this, how to modify that."

"It is so."

"Then cast all your care upon God, for He careth for you. Now go to sleep, and be fresh to-morrow."

The rector left his house and visited the Cellars. The rick was resolved into a huge glowing ember, from which fell avalanches of fiery powder. Above the mass flickered ghost-like blue flames, not in touch with the incandescent heap below.

At the door of the house the rector encountered Pasco Pepperill.

"There'see how I am served by the public!" exclaimed Pasco. "When a misfortune happens, there are always some wanton rascals to do mischief above and beyond what is the main loss."

"What has happened to you now, Mr. Pepperill?" asked the rector.

"Some idle vagabonds have been at my boat again," answered Pasco. "It was so when my stores were burnt'not the same night, but soon after'out of sheer wickedness they cut my old boat adrift, and I lost her. She was carried out by the tide, and never have I heard of her from that day to this."

"Well, and now?"

"And now they've gone and done the same'or worse. Before it was my old boat, and now it's the new one'cut the rope, and away she's gone. It's wickedness. Oh my! You should preach and pray against it. There be such a lot of it in the world'and cost me six guineas did that boat."

"I am very sorry to hear of this additional loss," said the rector.

"I suppose the next thing they will say is, I cut my own boat away and let her go out to sea, because I had insured her. But you may tell everyone, pass'n, that I hadn't insured my boat no more than I had my rick o' straw. Oh dear! the wickedness there is in the world!"

"I wish to see your wife for a moment."

"Zerah's inside, in a fine take-on. She's gone about like a weathercock lately, and can't make enough of Kitty. And now that Kitty is proved to ha' done all these horrible crimes, she's in a bad way, I can assure you."

The rector entered the house and found the poor woman. Her former hardness had given way under the troubles she had undergone; her pride had been broken down beneath the burden of the knowledge that her husband had been guilty of setting fire to his stores for the sake of the insurance money, and of the gnawing suspicion that her brother had died in the flames; that he had been remorselessly sacrificed by Pasco to conceal his own guilt. And now that this new conflagration had occurred, and that Kitty was apparently implicated in it, she was nigh in despair.

"Mrs. Pepperill," said the rector, "I have come to you after having dismissed Kitty to rest."

"Rest?" echoed Zerah. "Can she sleep? That is more than I can."

"Yes; so also will you when you have taken the same prescription."

"I want no medicine."

"You will take this. You can do nothing for your niece, can you?"

"Nothing but fret," said Mrs. Pepperill.

"That will not help her. You believe her to be innocent?" asked the rector.

"I am sure of it."

"Nothing you can say or do will prove it?"

"Nothing; but if I'm called to bear witness, and I must speak the truth, then what I say may go against her. That troubles me, terrible. I'm mazed wi' the thought. You see, I looked, and there was a can'l-end in the lantern when she took it; and I saw there was none at all when she brought back the lantern. I don't want to say it, as it may go against her; but I can't go against my oath and against the truth."

"Of course not. Speak out what is true."

"And I can't have no rest thinkin', and thinkin', and frettin' about it all."

"No, Mrs. Pepperill; but you will rest and sleep peacefully after you have taken my prescription'a sovereign one, as many a vexed soul has found'the only one possible in many a case''Cast all your care upon God, for He careth for you.'"

CHAPTER LII

IN COURT

The day of the petty sessions at Newton followed closely in the same week, within two days, and whilst excitement was at its height. The court-house was packed, there was hardly standing room; and there was a full bench of magistrates.

Kate was brought in, looking pale; her broad white forehead like ivory, with the dark hair drawn back on either side; the dark eyebrows and long dusky lashes showing conspicuously on account of her pallor; and the lustrous blue eyes, so full of light, alone giving brightness to her face. Though pale, she was composed. She no longer trembled, and her lips were closed and firm.

The transparent purity, the innocent modesty of her bearing and appearance, impressed the court.

She wore a black dress, as she had been accustomed to wear since the fire at the Cellars, in which it was supposed her father had died, but the black was spotted with white, as a sort of concession to the supposition that he might be still alive.

Mr. Fielding was present. He had been courteously accommodated with a chair within the precincts of the bench; he caught Kitty's eye, and raised his finger, pointing upwards. She understood him, and smiled reassuringly.

Far more anxious than Kitty was Walter Bramber, who had given a holiday to the school, with the rector's consent, and had come into Newton to hear the case. He was not able to master his agitation; his pain to see Kitty in so conspicuous a position, and in such danger, labouring under an accusation which he was certain was unfounded.

Pasco Pepperill was present; he would have to appear in the witness-box. He had sent for his solicitor to conduct the prosecution.

As soon as the case was called, Mr. Squire stood up. He had, he said, a painful task imposed on him, and none felt it more deeply than his client, the plaintiff, who naturally shrank from taking a step of so grave a character, against one who was his wife's niece, young in age, and who had been for many years an inmate of his house, and one for whom hitherto he had entertained an almost fatherly regard. Indeed, so deeply did the plaintiff feel this, that if possible he would have held back altogether, and have borne his loss in silence. But there were attendant circumstances which precluded him from adopting this course. He acted in the matter solely from a sense of duty he owed to himself and to the neighbourhood, and he might add, of humanity towards the unhappy individual placed before the bench under the grave charge of arson.

It was no secret'it could be no secret'that the most serious and damaging reports had been circulated relative to his client in connection with a recent fire at Coombe Cellars, reports most wounding to a man of high integrity and irreproachable character, peculiarly distressing to one of so sensitive and

scrupulous a conscience as Mr. Pasco Pepperill, who was churchwarden of his parish, and had served in several important parochial offices, as guardian of the poor, waywarden and overseer, always to the satisfaction of everyone, and had borne, in all his dealings, the character of a straight and upright man.

Mr. Pepperill had formed his own opinions relative to the fire that had occurred on his premises previous to this last, but with them, he, Mr. Squire, would not trouble the bench. Suffice it to say that his view relative to the origin of that fire had impelled him to act with promptitude on the present occasion, not merely to bring to justice the perpetrator of this last atrocious deed, but also to exhibit to the neighbourhood the fact that he had harboured in his house one who was capable of such acts, for which he himself had been most unjustly and cruelly charged by the popular voice.

Moreover, in consideration of the fact that three cases of malicious burning had taken place within a twelvemonth in the parish of Coombe, Mr. Pepperill had thought himself morally bound, in the interest of the public, to prosecute in this last instance, where the criminal had been taken, so to speak, red-handed. And, lastly, he acted in her interest; for he felt, and felt with the most sincere conviction, that it was for the young girl’s own good in this world and in the next that a career so badly begun should be checked; and that by wholesome correction she might be induced to enter into her own heart and root out from it all malice and resentfulness which had been allowed, as it would appear, to harbour there and drive her to the commission of crime. In conclusion, Mr. Squire hoped to produce such witnesses’all most reluctant to speak’as would place the matter clearly before their worships, and leave them no choice but to refer the case to the Quarter Sessions. The case being one of felony, they were precluded from dealing with it as in a case of summary jurisdiction.

Then Mr. Squire proceeded to call Mrs. Zerah Pepperill into the witness-box. Zerah cast an appealing glance at Kitty, who acknowledged it gently, with a faint smile.

The solicitor then questioned Mrs. Pepperill.

“You are, I believe, the aunt of the accused?”

“Yes, sir?”

“And you are greatly attached to her?”

“Very greatly. I have known her from a babe.”

“Then we may be quite satisfied that you are most unwilling to say anything to her prejudice; and that only an overwhelming sense of duty and responsibility induces you to give witness’and true witness?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now, Mrs. Pepperill, will you look towards the Bench and tell their worships, in order, the events of the evening of the th ultimo.”

Zerah was silent for a while.

“Do not be afraid; speak out,” said the chairman.

“Well, sir,” began Zerah, “it was supper’we mostly has our supper at seven, or thereabout. Sometimes we can’t be exact. That clock of ours ain’t over partic’lar to a minute, and us sets it by the Atmospheric, and the Atmospheric is most irregular of all. Then us took the clock to Mr. Ford, to Newton, to have ’n put to rights, and us paid ’n seven and six, and he sent ’n home worse than he was afore. He used to go, reg’lar, right on end till he runned down, tho’ he didn’t always keep time exact-ly. But after Mr. Ford took ’n in hand, then he began to stand still, after he wor winded up, out o’ pure wickedness; and if you gentlemen would make Mr. Ford pay me back that there seven and six”’

The chairman interrupted her. “Come to the point, please, Mrs. Pepperill.”

“Is it the leg o’ pork you mean?” asked Zerah. “I’m comin’ to her direct-ly. You see, sirs, ’twern’t cured proper, not as I likes it, and so the maggots got to the bone. Which do your worships like, gentlemen’rubbin’ in the salt dry, or soakin’ in brine? I hold to the dry rubbin’’that is, if it be well done; but to have a thing well done you must do it yourself. You can’t trust nobody now. And so the maggots”’

“Never mind the maggots, my good woman.”

“So I sed to Pasco. Us can’t waste thickey leg o’ pork; us must eat ’n, and so I’ll get ’n out as well as I can, and you go and take plenty o’ exercise and work up a cruel strong appetite, and you won’t make no count o’ there having been maggots in the leg o’ pork.”

The chairman again intervened, and requested Mr. Squire to extract what was necessary to be known from this good woman by interrogation. If allowed her own course, she would not know where to stop, like the clock before taken in hand by Mr. Ford, and run clean away, as was threatened by the leg of pork.

“Mrs. Pepperill,” said Mr. Squire, “you seem to be diffusive in your evidence. However engrossing may be the interest attaching to your clock and leg of pork, still we are not concerned, thank goodness, with either’specially, thank goodness, we are not here to discuss that same leg of pork.”

“The leg ought to ha’ been turned in the brine twice a day, and her wasn’t. If her had been, her’d ha’ been famous.”

“I rather think, Mrs. Pepperill, this leg of pork is likely to become famous now, as I see a local reporter present, and it will appear in the paper. But this leg is blocking our way; let us lay it on the shelf and proceed, as the French say, to our mutton. Where were you at seven, or, may be, half-past seven, on the evening of the th ultimo?”

“I don’t think I was nowhere.”

“What! nowhere three days ago?”

“That wor the th August.”

“Well, I said so.”

"Beg pardon, sir, you asked for the th of Ultimo, and I never heered tell o' that month. It ain't in the calendar."

"Come; on the evening of the th last, were you at supper with your husband and others?"

"Yes."

"And those others were"'

"Rose Ash and Noah Flood. They came in"'

"Never mind that. Answer shortly my questions. Where was Kate Quarm?"

"She had her supper, too."

"And when she had done, did she go into the back kitchen to clean up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was anyone with her then?"

"Yes, sir; Jane Redmore."

"And when Jane Redmore went home, did your niece accompany her?"

"She said she was going with her."

"Did your niece take a lantern?"

"Yes, sir."

"And did you see there was a candle in the lantern?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sufficient to burn for an hour?"

"I don't know that exactly."

"Well, three-quarters of an hour?"

"Perhaps so. I didn't notice exactly how long the candle was."

"Anyhow, it would have burnt for more than a quarter of an hour?"

"Oh yes."

"Or for half an hour?"

"I daresay it would."

"You know it would. Now be careful as to your statements, Mrs. Pepperill. You are quite sure it would have burnt for three-quarters of an hour, if not an hour?"

"Perhaps'I cannot say."

"You can say it would have lasted three-quarters, but are not sure it would last an hour?"

"I suppose so."

"It is not the way of candles, like legs of pork, to run away of themselves, is it?"

"I don't understand you, sir!"

"I mean, that if you put a candle into a lantern, it will remain in the lantern till it is burnt out."

"Unless someone takes it out."

"Exactly! and when the lantern was brought back by Kate Quarm, was the candle there?"

"N'n'o."

"It was not there. It was not burnt out, and it had not run away, eh?"

"I suppose so."

"Then someone must have removed the candle. This is a point, your worships, I wish to establish, and that you should observe. Kate Quarm went out with a lantern in her hand, in which was a piece of candle that would certainly last three-quarters of an hour, if not an entire hour. When she returned, no candle was in the socket. I shall call other witnesses to establish this, and the fact that there were no signs of the candle having melted away; indeed, the lantern is here. Constable, please to produce it. If the Bench will kindly look at it, your worships will perceive that the candle was put in with a piece of brown paper wrapped about it. The paper is still there. The candle is gone. It was taken out. I will call the constable presently to testify that he took charge of the lantern immediately after the event, and that it has not been tampered with since. I now proceed to ask Mrs. Pepperill how long a time Kate Quarm was absent after she went out with Mrs. Jane Redmore. Now, Mrs. Pepperill, pray concentrate your mind and exercise your memory. How long was Kate absent?"

"What'washing up?" asked Zerah.

"No'we have nothing to do with the washing up. After that, when she went out with Jane Redmore."

"I didn't look at the clock."

"About how long?"

"I can't say."

"Do you think it was half an hour?"

"It might be so."

"Or less."

"I really can't tell."

"Then she was absent for half an hour at the outside, possibly."

"I suppose so."

“You may go now. I shall want you again. I proceed to summon Jane Redmore.”

This poor woman was in such a nervous condition that she would have fainted, had she not been provided with a chair. Nothing but what was of absolute importance could be drawn from her; which was that Kitty had not accompanied her beyond the gate from the Coombe premises, a distance of hardly three hundred yards.

“This,” said the solicitor, “is what I require. I will not trouble this feeble and timorous creature any longer. We have ascertained that the defendant, Kate Quarm, went out with Mrs. Redmore, under the pretext that she was going to accompany her home.”

“I do not think this point was established,” said the chairman.

“I beg your worship’s pardon. You are right. The next witness I shall call will establish the pretext without a doubt. I summon Pasco Pepperill!”

“Stay a moment’what is this noise, this disturbance in the court?” called the chairman. “It is not possible for me or my brother magistrates to hear what is said. Unless the disturbance be allayed instantly, I shall give orders for the court to be cleared.”

The requisite stillness ensued.

“Now then, Mr. Pepperill, stand forward, take the book, and such answers,” etc.

Again there ensued a movement among the crowd outside the rails’exclamations, mutterings, and heaving and tossing, as though the mass of mankind there densely packed was boiling up from below.

“I insist on order in the court!” called the chairman.

Then Pasco, having kissed the Bible, turned his face to the Bench. He was elate, had spread his breast, and tossed back his head, a self-complacent smirk was on his countenance.

“I have felt it my duty,” he said, “to speak’to clear my own self, and to cut short the career of crime of the girl I have regarded as my niece.”

Again the agitation among the public; and now through the mob came a man, elbowing his way, till he had forced himself to the front, and stood face to face with Pasco Pepperill.

Pasco, disturbed in his pompous address, turned and saw before him’Jason Quarm!

He put his hand to his head with a gasp, staggered back, and fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER LIII

JASON'S STORY

The court was full of commotion. Pasco Pepperill had fallen, as though struck down by a hammer, and was insensible. He was carried out with difficulty, and with the crowd rushing about him and his bearers, unable to realise what had taken place, anxious to see if he were dead.

He was not dead: a doctor was hastily summoned to the house into which he was taken, and he pronounced the case to be one of apoplexy brought on by sudden and violent emotion.

Meantime, inside the court order was gradually restored.

The chairman made a feeling allusion to the sudden illness which had fallen on the most important witness in the case'which was the less to be wondered at, since the case was one that must deeply move Mr. Pepperill, as he had to appear against a member of his own family.

Then Mr. Pooke, with a mottled face, pushed up to the Bench, and whispered something in the ear of the chairman.

"I beg pardon, I do not understand," said he.

"Sir," said Mr. Pooke, "the real culprit has come to deliver himself up'Jason Quarm, who set fire to the rick, for which his daughter stands here accused wrongfully by the biggest rascal that ever breathed."

"Call Jason Quarm!" said the magistrate.

Jason at once hobbled forward and pushed himself in beside Kate, who was trembling with emotions of the most varied nature. Jason cleared his throat and said'

"I, your worships, I, and none but I, set fire to the rick at Coombe Cellars, and I did it by inadvertence. Please you to remove my daughter from this dock, and hear her presently as witness."

"Let us hear first what you have to say. We cannot discharge her till we know that she is innocent."

"She is innocent, as innocent as the day. May it please your worships to hear what I have to relate. It's a main long story," said Jason.

"What is to the point we will listen to. So you surrender yourself as having fired the rick."

"I did it, your worship. This is how it came about'you may put me on oath if you will."

“Stay a moment. I have to caution you that you are not obliged to say anything, unless you desire to do so; but whatever you say will be taken down in writing, and may be given in evidence against you upon your trial.”

“I quite understand that,” said Quarm. “If I may be allowed a seat, I shall be obliged. I’ve got one leg a bit shorter than the other, and it’s raythar a trouble for me to stand long, and I’ve a goodish long tale to tell.”

“I again remind you that what you say must be to the point.”

“I shan’t wander,” answered Jason. “But I shall have to begin some way back, and that in March last, when Mr. Pooke’s rick was set a-blazin’. That were thought to ha’ been the doin’ of Roger Redmore, and there was a warrant out agin him, but he wor niver ketched.”

“Does this concern the case before the court?”

“Ay, it do’intimate like.”

“Very well, then, proceed. We have ordered you to be accommodated with a chair, and your daughter likewise.”

“Roger Redmore, he runned away, and the constables never ketched he. My daughter Kitty, her took on terrible over the poor wife as was turned out of house and home by Mr. Pooke, and her persuaded me to let the woman have my cottage, for she and the little ones. I didn’t mind, as I was away on the moor busy about Brimpts oak wood, and when I comed back to Coombe, I wor mostly at the Cellars. My sister Zerah, she be that rapscallion Pasco’s wife, you understand, your worship.”

“Is this really to the point? You are speaking of the fire at Mr. Pooke’s, not of that at Mr. Pepperill’s.”

“One fire hangs on to the other. You’ll find that out, gents, when you’ve heard my tale.”

“Proceed, then.”

“Well’it seems that Roger Redmore felt mighty grateful because of what Kitty and I had done. I was agent for an insurance company, and I persuaded my brother-in-law to insure in it, but I must say he rather astonished me at the figure at which he insured, and made me a bit uneasy; I hadn’t such a terrible high opinion of him as to think he might not be up to tricks.”

“What do you mean by tricks?”

“Doin’ something to his insured goods that weren’t worth much, and gettin’ for ’em payment as if they was gold. But, your worship, that you’ll say ain’t to the point. No more it is’we come to facts, not opinions, don’t us? Well, I had been to Brimpts about the oak we was fellin’ and barkin’, and I wanted to tell my brother-in-law as how I thought we could deal with the dockyard at Portsmouth. So I left the moor and drove down in my conveyance,’which is nothing but a donkey cart and a jackass to draw’n,’and when I came in the dark o’ the evening to my cottage, there I found Roger Redmore in the bosom of his

family, so to speak. ’Twas awk’ard for he and awk’ard for me, as there was a warrant out again’ him, and so I drove right on and on to the Cellars. I found Pasco there in the house all by hisself, which was coorious. He had sent his wife, my sister Zerah, away somewhere, and Kitty, my daughter, away somewhere else, and he was in a pretty take-on because I turned up unexpected. I didn’t quite understand why he was in so poor a temper, and why he should turn me out of the house as he did’and I had got nowhere to go to for a night’s lodgin’. You see, your worships, I couldn’t go home, what wi’ all the beds and every hole and corner chockfull o’ childer as thick as fleas in a dog’s back, not to mention the woman and that chap Roger in hiding, who didn’t want to be found. But Pasco, he wouldn’t listen to reason, and he was that suspicious and that queer in all his goings-on, that I thought some mischief wor up, and that I’d bide handy and keep an eye on him. Well, gentlemen, when he jostled me out o’ the house door, I went to the warehouse, and it wasn’t locked, so I stepped in and found the ladder and clambered up that. Thinks I to myself, if Pasco don’t mean no wickedness, well, I can sleep here comfortable enough, anyhow. There were plenty o’ fleeces’they weren’t over clean and sweet, but in such a case one can’t be partic’lar. I hadn’t been there a terrible long time before I heard the door open and I see’d a light. So I went to the ladder head and looked down, and there sure enough wor Pasco! I watched him awhile to see what May-games he wor up to, and at last I spied what it wor. He were arranging and settling shavings among the coal knobs, so as to make up grand fires, and he was gettin’ everything ready to burn down the whole consarn, coals and fleeces and building, and me in it, if I were that jack fool to bide where I was. So I hollered out to he, and let ’n understand who was there, and that I marked his little game. I were on the ladder. He looked towards me, and came at me, and shook the ladder, and shook me down, and I fell on my head, I reckon, and remember nothing more till I came to myself, bound hand and foot in a sack, and throwed a-top of a heap o’ coal, that were afire and fizzing out in flame and smoke, and a’most stifled I were, and didn’t know ’xactly where I were, whether I’d got to the wrong place down below. I cried out, and I tried to get free, but couldn’t move, and then I rolled myself down over fire and coals, and scorched I were a bit; but what’d been the end I cannot tell, if it had not been for Roger Redmore, who broke open the door and came in, and dragged me out of the smoke and smother, and cut the bands and got me out o’ the sack, and helped me off to where his missis were, that is to say, my cottage.”

Jason paused and looked about him.

“That, I reckon, is the first chapter. Now to go on. When I came there, I thought it all over, and I got Roger to put me in the outhouse, where none of the children might see, and himself he dursn’t bide more than the night lest he should be took, but he told Jane to mind me and let me have what I wanted. Well, I turned the matter well over in my head, and I thought as how Pasco were my brother-in-law, and if all came out, I’d bring trouble on Zerah, and on my own child; I’d have to say as how Pasco had fired his own building so as to get the insurance money, and tried to kill me too, ’cause I see’d what he were up to. So I didn’t like to do that, and I thought it ’ud be best for all parties if I

got out o’ the way. I dursn’t stir all the day that followed. But at night I got out when I knowed the tide was suitable, and I took the old boat at the Cellars and I made off wi’ that, and I rowed out to sea, and rowed along the coast to Torquay, and I landed there, and there I ha’ been, unbeknown to the Coombe folk’there or in London. When I’d been a bit to Torquay, I seemed to smell money. I see’d as how a lot o’ fortune could be got there by building and making a great place of it for invalids and such folk; and I went up to London to start a company, and get a building firm to take the matter up. I’ve been off and on about this idee, and a fine idee it is like to turn out’so I reckon. I did hear as how Pasco, he’d dra’ed twelve hundred pounds out o’ the insurance company. Blessed if I knowed ’xactly what I should do. On the one side, I were agent for the company; on the other, I were brother-in-law to Pasco, and if I peached on Pasco, I might just as well ha’ stuck a knife into my sister’s heart. And then I owed him something for having reared my daughter in his house since she wor a baby. And Pasco and me, us got on famous together about speculations, and taken in the lump he weren’t a bad chap till he began to look to gettin’ money by burning down his warehouse.”

Jason stood up, stretched his limbs, sat down again, and proceeded’after a word of cheer to his daughter, who had risen and was standing speechless, looking at him with dismayed eyes. She knew that her uncle was false, but Jason had revealed a depth of wickedness in the man which she had not conceived to be possible.

She had been satisfied that he had set fire to his magazines for the sake of the insurance, and she knew that, basely, he endeavoured to throw the guilt of the act on her. She had feared that her father had been sacrificed when the warehouse was burned, but had never supposed that her uncle had done this deliberately.

“Now,” continued Quarm, “I reckon I come to the third chapter. After a bit, I thought I’d come back to Coombe, but not openly, and see how Kitty were getting along. So I came unbeknown to everyone, and went to Mrs. Redmore, and her put me in the same old outhouse as I were in before, and I told her, as she worked at the Cellars, to say nothing about it to Kitty, but find an excuse for getting her out from the house after dark. That is what Jane Redmore did, and I met Kitty at the rick, and us went together behind the rick, so as the light might not be seen from the house whilst we talked. Well, I’d been wi’out my bacca-pipe for some time, and seein’ as how Kitty had a light, I told her to open the lantern, and I’d have a bit o’ a smoke for comfort. Her opened the lantern door’but Lor’! gentlemen, I han’t told you how struck wi’ amaze and main glad the little maid was to see her father, whom she had believed to be dead, come to life again, hearty and wi’ fine prospects of makin’ money out of building speculations to Torquay. But you must imagine all that, your worships; it ain’t, as you may say, to the point; but this here little affair o’ the pipe and lightin’ it is. Well, when she opened the lantern door, I took out the bit end of a candle as was therein, and I put it to my pipe to kindle my ’baccy. She was talkin’ and tellin’ of me all as had happened, and when her said as how Pasco Pepperill had tried to lay the firing of his warehouse on she, then I were

that angry I burnt my fingers wi' the candle-end, not thinking what I were about, and throwed it down right among the straw, and afore I could say Jack Robinson, there was a blaze as no stamping would put out. The first thing Kate did was to run in, and the first thing I did was to tumble into the boat and make off. I didn't know what the consequences might be, and I first thought I'd consider it, and learn what came of it all before I stirred. If Pasco didn't make a fuss, why, it might pass and no harm come of it; if he made a stir, why, all must come out. The little maid, I reckon, she would say nothing, because her knowed it was my doing the stack catching alight, and thought she'd bring me into trouble; and then there was that other fire behind; she didn't know what might come if it were examined into, and I made my appearance as one returned from the dead. But I heard of it all. Jane Redmore sent to tell me. And now, your worships, I reckon I'm the guilty one of the fire, but it was accident, and she's innocent and may be discharged. That is my story."

The Bench withdrew for a few minutes. When the magistrates returned, the buzz of voices in court ceased at once.

"We have decided," said the chairman, "that the case against Kate Quarm be dismissed. She leaves the court without an imputation against her character. You, Mr. Jason Quarm, must stand security in yourself and find two others to stand bail for you to reappear before the court when required."

CHAPTER LIV

CON AFFETTUOSO CAPRIZIO

Pasco Pepperill did not recover. The shock had been too great'it had sent the blood rushing to his head, and his consciousness never returned. By midnight he was a dead man.

Now that he was gone, the will'made partly in a moment of scare, partly out of compunction, partly also out of boastfulness'came into force, and Kitty was provided with a small income of her own. The first thing done by her and her aunt, as soon as the will was proved, was to refund to the insurance company the whole of the money paid by them to Pasco on account of the burned stores.

The Cellars belonged now to Zerah for her life. It was not long before an understanding was reached between Walter Bramber and Kitty, the purport of which was that next spring Kitty should cease to be Alone. No inscription, such as the girl had desired, had been cut in the bark of the mulberry tree, and now, were one to be traced there, it would be of a different nature'a legend of two who met and parted, and met again never more to part.

Jason Quarm for once had succeeded in a speculation. The Torquay building society promised to be a prosperous company, and to pay good dividends. Jason

was not able to contribute much in capital, but as promoter of the scheme he received certain shares. He was occupied, his mind engrossed in carrying out the plans of the company, in making contracts, in buying materials, in supervising, in altering, in scheming terraces and detached villas, in planting Belle Views and Sea Prospects, and Rosebank Cottages, and Lavender Walks, and Marine Parades, and he could afford no time to be at Coombe.

Zerah was wrapped up in her niece. She could not have loved her more dearly had Kitty been her own child. The hardness in the woman's character gave way; the trouble she had undergone had softened and sweetened a nature really good and kind, but ruffled and soured by adverse circumstances and uncongenial associations. A great change had taken place in the opinion of the public in Coombe-in-Teignhead relative to Kitty. The general feeling was, that she had been hardly treated, in having a crime attributed to her of which she had been guiltless; that if she had been reserved in her manner, it was her way, and all folk were not constituted alike; that if she asked questions, no one was bound to answer them unless he liked, and if he couldn't give the required information. Kitty was quiet'she harmed nobody. She had done Rose Ash a great favour in stepping out of the way when Jan Pooke was inclined to "make a fool of himself wi' her." She was worth three thousand pounds for certain, and it was said that her father was piling up a fortune in Torquay. Coombe Cellars would ultimately be hers, as well as the little bit of ground about it'or rather, at the back of it, which was what remained of the farm. And she had been grown in Coombe, she had foothold there, and "all knew the worst o' her, and that weren't so cruel bad." Finally, and conclusively, Mr. Puddicombe pronounced in her favour.

So public opinion veered round, and was prepared to make much of Kate. The worst that could be spoken of her was that she had taken up with that schoolmaster again. But then, just as Scripture said that the believing wife might sanctify the heathen husband, so it was reasoned that the indigenous Kitty might naturalise the foreign Walter, and that because she belonged to the place, he might be accepted as a strange plant, given room to root in at Coombe.

It was very well known that sometimes a stray cat came to a house from nobody knew where, and meeowed, entreating to be fed and harboured, and few housewives would shut it out. They would take in the stranger, give it milk and a place by the fire, and domesticate it. Even so came this Walter Bramber into Coombe out of space; whom he had belonged to, and from what sort of habitation, no one knew. He asked to be domiciled in Coombe, and Kitty took him in. What was allowable to a cat was surely not to be refused to a schoolmaster.

If Walter Bramber was afflicted with superior education, it was probably no more his fault than is water on the brain in a rickety child. And if he was a schoolmaster by profession, perhaps it was not his fault, but his misfortune. He'd been bred to it by his unfeeling and unnatural parents, just as in London some boys were brought up to be thieves and pickpockets. Mr. Puddicombe,

indeed, had taken up schoolmastering, but that was a different matter; he had not been reared to anything of the sort, and had adopted it rather as a pastime than a profession, and had never allowed it to interfere with his robust and intelligent pleasures, such as cock-fighting; and Mr. Puddicombe drank and smoked and swore sometimes, and all that showed he was a man. On the whole, Coombe-in-Teignhead agreed to accept Walter Bramber and Kitty as his wife, with the proviso that it would kick them over should they attempt to give themselves airs.

As for the rector, he was radiant with happiness. Now at last he saw some prospect of making an impression for good on his parishioners, if not of elevating the existing generation, of greatly raising the moral and intellectual tone of that which would follow. He had striven hard for years in isolation and with absolutely no success. Now, with the aid of a peculiarly well-qualified schoolmaster, and with Kitty at that master's side to direct the girls as Bramber guided the minds of the boys, he was sanguine of success, not of much that he would see himself, but of a success in the far future. Of no profession can that be said more truly than of that of the pastor, "One soweth'another reapeth."

"Walter," said he to his schoolmaster, "I was not sent here to blow Sunday soap-bubbles, sometimes iridescent emptiness, sometimes emptiness without the iridescence. Soap-bubbles please for the moment, but they do not satisfy. No father, the gospel says, when asked for bread, will give his children a stone, but a stone has in it substance, whereas a soap-bubble has but emptiness. But the children will not ask for bread unless they be hungry, and will always be pleased to see soap-bubbles sail over their heads. I believe the apostles were sent forth to be the salt of the earth. Their successors are self-satisfied if they be but insipid carbonate of soda. I have striven to feed, not to amuse, but nothing can avail till the hunger come. You find that in the school, I find it in the church. Some Indians chew clay, because they have not bread. Our people have quite a fancy for this stodgy substance; we have to rectify their appetites, so that they may come to desire nourishing diet, and not what is merely stuffing'to seek for instruction, and not amusement. You in your sphere, I in mine, have a similar office, and similar obligations weighing on us, and similar difficulties to encounter. If you seek for popularity, make Puddicombe your model; take the level of the people among whom you are set, and do not stir to cure them of clay-chewing. If you seek to do your duty, then do not expect to have a path of soft herbage to tread, but one of thorns. If I had been indefinite, flowery, hollow in my teaching here, I should have been the most popular man in the parish, and after forty years' ministration would have passed away with a smile of self-satisfaction that I had given no offence to anyone'only to awake in the vast beyond to the startling conviction that I had done no good to anyone!

"Cast your bread on the waters, and you will find it after many days; cast chaff, and it will be blown, washed, rotted away. Many a man in my profession and in yours -we are both teachers—is like the cuckoo-spittle-insect, which throws out a great froth bubble about it. So do some of my profession surround themselves with a copious discharge of words -words without substance. Avoid that in your school, Bramber. Teaching must be definite, or it is trifling, not teaching; and in

sacred matters trifling is a guilty desertion of a duty. We are sent to feed, not befool our flocks. Form a clear conception in your mind of what you want to teach, and then impress it sharply, well defined, on the minds given you to act upon. So only will you rear a generation in advance of that to which we belong. But you will get no praise for so doing, save from your own conscience."

Roger Redmore had surrendered to justice, by the advice of Jason, and he had been sentenced to a nominal punishment of two months' imprisonment. Mr. Pooke had readily pleaded for him, had frankly acknowledged that the man had been greatly aggravated, and was perhaps hardly sensible of what he *was* doing.

On leaving prison, Roger was taken, along with his wife, into the service of the Cellars, and gave promise of being a faithful and energetic workman.

The spring arrived in course, and with the warm May air and flowers came the day of Kitty's marriage.

There had been grave discussions among the instrumentalists of the village orchestra previous to the event, as to how it was to be honoured by their performance. In compliment to the ex-schoolmaster, who took a lively interest in the marriage, it was unanimously decided that Puddicombe in F should be performed, if not in its entirety, at all events in part. The "fugg," it was thought, might be omitted, as only a critical and scientific musician could appreciate its merits and disentangle the chaos of sounds. But there was the *largo molto con affettuoso caprizio* at their disposal. As *largo molto* meant, Turn the score upside down, then if the score were not inverted, it would flow in the melody of "Kitty Alone and I." Mr. Puddicombe was approached with the demand whether it were permissible to execute this movement without the *largo molto*, *i.e.* the inversion of the score. Puddicombe at once assented. That, as he pointed out, was the magnificent brilliancy of the composition, that it could be turned about anyhow, and played right off, and the effect was superb any way. Let them disregard *largo molto* and simply play *con affettuoso caprizio*—which meant, go ahead with the score upright—and there you are.

Accordingly, after the ceremony, when bride and bridegroom issued from the church, the orchestra, which was in readiness, struck up the movement of Puddicombe in F, *con affettuoso caprizio*; and most certainly as it so stood in the score, and so was performed, the air was none other than "The Frog and the Mouse—Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone."

Forward marched the band, playing hautboy, clarionet, first fiddle, second fiddle, the bass labouring along as best he could, tumbling over his viol, throwing out a grunt and a growl when he was able.

The people of Coombe-in-Teignhead were at their doors wishing happiness to the young couple. The children strewed flowers, and every now and then broke out into chorus'

> "Crock-a-mydaisy, Kitty alone."

The ploughmen whistled the air and waved their caps. The church bells burst out into clamour and drowned it. The rooks in the elms of the churchyard

poured forth volleys of “Caw, caw, caw,” introducing a new element into the musical medley.

Through the street went the little procession, headed by children, who danced and sang before the band; then came the musicians, and lastly the married young people. They were on their way to the Cellars, where Zerah was waiting for them, and had brought forth cake and ale in abundance, to feast children, musicians, well-wishers’everyone who would drink the health of bride and bridegroom.

Then, when the regaling was over, and thundering cheers had been given for the schoolmaster, for Kitty, for Zerah’Walter Bramber and Kitty appeared at the door, and half singing, with a smile on his face, to the strain of “The Frog and the Mouse,” Walter thus tendered his thanks’

“Curtsey, Kitty, and say with me’
Neighbours, thanks for company;
On all the world we will shut the door:
In all the world I need nothing more
Than Kitty, my wife, and Kitty Alone,
Kitty Alone and I.”

THE END

MORRISON AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

A LIST OF NEW BOOKS

AND ANNOUNCEMENTS OF

METHUEN AND COMPANY

PUBLISHERS: LONDON

36 ESSEX STREET

W.C.

October 1894.

MESSRS. METHUEN'S

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Poetry

[*May* 1895.Rudyard Kipling. BALLADS. By RUDYARD KIPLING. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s*

The announcement of a new volume of poetry from Mr. Kipling will excite wide interest. The exceptional success of 'Barrack-Room Ballads,' with which this volume will be uniform, justifies the hope that the new book too will obtain a wide popularity.

Henley. ENGLISH LYRICS. Selected and Edited by W. E. HENLEY. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

Also 30 copies on hand-made paper *Demy 8vo. £1, 1s.*

Also 15 copies on Japanese paper. *Demy 8vo. £2, 2s.*

Few announcements will be more welcome to lovers of English verse than the one that Mr. Henley is bringing together into one book the finest lyrics in our language. Robust and original the book will certainly be, and it will be produced with the same care that made 'Lyra Heroica' delightful to the hand and eye.

"Q" THE GOLDEN POMP: A Procession of English Lyrics from Surrey to Shirley, arranged by A. T. QUILLER COUCH. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

Also 40 copies on hand-made paper. *Demy 8vo. £1, 1s.*

Also 15 copies on Japanese paper. *Demy 8vo. £2, 2s.*

Mr. Quiller Couch's taste and sympathy mark him out as a born anthologist, and out of the wealth of Elizabethan poetry he has made a book of great attraction.

Beeching. LYRA SACRA: An Anthology of Sacred Verse. Edited by H. C. BEECHING, M.A. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

Also 25 copies on hand-made paper. *21s.*

This book will appeal to a wide public. Few languages are richer in serious verse than the English, and the Editor has had some difficulty in confining his material within his limits.

Yeats. AN ANTHOLOGY OF IRISH VERSE. Edited by W. B. YEATS. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

a3Illustrated Books

Baring Gould. A BOOK OF FAIRY TALES retold by S. BARING GOULD. With numerous illustrations and initial letters by ARTHUR J. GASKIN. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

Also 75 copies on hand-made paper. *Demy 8vo.* £1, 1*s.*

Also 20 copies on Japanese paper. *Demy 8vo.* £2, 2*s.*

Few living writers have been more loving students of fairy and folk lore than Mr. Baring Gould, who in this book returns to the field in which he won his spurs. This volume consists of the old stories which have been dear to generations of children, and they are fully illustrated by Mr. Gaskin, whose exquisite designs for Andersen's Tales won him last year an enviable reputation.

Baring Gould. A BOOK OF NURSERY SONGS AND RHYMES. Edited by S. BARING GOULD, and illustrated by the Students of the Birmingham Art School. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

Also 50 copies on hand-made paper. *4to. 21s.*

A collection of old nursery songs and rhymes, including a number which are little known. The book contains some charming illustrations by the Birmingham students under the superintendence of Mr. Gaskin, and Mr. Baring Gould has added numerous notes.

Beeching. A BOOK OF CHRISTMAS VERSE. Edited by H. C. BEECHING, M.A., and Illustrated by WALTER CRANE. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

Also 75 copies on hand-made paper. *Demy 8vo.* £1, 1*s.*

Also 20 copies on Japanese paper. *Demy 8vo.* £2, 2*s.*

A collection of the best verse inspired by the birth of Christ from the Middle Ages to the present day. Mr. Walter Crane has designed some beautiful illustrations. A distinction of the book is the large number of poems it contains by modern authors, a few of which are here printed for the first time..

Jane Barlow. THE BATTLE OF THE FROGS AND MICE, translated by JANE BARLOW, Author of 'Irish Idylls' and pictured by F. D. BEDFORD. *Small 4to. 6s. net.*

Also 50 copies on hand-made paper. *4to. 21s. net.*

This is a new version of a famous old fable. Miss Barlow, whose brilliant volume of 'Irish Idylls' has gained her a wide reputation, has told the story in spirited flowing verse, and Mr. Bedford's numerous illustrations and ornaments are as spirited as the verse they picture. The book will be one of the most beautiful and original books possible.

Devotional Books

With full-page Illustrations.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST. By THOMAS À KEMPIS. With an Introduction by ARCHDEACON FARRAR. Illustrated by C. M. GERE. *Fcap. 8vo. 5s.*

Also 50 copies on hand-made paper. 15*s.*

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR. By JOHN KEBLE. With an Introduction and Notes by W. LOCK, M.A., Sub-Warden of Keble College, Author of 'The Life of John Keble,' Illustrated by R. ANNING BELL. *Fcap. 8vo. 5s.*

Also 50 copies on hand-made paper. 15*s.*

These two volumes will be charming editions of two famous books, finely illustrated and printed in black and red. The scholarly introductions will give them an added value, and they will be beautiful to the eye, and of convenient size.

General Literature

Gibbon. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. By EDWARD GIBBON. A New Edition, edited with Notes and Appendices and Maps by J. B. BURY, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin. *In seven volumes. Crown 8vo.*

The time seems to have arrived for a new edition of Gibbon's great work--furnished with such notes and appendices as may bring it up to the standard of recent historical research. Edited by a scholar who has made this period his special study, and issued in a convenient form and at a moderate price, this edition should fill an obvious void.

Flinders Petrie. A HISTORY OF EGYPT, FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE HYKSOS. By W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE, D.C.L., Professor of Egyptology at University College. *Fully Illustrated. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

This volume is the first of an illustrated History of Egypt in six volumes, intended both for students and for general reading and reference, and will present a complete record of what is now known, both of dated monuments and

of events, from the prehistoric age down to modern times. For the earlier periods every trace of the various kings will be noticed, and all historical questions will be fully discussed. The volumes will cover the following periods;--

I. Prehistoric to Hyksos times. By Prof. Flinders Petrie. II. xviiith to xxth Dynasties. III. xxist to xxxth Dynasties. IV. The Ptolemaic Rule. V. The Roman Rule. VI. The Muhammedan Rule.

The volumes will be issued separately. The first will be ready in the autumn, the Muhammedan volume early next year, and others at intervals of half a year.

Flinders Petrie. EGYPTIAN DECORATIVE ART. By W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE, D.C.L. With 120 Illustrations. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.* A book which deals with a subject which has never yet been seriously treated.

Flinders Petrie. EGYPTIAN TALES. Edited by W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE. Illustrated by TRISTRAM ELLIS. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A selection of the ancient tales of Egypt, edited from original sources, and of great importance as illustrating the life and society of ancient Egypt.

Southey. ENGLISH SEAMEN (Howard, Clifford, Hawkins, Drake, Cavendish). By ROBERT SOUTHEY. Edited, with an Introduction, by DAVID HANNAY. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

This is a reprint of some excellent biographies of Elizabethan seamen, written by Southey and never republished. They are practically unknown, and they deserve, and will probably obtain, a wide popularity.

Waldstein. JOHN RUSKIN: a Study. By CHARLES WALDSTEIN, M.A., Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. With a Photogravure Portrait after Professor HERKOMER. *Post 8vo. 5s.*

Also 25 copies on Japanese paper. *Demy 8vo.* 21*s.*

This is a frank and fair appreciation of Mr. Ruskin's work and influence--literary and social--by an able critic, who has enough admiration to make him sympathetic, and enough discernment to make him impartial.

Henley and Whibley. A BOOK OF ENGLISH PROSE. Collected by W. E. HENLEY and CHARLES WHIBLEY. *Cr. 8vo. 6s.*

Also 40 copies on Dutch paper. 21*s. net.*

Also 15 copies on Japanese paper. 42*s. net.*

A companion book to Mr. Henley's well-known 'Lyra Heroica.' It is believed that no such collection of splendid prose has ever been brought within the compass of one volume. Each piece, whether containing a character-sketch or incident, is complete in itself. The book will be finely printed and bound.

Robbins. THE EARLY LIFE OF WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE. By A. F. ROBBINS. *With Portraits. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A full account of the early part of Mr. Gladstone's extraordinary career, based on much research, and containing a good deal of new matter, especially with regard to his school and college days.

Baring Gould. THE DESERTS OF SOUTH CENTRAL FRANCE. By S. BARING GOULD, With numerous Illustrations by F. D. BEDFORD, S. HUTTON, etc. *2 vols. Demy 8vo. 32s.*

This book is the first serious attempt to describe the great barren tableland that extends to the south of Limousin in the Department of Aveyron, Lot, etc., a country of dolomite cliffs, and canons, and subterranean rivers. The region is full of prehistoric and historic interest, relics of cave-dwellers, of mediæval robbers, and of the English domination and the Hundred Years' War. The book is lavishly illustrated.

Baring Gould. A GARLAND OF COUNTRY SONG: English Folk Songs with their traditional melodies. Collected and arranged by S. BARING GOULD and H. FLEETWOOD SHEPPARD. *Royal 8vo. 6s.*

In collecting West of England airs for 'Songs of the West,' the editors came across a number of songs and airs of considerable merit, which were known throughout England and could not justly be regarded as belonging to Devon and Cornwall. Some fifty of these are now given to the world.

Oliphant. THE FRENCH RIVIERA. By Mrs. OLIPHANT and F. R. OLIPHANT. With Illustrations and Maps. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A volume dealing with the French Riviera from Toulon to Mentone. Without falling within the guide-book category, the book will supply some useful practical information, while occupying itself chiefly with descriptive and historical matter. A special feature will be the attention directed to those portions of the Riviera, which, though full of interest and easily accessible from many well-frequented spots, are generally left unvisited by English travellers, such as the Maures Mountains and the St. Tropez district, the country lying between Cannes, Grasse and the Var, and the magnificent valleys behind Nice. There will be several original illustrations.

George. BRITISH BATTLES. By H. B. GEORGE, M.A., Fellow of New College, Oxford. *With numerous Plans. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

This book, by a well-known authority on military history, will be an important contribution to the literature of the subject. All the great battles of English history are fully described, connecting chapters carefully treat of the changes wrought by new discoveries and developments, and the healthy spirit of patriotism is nowhere absent from the pages.

Shedlock. THE PIANOFORTE SONATA: Its Origin and Development. By J. S. SHEDLOCK. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

This is a practical and not unduly technical account of the Sonata treated historically. It contains several novel features, and an account of various works little known to the English public.

Jenks. ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT. By E. JENKS, M.A., Professor of Law at University College, Liverpool. *Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

A short account of Local Government, historical and explanatory, which will appear very opportunely.

Dixon. A PRIMER OF TENNYSON. By W. M. DIXON, M. A., Professor of English Literature at Mason College. *Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

This book consists of (1) a succinct but complete biography of Lord Tennyson; (2) an account of the volumes published by him in chronological order, dealing with the more important poems separately; (3) a concise criticism of Tennyson in his various aspects as lyrist, dramatist, and representative poet of his day; (4) a bibliography. Such a complete book on such a subject, and at such a moderate price, should find a host of readers.

Oscar Browning. THE AGE OF THE CONDOTTIERI: A Short History of Italy from 1409 to 1530. By OSCAR BROWNING, M.A., Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

This book is a continuation of Mr. Browning's 'Guelphs and Ghibellines,' and the two works form a complete account of Italian history from 1250 to 1530.

Layard. RELIGION IN BOYHOOD. Notes on the Religious Training of Boys. With a Preface by J. R. ILLINGWORTH. by E. B. LAYARD, M.A. 18*mo.* 1*s.*

Hutton. THE VACCINATION QUESTION. A Letter to the Right Hon. H. H. ASQUITH, M.P. by A. W. HUTTON, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 1s.*

Leaders of Religion

NEW VOLUMES

Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

LANCELOT ANDREWES, Bishop of Winchester. By R. L. OTTLEY, Principal of Pusey House, Oxford, and Fellow of Magdalen. *With Portrait.*

St. AUGUSTINE of Canterbury. By E. L. CUTTS, D.D. *With a Portrait.*

THOMAS CHALMERS. By Mrs. OLIPHANT. *With a Portrait. Second Edition.*

JOHN KEBLE. By WALTER LOCK, Sub-Warden of Keble College. *With a Portrait. Seventh Edition.*

English Classics

Edited by W. E. HENLEY.

Messrs. Methuen propose to publish, under this title, a series of the masterpieces of the English tongue.

The ordinary 'cheap edition' appears to have served its purpose: the public has found out the artist-printer, and is now ready for something better fashioned.

This, then, is the moment for the issue of such a series as, while well within the reach of the average buyer, shall be at once an ornament to the shelf of him that owns, and a delight to the eye of him that reads.

The series, of which Mr. William Ernest Henley is the general editor, will confine itself to no single period or department of literature. Poetry, fiction, drama, biography, autobiography, letters, essays--in all these fields is the material of many goodly volumes.

The books, which are designed and printed by Messrs. Constable, will be issued in two editions--

(1) A small edition, on the finest Japanese vellum, limited in most cases to 75 copies, demy 8vo, 21*s.* a volume nett;

(2) The popular edition on laid paper, crown 8vo, buckram, 3*s.* 6*d.* a volume.

The first six numbers are:--

THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TRISTRAM SHANDY. By LAWRENCE STERNE. With an Introduction by CHARLES WHIBLEY, and a Portrait. 2 *vols.*

THE WORKS OF WILLIAM CONGREVE. With an Introduction by G. S. STREET, and a Portrait. 2 *vols.*

THE LIVES OF DONNE, WOTTON, HOOKER, HERBERT, and SANDERSON. By IZAAK WALTON. With an Introduction by VERNON BLACKBURN, and a Portrait.

THE ADVENTURES OF HADJI BABA OF ISPAHAN. By JAMES MORIER. With an Introduction by E. S. BROWNE, M.A.

THE POEMS OF ROBERT BURNS. With an Introduction by W. E. HENLEY, and a Portrait. 2 *vols.*

THE LIVES OF THE ENGLISH POETS. By SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D. With an Introduction by JAMES HEPBURN MILLAR, and a Portrait. 3 *vols.*

Classical Translations

NEW VOLUMES

Crown 8vo. Finely printed and bound in blue buckram.

LUCIAN--Six Dialogues (Nigrinus, Icaro-Menippus, The Cock, The Ship, The Parasite, The Lover of Falsehood). Translated by S. T. IRWIN, M.A., Assistant Master at Clifton; late Scholar of Exeter College, Oxford. 3*s.* 6*d.*

SOPHOCLES--Electra and Ajax. Translated by E. D. A. MORSHEAD, M.A., late Scholar of New College, Oxford; Assistant Master at Winchester. 2*s.* 6*d.*

TACITUS--Agricola and Germania. Translated by R. B. TOWNSHEND, late Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge. 2*s.* 6*d.*

CICERO--Select Orations (Pro Milone, Pro Murena, Philippic II., In Catilinam). Translated by H. E. D. BLAKISTON, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Oxford. 5*s.*

University Extension Series

NEW VOLUMES. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.

THE EARTH. An Introduction to Physiography. By EVAN SMALL, M.A. *Illustrated.*

INSECT LIFE. By F. W. THEOBALD, M.A. *Illustrated.*

Social Questions of To-day

NEW VOLUME. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.

WOMEN'S WORK. By LADY DILKE, MISS BULLEY, and MISS WHITLEY.

Cheaper Editions

Baring Gould. THE TRAGEDY OF THE CAESARS: The Emperors of the Julian and Claudian Lines. With numerous Illustrations from Busts, Gems, Cameos, etc. By S. BARING GOULD, Author of 'Mehalah,' etc. *Third Edition. Royal 8vo.* 15*s.*

'A most splendid and fascinating book on a subject of undying interest. The great feature of the book is the use the author has made of the existing portraits of the Caesars, and the admirable critical subtlety he has exhibited in dealing with this line of research. It is brilliantly written, and the illustrations are supplied on a scale of profuse magnificence.'--*Daily Chronicle.*

Clark Russell. THE LIFE OF ADMIRAL LORD COLLINGWOOD. By W. CLARK RUSSELL, Author of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor.' With Illustrations by F. BRANGWYN. *Second Edition. 8vo. 6s.*

'A most excellent and wholesome book, which we should like to see in the hands of every boy in the country.'--*St. James's Gazette.*

Fiction

Baring Gould. KITTY ALONE. By S. BARING GOULD, Author of 'Mehalah,' 'Cheap Jack Zita,' etc. *3 vols. Crown 8vo.*

A romance of Devon life.

Norris. MATTHEW AUSTIN. By W. E. NORRIS, Author of 'Mdle. de Mersai,' etc. *3 vols. Crown 8vo.* in 4 A story of English social life by the well-known author of 'The Rogue.'

Parker. THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD. By GILBERT PARKER, Author of 'Pierre and his People,' etc. *2 vols. Crown 8vo.*

A historical romance dealing with a stirring period in the history of Canada.

Anthony Hope. THE GOD IN THE CAR. By ANTHONY HOPE, Author of 'A Change of Air,' etc. 2 VOLS. CROWN 8VO.

A story of modern society by the clever author of 'The Prisoner of Zenda.'

Mrs. Watson. THIS MAN'S DOMINION. By the Author of 'A High Little World.' *2 vols. Crown 8vo.*

A story of the conflict between love and religious scruple.

Conan Doyle. ROUND THE RED LAMP. By A. CONAN DOYLE, Author of 'The White Company,' 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,' etc. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

This volume, by the well-known author of 'The Refugees,' contains the experiences of a general practitioner, round whose 'Red Lamp' cluster many dramas--some sordid, some terrible. The author makes an attempt to draw a few phases of life from the point of view of the man who lives and works behind the lamp.

Barr. IN THE MIDST OF ALARMS. By ROBERT BARR, Author of 'From Whose Bourne,' etc. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A story of journalism and Fenians, told with much vigour and humour.

Benson. SUBJECT TO VANITY. By MARGARET BENSON. With numerous Illustrations. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A volume of humorous and sympathetic sketches of animal life and home pets.

X. L. AUT DIABOLUS AUT NIHIL, and Other Stories. By X. L. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A collection of stories of much weird power. The title story appeared some years ago in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' and excited considerable attention. The 'Spectator' spoke of it as 'distinctly original, and in the highest degree imaginative. The conception, if self-generated, is almost as lofty as Milton's.'

Morrison. LIZERUNT, and other East End Idylls. By ARTHUR MORRISON. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A volume of sketches of East End life, some of which have appeared in the 'National Observer,' and have been much praised for their truth and strength and pathos.

O'Grady. THE COMING OF CURCULAIN. By STANDISH O'GRADY, Author of 'Finn and his Companions,' etc. Illustrated by MURRAY SMITH. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

The story of the boyhood of one of the legendary heroes of Ireland.

New Editions

E. F. Benson. THE RUBICON. By E. F. BENSON, Author of ‘Dodo.’ *Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

Mr. Benson’s second novel has been, in its two volume form, almost as great a success as his first. The ‘Birmingham Post’ says it is ‘*well written, stimulating, unconventional, and, in a word, characteristic*’: the ‘National Observer’ congratulates Mr. Benson upon ‘*an exceptional achievement*,’ and calls the book ‘*a notable advance on his previous work*.’

Stanley Weyman. UNDER THE RED ROBE. By STANLEY WEYMAN, Author of ‘A Gentleman of France.’ With Twelve Illustrations by R. Caton Woodville. *Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A cheaper edition of a book which won instant popularity. No unfavourable review occurred, and most critics spoke in terms of enthusiastic admiration. The ‘Westminster Gazette’ called it ‘*a book of which we have read every word for the sheer pleasure of reading, and which we put down with a pang that we cannot forget it all and start again*.’ The ‘Daily Chronicle’ said that ‘*every one who reads books at all must read this thrilling romance, from the first page of which to the last the breathless reader is haled along*.’ It also called the book ‘*an inspiration of manliness and courage*.’ The ‘Globe’ called it ‘*a delightful tale of chivalry and adventure, vivid and dramatic, with a wholesome modesty and reverence for the highest*.’

Baring Gould. THE QUEEN OF LOVE. By S. BARING GOULD, Author of ‘Cheap Jack Zita,’ etc. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo, 6s.*.in 2

‘The scenery is admirable and the dramatic incidents most striking.’--*Glasgow Herald.*

‘Strong, interesting, and clever.’--*Westminster Gazette.*

‘You cannot put it down till you have finished it.’--*Punch.*

‘Can be heartily recommended to all who care for cleanly, energetic, and interesting fiction.’--*Sussex Daily News.*

Mrs. Oliphant. THE PRODIGALS. By Mrs. OLIPHANT. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Richard Pryce. WINIFRED MOUNT. By RICHARD PRYCE. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

The ‘Sussex Daily News’ called this book ‘*a delightful story*’, and said that the writing was ‘*uniformly bright and graceful*.’ The ‘Daily Telegraph’ said that the author was a ‘*deft and elegant story-teller*,’ and that the book was ‘*an extremely clever story, utterly untainted by pessimism or vulgarity*.’

Constance Smith. A CUMBERER OF THE GROUND. By CONSTANCE SMITH, Author of ‘The Repentance of Paul Wentworth,’ etc. *New Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

School Books

A VOCABULARY OF LATIN IDIOMS AND PHRASES. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. 18*mo.* 1*s.*

STEPS TO GREEK. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. 18mo. 1*s.* 6*d.*

A SHORTER GREEK PRIMER OF ACCIDENCE AND SYNTAX. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

SELECTIONS FROM THE ODYSSEY. With Introduction and Notes. By E. D. STONE, M.A., late Assistant Master at Eton. *Fcap. 8vo. 2s.*

THE ELEMENTS OF ELECTRICITY AND MAGNETISM. With numerous Illustrations. By R. G. STEEL, M. A., Head Master of the Technical Schools, Northampton. *Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d.*

THE ENGLISH CITIZEN: HIS RIGHTS AND DUTIES. By H. E. MALDEN, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d.* A simple account of the privileges and duties of the English citizen.

INDEX POETARUM LATINORUM. By E. F. BENECKE, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d.* A concordance to Latin Lyric Poetry.

Commercial Series

A PRIMER OF BUSINESS. By S. JACKSON, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

COMMERCIAL ARITHMETIC. By F. G. TAYLOR. *Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

a13New and Recent Books

Poetry

Rudyard Kipling. BARRACK-ROOM BALLADS; And Other Verses.
By RUDYARD KIPLING. *Seventh Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A Special Presentation Edition, bound in white buckram, with extra gilt ornament. 7*s.* 6*d.*

‘Mr. Kipling’s verse is strong, vivid, full of character.... Unmistakable genius rings in every line.’--*Times.*

‘The disreputable lingo of Cockayne is henceforth justified before the world; for a man of genius has taken it in hand, and has shown, beyond all cavilling, that in its way it also is a medium for literature. You are grateful, and you say to yourself, half in envy and half in admiration: “Here is a *book*; here, or one is a Dutchman, is one of the books of the year.”’--*National Observer.*

‘“Barrack-Room Ballads” contains some of the best work that Mr. Kipling has ever done, which is saying a good deal. “Fuzzy-Wuzzy,” “Gunga Din,” and “Tommy,” are, in our opinion, altogether superior to anything of the kind that English literature has hitherto produced.’--*Athenæum.*

‘These ballads are as wonderful in their descriptive power as they are vigorous in their dramatic force. There are few ballads in the English language more

stirring than "The Ballad of East and West," worthy to stand by the Border ballads of Scott.'--*Spectator.*

'The ballads teem with imagination, they palpitate with emotion. We read them with laughter and tears; the metres throb in our pulses, the cunningly ordered words tingle with life; and if this be not poetry, what is?'--*Pall Mall Gazette.*

Henley. LYRA HEROICA: An Anthology selected from the best English Verse of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries. By WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY, Author of 'A Book of Verse,' 'Views and Reviews,' etc. *Crown 8vo. Stamped gilt buckram, gilt top, edges uncut. 6s.*

'Mr. Henley has brought to the task of selection an instinct alike for poetry and for chivalry which seems to us quite wonderfully, and even unerringly, right.'--*Guardian.*

Tomson. A SUMMER NIGHT, AND OTHER POEMS. By GRAHAM R. TOMSON. With Frontispiece by A. TOMSON. *Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

An edition on hand-made paper, limited to 50 copies. 10*s.* 6*d. net.*

'Mrs. Tomson holds perhaps the very highest rank among poetesses of English birth. This selection will help her reputation.'--*Black and White.*

a14Ibsen. BRAND. A Drama by HENRIK IBSEN. Translated by WILLIAM WILSON. *Crown 8vo. Second Edition. 3s. 6d.*

'The greatest world-poem of the nineteenth century next to "Faust." "Brand" will have an astonishing interest for Englishmen. It is in the same set with "Agamemnon," with "Lear," with the literature that we now instinctively regard as high and holy.'--*Daily Chronicle.*

"Q." GREEN BAYS: Verses and Parodies. By "Q.," Author of 'Dead Man's Rock' etc. *Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'The verses display a rare and versatile gift of parody, great command of metre, and a very pretty turn of humour.'--*Times.*

"A. G." VERSES TO ORDER. By "A. G." *Cr. 8vo. 2s.6d. net.*

A small volume of verse by a writer whose initials are well known to Oxford men.

'A capital specimen of light academic poetry. These verses are very bright and engaging, easy and sufficiently witty.'--*St. James's Gazette.*

Hosken. VERSES BY THE WAY. By J. D. HOSKEN. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

A small edition on hand-made paper. *Price 12s. 6d. net.*

A Volume of Lyrics and Sonnets by J. D. Hosken, the Postman Poet. Q, the Author of 'The Splendid Spur,' writes a critical and biographical introduction.

Gale. CRICKET SONGS. By NORMAN GALE. *Crown 8vo. Linen. 2s. 6d.*

Also a limited edition on hand-made paper. *Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.*

‘They are wrung out of the excitement of the moment, and palpitate with the spirit of the game.’--*Star.*

‘As healthy as they are spirited, and ought to have a great success.’--*Times.*

‘Simple, manly, and humorous. Every cricketer should buy the book.’--*Westminster Gazette.*

‘Cricket has never known such a singer.’--*Cricket.*

Langbridge. BALLADS OF THE BRAVE: Poems of Chivalry, Enterprise, Courage, and Constancy, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day. Edited, with Notes, by Rev. F. LANGBRIDGE. *Crown 8vo. Buckram 3s. 6d.* School Edition, *2s. 6d.*

‘A very happy conception happily carried out. These “Ballads of the Brave” are intended to suit the real tastes of boys, and will suit the taste of the great majority.’--*Spectator.*

‘The book is full of splendid things.’--*World.*

General Literature

Collingwood. JOHN RUSKIN: His Life and Work. By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., late Scholar of University College, Oxford, Author of the ‘Art Teaching of John Ruskin,’ Editor of Mr. Ruskin’s Poems. *2 vols. 8vo. 32s. Second Edition.*

This important work is written by Mr. Collingwood, who has been for some years Mr. Ruskin’s private secretary, and who has had unique advantages in obtaining materials for this book from Mr. Ruskin himself and from his friends. It contains a large amount of new matter, and of letters which have never been published, and is, in fact, a full and authoritative biography of Mr. Ruskin. The book contains numerous portraits of Mr. Ruskin, including a coloured one from a water-colour portrait by himself, and also 13 sketches, never before published, by Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Arthur Severn. A bibliography is added.

‘No more magnificent volumes have been published for a long time....’--*Times.*

‘This most lovingly written and most profoundly interesting book.’--*Daily News.*

‘It is long since we have had a biography with such varied delights of substance and of form. Such a book is a pleasure for the day, and a joy for ever.’--*Daily Chronicle.*

‘Mr. Ruskin could not well have been more fortunate in his biographer.’--*Globe.*

‘A noble monument of a noble subject. One of the most beautiful books about one of the noblest lives of our century.’--*Glasgow Herald.*

Gladstone. THE SPEECHES AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES OF THE RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P. With Notes and Introductions. Edited by A. W.

HUTTON, M.A. (Librarian of the Gladstone Library), and H. J. COHEN, M.A. With Portraits. *8vo. Vols. IX. and X. 12s. 6d. each.*

Clark Russell. THE LIFE OF ADMIRAL LORD COLLINGWOOD. By W. CLARK RUSSELL, Author of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor.' With Illustrations by F. BRANGWYN. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

'A really good book.'--*Saturday Review.*

'A most excellent and wholesome book, which we should like to see in the hands of every boy in the country.'--*St. James's Gazette.*

Clark. THE COLLEGES OF OXFORD: Their History and their Traditions. By Members of the University. Edited by A. CLARK, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Lincoln College. *8vo. 12s. 6d.*

'Whether the reader approaches the book as a patriotic member of a college, as an antiquary, or as a student of the organic growth of college foundation, it will amply reward his attention.'--*Times.*

'A delightful book, learned and lively.'--*Academy.*

'A work which will certainly be appealed to for many years as the standard book on the Colleges of Oxford.'--*Athenæum.*

Wells. OXFORD AND OXFORD LIFE. By Members of the University. Edited by J. WELLS, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Wadham College. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

This work contains an account of life at Oxford--intellectual, social, and religious--a careful estimate of necessary expenses, a review of recent changes, a statement of the present position of the University, and chapters on Women's Education, aids to study, and University Extension.

'We congratulate Mr. Wells on the production of a readable and intelligent account of Oxford as it is at the present time, written by persons who are, with hardly an exception, possessed of a close acquaintance with the system and life of the University.'--*Athenæum.*

Perrens. THE HISTORY OF FLORENCE FROM THE TIME OF THE MEDICIS TO THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC. By F. T. PERRENS. Translated by HANNAH LYNCH. *In Three Volumes. Vol. I. 8vo. 12s. 6d.*

This is a translation from the French of the best history of Florence in existence. This volume covers a period of profound interest--political and literary--and is written with great vivacity.

'This is a standard book by an honest and intelligent historian, who has deserved well of his countrymen, and of all who are interested in Italian history.'--*Manchester Guardian.*

Browning. GUELPHS AND GHIBELLINES: A Short History of Mediæval Italy, A.D. 1250-1409. By OSCAR BROWNING, Fellow and Tutor of King's College, Cambridge. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 5s.*

'A very able book.'--*Westminster Gazette.*

'A vivid picture of mediæval Italy.'--*Standard.*

O'Grady. THE STORY OF IRELAND. By STANDISH O'GRADY, Author of 'Finn and his Companions.' *Cr. 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

'Novel and very fascinating history. Wonderfully alluring.'--*Cork Examiner.*

'Most delightful, most stimulating. Its racy humour, its original imaginings, its perfectly unique history, make it one of the freshest, breeziest volumes.'--*Methodist Times.*

'A survey at once graphic, acute, and quaintly written.'--*Times.*

Dixon. ENGLISH POETRY FROM BLAKE TO BROWNING. By W. M. DIXON, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A Popular Account of the Poetry of the Century.

'Scholarly in conception, and full of sound and suggestive criticism.'--*Times.*

'The book is remarkable for freshness of thought expressed in graceful language.'--*Manchester Examiner.*

Bowden. THE EXAMPLE OF BUDDHA: Being Quotations from Buddhist Literature for each Day in the Year. Compiled by E. M. BOWDEN. With Preface by Sir EDWIN ARNOLD. *Third Edition. 16mo. 2s. 6d.*

Flinders Petrie. TELL EL AMARNA. By W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE, D.C.L. With chapters by Professor A. H. SAYCE, D.D.; F. LL. GRIFFITH, F.S.A.; and F. C. J. SPURRELL, F.G.S. With numerous coloured illustrations. *Royal 4to. 20s. net.*

Massee. A MONOGRAPH OF THE MYXOGASTRES. By GEORGE MASSEE. With 12 Coloured Plates. *Royal 8vo. 18s. net.*

'A work much in advance of any book in the language treating of this group of organisms. It is indispensable to every student of the Myxogastres. The coloured plates deserve high praise for their accuracy and execution.'--*Nature.*

Bushill. PROFIT SHARING AND THE LABOUR QUESTION. By T. W. BUSHILL, a Profit Sharing Employer. With an Introduction by SEDLEY TAYLOR, Author of 'Profit Sharing between Capital and Labour.' *Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

John Beever. PRACTICAL FLY-FISHING, Founded on Nature, by JOHN BEEVER, late of the Thwaite House, Coniston. A New Edition, with a Memoir of the Author by W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A. Also additional Notes and a chapter on Char-Fishing, by A. and A. R. SEVERN. With a specially designed title-page. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A little book on Fly-Fishing by an old friend of Mr. Ruskin. It has been out of print for some time, and being still much in request, is now issued with a Memoir of the Author by W. G. Collingwood.

Theology

Driver. SERMONS ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT. By S. R. DRIVER, D.D., Canon of Christ Church, Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

‘A welcome companion to the author’s famous ‘Introduction.’ No man can read these discourses without feeling that Dr. Driver is fully alive to the deeper teaching of the Old Testament.’--*Guardian.*

Cheyne. FOUNDERS OF OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM: Biographical, Descriptive, and Critical Studies. By T. K. CHEYNE, D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford. *Large crown 8vo. 7s. 6d.*

This important book is a historical sketch of O.T. Criticism in the form of biographical studies from the days of Eichhorn to those of Driver and Robertson Smith. It is the only book of its kind in English.

‘The volume is one of great interest and value. It displays all the author’s well-known ability and learning, and its opportune publication has laid all students of theology, and specially of Bible criticism, under weighty obligation.’--*Scotsman.*

‘A very learned and instructive work.’--*Times.*

Prior. CAMBRIDGE SERMONS. Edited by C. H. PRIOR, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Pembroke College. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A volume of sermons preached before the University of Cambridge by various preachers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop Westcott.

‘A representative collection. Bishop Westcott’s is a noble sermon.’--*Guardian.*

‘Full of thoughtfulness and dignity.’--*Record.*

Beeching. BRADFIELD SERMONS. Sermons by H. C. BEECHING, M.A., Rector of Yattendon, Berks. With a Preface by CANON SCOTT HOLLAND. *Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

Seven sermons preached before the boys of Bradfield College.

James. CURIOSITIES OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION. By CROAKE JAMES, Author of ‘Curiosities of Law and Lawyers.’ *Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d.*

‘This volume contains a great deal of quaint and curious matter, affording some “particulars of the interesting persons, episodes, and events from the Christian’s point of view during the first fourteen centuries.” Wherever we dip into his pages we find something worth dipping into.’--*John Bull.*

Kaufmann. CHARLES KINGSLEY. By M. KAUFMANN, M.A. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 5s.*

A biography of Kingsley, especially dealing with his achievements in social reform.

‘The author has certainly gone about his work with conscientiousness and industry.’--*Sheffield Daily Telegraph.*

Leaders of Religion

Edited by H. C. BEECHING, M.A. *With Portraits, crown 8vo.*

2/6 & 3/6A series of short biographies of the most prominent leaders of religious life and thought of all ages and countries.

The following are ready-- 2s. 6d.

CARDINAL NEWMAN. By R. H. HUTTON. *Second Edition.*

'Few who read this book will fail to be struck by the wonderful insight it displays into the nature of the Cardinal's genius and the spirit of his life.'--WILFRID WARD, in the *Tablet*.

'Full of knowledge, excellent in method, and intelligent in criticism. We regard it as wholly admirable.'--*Academy.*

JOHN WESLEY. By J. H. OVERTON, M.A.

'It is well done: the story is clearly told, proportion is duly observed, and there is no lack either of discrimination or of sympathy.'--*Manchester Guardian.*

BISHOP WILBERFORCE. By G. W. DANIEL, M.A.

CARDINAL MANNING. By A. W. HUTTON, M.A.

CHARLES SIMEON. By H. C. G. MOULE, M.A.

3s. 6d.

JOHN KEBLE. By WALTER LOCK, M.A. *Seventh Edition.*

THOMAS CHALMERS. By Mrs. OLIPHANT. *Second Edition.*

Other volumes will be announced in due course.

Works by S. Baring Gould

OLD COUNTRY LIFE. With Sixty-seven Illustrations by W. PARKINSON, F. D. BEDFORD, and F. MASEY. *Large Crown 8vo, cloth super extra, top edge gilt, 10s. 6d. Fourth and Cheaper Edition. 6s.*

'"Old Country Life," as healthy wholesome reading, full of breezy life and movement, full of quaint stories vigorously told, will not be excelled by any book to be published throughout the year. Sound, hearty, and English to the core.'--*World.*

HISTORIC ODDITIES AND STRANGE EVENTS. *Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

'A collection of exciting and entertaining chapters. The whole volume is delightful reading.'--*Times.*

FREAKS OF FANATICISM. *Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

'Mr. Baring Gould has a keen eye for colour and effect, and the subjects he has chosen give ample scope to his descriptive and analytic faculties. A perfectly fascinating book.'--*Scottish Leader.*

SONGS OF THE WEST: Traditional Ballads and Songs of the West of England, with their Traditional Melodies. Collected by S. BARING GOULD, M.A., and H. FLEETWOOD SHEPPARD, M.A. Arranged for Voice and Piano. In 4 Parts (containing 25 Songs each), *Parts I., II., III., 3s. each. Part IV., 5s. In one Vol., French morocco, 15s.*

'A rich and varied collection of humour, pathos, grace, and poetic fancy.'--*Saturday Review.*

YORKSHIRE ODDITIES AND STRANGE EVENTS. *Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

STRANGE SURVIVALS AND SUPERSTITIONS. With Illustrations. By S. BARING GOULD. *Crown 8vo. Second Edition. 6s.*

A book on such subjects as Foundations, Gables, Holes, Gallows, Raising the Hat, Old Ballads, etc. etc. It traces in a most interesting manner their origin and history.

'We have read Mr. Baring Gould's book from beginning to end. It is full of quaint and various information, and there is not a dull page in it.'--*Notes and Queries.*

THE TRAGEDY OF THE CAESARS: The Emperors of the Julian and Claudian Lines. With numerous Illustrations from Busts, Gems, Cameos, etc. By S. BARING GOULD, Author of 'Mehalah,' etc. *Third Edition. Royal 8vo. 15s.*

'A most splendid and fascinating book on a subject of undying interest. The great feature of the book is the use the author has made of the existing portraits of the Caesars, and the admirable critical subtlety he has exhibited in dealing with this line of research. It is brilliantly written, and the illustrations are supplied on a scale of profuse magnificence.'--*Daily Chronicle.*

'The volumes will in no sense disappoint the general reader. Indeed, in their way, there is nothing in any sense so good in English.... Mr. Baring Gould has presented his narrative in such a way as not to make one dull page.'--*Athenæum.*

MR. BARING GOULD'S NOVELS

'To say that a book is by the author of "Mehalah" is to imply that it contains a story cast on strong lines, containing dramatic possibilities, vivid and sympathetic descriptions of Nature, and a wealth of ingenious imagery.'--*Speaker.*

'That whatever Mr. Baring Gould writes is well worth reading, is a conclusion that may be very generally accepted. His views of life are fresh and vigorous, his language pointed and characteristic, the incidents of which he makes use are

striking and original, his characters are life-like, and though somewhat exceptional people, are drawn and coloured with artistic force. Add to this that his descriptions of scenes and scenery are painted with the loving eyes and skilled hands of a master of his art, that he is always fresh and never dull, and under such conditions it is no wonder that readers have gained confidence both in his power of amusing and satisfying them, and that year by year his popularity widens.'--*Court Circular.*

SIX SHILLINGS EACH

- IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA: A Tale of the Cornish Coast.
- MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.
- CHEAP JACK ZITA.
- THE QUEEN OF LOVE.

THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE EACH

- ARMINELL: A Social Romance.
- URITH: A Story of Dartmoor.
- MARGERY OF QUETHER, and other Stories.
- JACQUETTA, and other Stories.

Fiction

SIX SHILLING NOVELS

Corelli. BARABBAS: A DREAM OF THE WORLD'S TRAGEDY. By MARIE CORELLI, Author of 'A Romance of Two Worlds,' 'Vendetta,' etc. *Eleventh Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

Miss Corelli's new romance has been received with much disapprobation by the secular papers, and with warm welcome by the religious papers. By the former she has been accused of blasphemy and bad taste; 'a gory nightmare'; 'a hideous travesty'; 'grotesque vulgarisation'; 'unworthy of criticism'; 'vulgar redundancy'; 'sickening details'--these are some of the secular flowers of speech. On the other hand, the 'Guardian' praises 'the dignity of its conceptions, the reserve round the Central Figure, the fine imagery of the scene and circumstance, so much that is elevating and devout'; the 'Illustrated Church News' styles the book 'reverent and artistic, broad based on the rock of our common nature, and appealing to what is best in it'; the 'Christian World' says it is written 'by one who has more than conventional reverence, who has tried to tell the story that it may be read again with open and attentive eyes'; the 'Church of England Pulpit' welcomes 'a book which teems with faith without any appearance of irreverence.'

Benson. DODO: A DETAIL OF THE DAY. By E. F. BENSON. *Crown 8vo. Fourteenth Edition. 6s.*

A story of society by a new writer, full of interest and power, which has attracted by its brilliance universal attention. The best critics were cordial in their praise. The ‘Guardian’ spoke of ‘Dodo’ as *unusually clever and interesting*; the ‘Spectator’ called it *a delightfully witty sketch of society*; the ‘Speaker’ said the dialogue was *a perpetual feast of epigram and paradox*; the ‘Athenæum’ spoke of the author as *a writer of quite exceptional ability*; the ‘Academy’ praised his *amazing cleverness*; the ‘World’ said the book was *brilliantly written*; and half-a-dozen papers declared there *was not a dull page in the book*.

Baring Gould. IN THE ROAR OF THE SEA: A Tale of the Cornish Coast. By S. BARING GOULD. *New Edition. 6s.*

Baring Gould. MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN. By S. BARING GOULD. *Third Edition. 6s.*

A story of Devon life. The ‘Graphic’ speaks of it as *a novel of vigorous humour and sustained power*; the ‘Sussex Daily News’ says that *the swing of the narrative is splendid*; and the ‘Speaker’ mentions *its bright imaginative power*.

Baring Gould. CHEAP JACK ZITA. By S. BARING GOULD. *Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A Romance of the Ely Fen District in 1815, which the ‘Westminster Gazette’ calls ‘a powerful drama of human passion’; and the ‘National Observer’ ‘a story worthy the author.’

Baring Gould. THE QUEEN OF LOVE. By S. BARING GOULD. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

The ‘Glasgow Herald’ says that ‘the scenery is admirable, and the dramatic incidents are most striking.’ The ‘Westminster Gazette’ calls the book ‘strong, interesting, and clever.’ ‘Punch’ says that ‘you cannot put it down until you have finished it.’ ‘The Sussex Daily News’ says that it ‘can be heartily recommended to all who care for cleanly, energetic, and interesting fiction.’

Norris. HIS GRACE. By W. E. NORRIS, Author of ‘Mademoiselle de Mersac.’ *Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

‘The characters are delineated by the author with his characteristic skill and vivacity, and the story is told with that ease of manners and Thackerayean insight which give strength of flavour to Mr. Norris’s novels. No one can depict the Englishwoman of the better classes with more subtlety.’--*Glasgow Herald.*

‘Mr. Norris has drawn a really fine character in the Duke of Hurstbourne, at once unconventional and very true to the conventionalities of life, weak and strong in a breath, capable of inane follies and heroic decisions, yet not so definitely portrayed as to relieve a reader of the necessity of study on his own behalf.’--*Athenæum.*

Parker. MRS. FALCHION. By GILBERT PARKER, Author of ‘Pierre and His People.’ *New Edition. 6s.*

Mr. Parker's second book has received a warm welcome. The 'Athenæum' called it *a splendid study of character*; the 'Pall Mall Gazette' spoke of the writing as *but little behind anything that has been done by any writer of our time*; the 'St. James's' called it *a very striking and admirable novel*; and the 'Westminster Gazette' applied to it the epithet of *distinguished*.

Parker. PIERRE AND HIS PEOPLE. By GILBERT PARKER. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

'Stories happily conceived and finely executed. There is strength and genius in Mr. Parker's style.'--*Daily Telegraph.*

Parker. THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE. By GILBERT PARKER, Author of 'Pierre and His People,' 'Mrs. Falchion,' etc. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

'The plot is original and one difficult to work out; but Mr. Parker has done it with great skill and delicacy. The reader who is not interested in this original, fresh, and well-told tale must be a dull person indeed.'--*Daily Chronicle.*

'A strong and successful piece of workmanship. The portrait of Lali, strong, dignified, and pure, is exceptionally well drawn.'--*Manchester Guardian.*

'A very pretty and interesting story, and Mr. Parker tells it with much skill. The story is one to be read.'--*St. James's Gazette.*

Anthony Hope. A CHANGE OF AIR: A Novel. By ANTHONY HOPE, Author of 'The Prisoner of Zenda,' etc. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A bright story by Mr. Hope, who has, the *Athenæum* says, 'a decided outlook and individuality of his own.'

'A graceful, vivacious comedy, true to human nature. The characters are traced with a masterly hand.'--*Times.*

Pryce. TIME AND THE WOMAN. By RICHARD PRYCE, Author of 'Miss Maxwell's Affections,' 'The Quiet Mrs. Fleming,' etc. New and Cheaper Edition. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

'Mr. Pryce's work recalls the style of Octave Feuillet, by its clearness, conciseness, its literary reserve.'--*Athenæum.*

a23Marriott Watson. DIOGENES OF LONDON and other Sketches. By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON, Author of 'The Web of the Spider.' *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

'By all those who delight in the uses of words, who rate the exercise of prose above the exercise of verse, who rejoice in all proofs of its delicacy and its strength, who believe that English prose is chief among the moulds of thought, by these Mr. Marriott Watson's book will be welcomed.'--*National Observer.*

Gilchrist. THE STONE DRAGON. By MURRAY GILCHRIST. *Crown 8vo. Buckram. 6s.*

'The author's faults are atoned for by certain positive and admirable merits. The romances have not their counterpart in modern literature, and to read them is a unique experience.'--*National Observer.*

THREE-AND-SIXPENNY NOVELS

Baring Gould. ARMINELL: A Social Romance. By S. BARING GOULD. *New Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Baring Gould. URITH: A Story of Dartmoor. By S. BARING GOULD. *Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'The author is at his best.'--*Times.*

'He has nearly reached the high water-mark of "Mehalah."'--*National Observer.*

Baring Gould. MARGERY OF QUETHER, and other Stories. By S. BARING GOULD. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Baring Gould. JACQUETTA, and other Stories. By S. BARING GOULD. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Gray. ELSA. A Novel. By E. M'QUEEN GRAY. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'A charming novel. The characters are not only powerful sketches, but minutely and carefully finished portraits.'--*Guardian.*

Pearce. JACO TRELOAR. By J. H. PEARCE, Author of 'Esther Pentreath.' *New Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A tragic story of Cornish life by a writer of remarkable power, whose first novel has been highly praised by Mr. Gladstone.

The 'Spectator' speaks of Mr. Pearce as *a writer of exceptional power*; the 'Daily Telegraph' calls the book *powerful and picturesque*; the 'Birmingham Post' asserts that it is *a novel of high quality*.

Edna Lyall. DERRICK VAUGHAN, NOVELIST. By EDNA LYALL, Author of 'Donovan,' etc. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Clark Russell. MY DANISH SWEETHEART. By W. CLARK RUSSELL, Author of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor,' etc. *Illustrated. Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Author of 'Vera.' THE DANCE OF THE HOURS. By the Author of 'Vera.' *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Esmè Stuart. A WOMAN OF FORTY. By ESMÈ STUART, Author of 'Muriel's Marriage,' 'Virginié's Husband,' etc. *New Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'The story is well written, and some of the scenes show great dramatic power.'--*Daily Chronicle.*

Fenn. THE STAR GAZERS. By G. MANVILLE FENN, Author of 'Eli's Children,' etc. *New Edition. Cr. 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'A stirring romance.'--*Western Morning News.*

'Told with all the dramatic power for which Mr. Fenn is conspicuous.'--*Bradford Observer.*

Dickinson. A VICAR'S WIFE. By EVELYN DICKINSON. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Prowse. THE POISON OF ASPS. By R. ORTON PROWSE. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

Grey. THE STORY OF CHRIS. By ROWLAND GREY. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

Lynn Linton. THE TRUE HISTORY OF JOSHUA DAVIDSON, Christian and Communist. By E. LYNN LINTON. Eleventh Edition. *Post 8vo. 1s.*

HALF-CROWN NOVELS

2/6

A Series of Novels by popular Authors, tastefully bound in cloth.

- 1. THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN. By F. MABEL ROBINSON.
- 2. DISENCHANTMENT. By F. MABEL ROBINSON.
- 3. MR. BUTLER'S WARD. By F. MABEL ROBINSON.
- 4. HOVENDEN, V.C. By F. MABEL ROBINSON.
- 5. ELI'S CHILDREN. By G. MANVILLE FENN.
- 6. A DOUBLE KNOT. By G. MANVILLE FENN.
- 7. DISARMED. By BETHAM EDWARDS.
- 8. A LOST ILLUSION. By LESLIE KEITH.
- 9. A MARRIAGE AT SEA. By W. CLARK RUSSELL.
- a25 10. IN TENT AND BUNGALOW. By the Author of 'Indian Idylls.'
- 11. MY STEWARDSHIP. By E. M'QUEEN GRAY.
- 12. A REVEREND GENTLEMAN. By J. M. COBBAN.
- 13. A DEPLORABLE AFFAIR. By W. E. NORRIS.
- 14. JACK'S FATHER. By W. E. NORRIS.

Other volumes will be announced in due course.

Books for Boys and Girls

Baring Gould. THE ICELANDER'S SWORD. By S. BARING GOULD, Author of 'Mehalah,' etc. With Twenty-nine Illustrations by J. MOYR SMITH. *Crown 8vo. 6s.*

A stirring story of Iceland, written for boys by the author of 'In the Roar of the Sea.'

Cuthell. TWO LITTLE CHILDREN AND CHING. By EDITH E. CUTHELL. Profusely Illustrated. *Crown 8vo. Cloth, gilt edges. 3s. 6d.*

Another story, with a dog hero, by the author of the very popular 'Only a Guard-Room Dog.'

Blake. TODDLEBEN'S HERO. By M. M. BLAKE, Author of 'The Siege of Norwich Castle.' With 36 Illustrations. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

A story of military life for children.

Cuthell. ONLY A GUARD-ROOM DOG. By Mrs. CUTHELL. With 16 Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. *Square Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'This is a charming story. Tangle was but a little mongrel Skye terrier, but he had a big heart in his little body, and played a hero's part more than once. The book can be warmly recommended.'--*Standard.*

Collingwood. THE DOCTOR OF THE JULIET. By HARRY COLLINGWOOD, Author of 'The Pirate Island,' etc. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'"The Doctor of the Juliet," well illustrated by Gordon Browne, is one of Harry Collingwood's best efforts.'--*Morning Post.*

Clark Russell. MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE. By W. CLARK RUSSELL, Author of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor,' etc. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. *Second Edition, Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'Mr. Clark Russell's story of "Master Rockafellar's Voyage" will be among the favourites of the Christmas books. There is a rattle and "go" all through it, and its illustrations are charming in themselves, and very much above the average in the way in which they are produced.'--*Guardian.*

Manville Fenn. SYD BELTON: Or, The Boy who would not go to Sea. By G. MANVILLE FENN, Author of 'In the King's Name,' etc. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. *Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.*

'Who among the young story-reading public will not rejoice at the sight of the old combination, so often proved admirable--a story by Manville Fenn, illustrated by Gordon Browne? The story, too, is one of the good old sort, full of life and vigour, breeziness and fun.'--*Journal of Education.*

The Peacock Library

3/6 *A Series of Books for Girls by well-known Authors, handsomely bound in blue and silver, and well illustrated. Crown 8vo.*

- 1. A PINCH OF EXPERIENCE. By L. B. WALFORD.
- 2. THE RED GRANGE. By Mrs. MOLESWORTH.

- 3. THE SECRET OF MADAME DE MONLUC. By the Author of 'Mdle Mori.'
- 4. DUMPS. By Mrs. PARR, Author of 'Adam and Eve.'
- 5. OUT OF THE FASHION. By L. T. MEADE.
- 6. A GIRL OF THE PEOPLE. By L. T. MEADE.
- 7. HEPSY GIPSY. By L. T. MEADE. *2s. 6d.*
- 8. THE HONOURABLE MISS. By L. T. MEADE.
- 9. MY LAND OF BEULAH. By Mrs. LEITH ADAMS.

University Extension Series

A series of books on historical, literary, and scientific subjects, suitable for extension students and home reading circles. Each volume is complete a27in itself, and the subjects are treated by competent writers in a broad and philosophic spirit.

Edited by J. E. SYMES, M.A.,

Principal of University College, Nottingham.

Crown 8vo. Price (with some exceptions) 2s. 6d.

The following volumes are ready:--

THE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND. By H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A., late Scholar of Wadham College, Oxon., Cobden Prizeman. *Third Edition.* With Maps and Plans. *3s.*

'A compact and clear story of our industrial development. A study of this concise but luminous book cannot fail to give the reader a clear insight into the principal phenomena of our industrial history. The editor and publishers are to be congratulated on this first volume of their venture, and we shall look with expectant interest for the succeeding volumes of the series.'--*University Extension Journal.*

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH POLITICAL ECONOMY. By L. L. PRICE, M.A., Fellow of Oriel College, Oxon.

PROBLEMS OF POVERTY: An Inquiry into the Industrial Conditions of the Poor. By J. A. HOBSON, M.A.

VICTORIAN POETS. By A. SHARP.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. By J. E. SYMES, M.A.

PSYCHOLOGY. By F. S. GRANGER, M.A., Lecturer in Philosophy at University College, Nottingham.

THE EVOLUTION OF PLANT LIFE: Lower Forms. By G. MASSEE, Kew Gardens. With Illustrations.

AIR AND WATER. Professor V. B. LEWES, M.A. Illustrated.

THE CHEMISTRY OF LIFE AND HEALTH. By C. W. KIMMINS, M.A. Camb. Illustrated.

THE MECHANICS OF DAILY LIFE. By V. P. SELLS, M.A. Illustrated.

ENGLISH SOCIAL REFORMERS. H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A.

ENGLISH TRADE AND FINANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. By W. A. S. HEWINS, B.A.

THE CHEMISTRY OF FIRE. The Elementary Principles of Chemistry. By M. M. PATTISON MUIR, M.A. Illustrated.

A TEXT-BOOK OF AGRICULTURAL BOTANY. By M. C. POTTER, M.A., F.L.S. Illustrated. *3s. 6d.*

THE VAULT OF HEAVEN. A Popular Introduction to Astronomy. By R. A. GREGORY. With numerous Illustrations.

METEOROLOGY. The Elements of Weather and Climate. By H. N. DICKSON, F.R.S.E., F.R. Met. Soc. Illustrated.

A MANUAL OF ELECTRICAL SCIENCE. By GEORGE J. BURCH, M.A. With numerous Illustrations. *3s*.

Social Questions of To-day

Edited by H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A.

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.

2/6 A series of volumes upon those topics of social, economic, and industrial interest that are at the present moment foremost in the public mind. Each volume of the series is written by an author who is an acknowledged authority upon the subject with which he deals.

The following Volumes of the Series are ready:--

TRADE UNIONISM--NEW AND OLD. By G. HOWELL, M.P., Author of 'The Conflicts of Capital and Labour.' *Second Edition*.

THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT TO-DAY. By G. J. HOLYOAKE, Author of 'The History of Co-operation.'

MUTUAL THRIFT. By Rev. J. FROME WILKINSON, M.A., Author of 'The Friendly Society Movement.'

PROBLEMS OF POVERTY: An Inquiry into the Industrial Conditions of the Poor. By J. A. HOBSON, M.A.

THE COMMERCE OF NATIONS. By C. F. BASTABLE, M.A., Professor of Economics at Trinity College, Dublin.

THE ALIEN INVASION. By W. H. WILKINS, B.A., Secretary to the Society for Preventing the Immigration of Destitute Aliens.

THE RURAL EXODUS. By P. ANDERSON GRAHAM.

LAND NATIONALIZATION. By HAROLD COX, B.A.

A SHORTER WORKING DAY. By H. DE B. GIBBINS and R. A. HADFIELD, of the Hecla Works, Sheffield.

BACK TO THE LAND: An Inquiry into the Cure for Rural Depopulation. By H. E. MOORE.

TRUSTS, POOLS AND CORNERS: As affecting Commerce and Industry. By J. STEPHEN JEANS, M.R.I., F.S.S.

THE FACTORY SYSTEM. By R. COOKE TAYLOR.

THE STATE AND ITS CHILDREN. By GERTRUDE TUCKWELL.

Classical Translations

Edited by H. F. FOX, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose

College, Oxford.

Messrs. Methuen propose to issue a New Series of Translations from the Greek and Latin Classics. They have enlisted the services of some of the best Oxford and Cambridge Scholars, and it is their intention that the Series shall be distinguished by literary excellence as well as by scholarly accuracy.

Crown 8vo. Finely printed and bound in blue buckram.

CICERO--De Oratore I. Translated by E. N. P. MOOR, M.A., Assistant Master at Clifton. *3s. 6d.*

ÆSCHYLUS--Agamemnon, Chöephoroe, Eumenides. Translated by LEWIS CAMPBELL, LL.D., late Professor of Greek at St. Andrews. *5s.*

LUCIAN--Six Dialogues (Nigrinus, Icaro-Menippus, The Cock, The Ship, The Parasite, The Lover of Falsehood). Translated by S. T. IRWIN, M.A., Assistant Master at Clifton; late Scholar of Exeter College, Oxford. *3s. 6d.*

SOPHOCLES--Electra and Ajax. Translated by E. D. A. MORSHEAD, M.A., late Scholar of New College, Oxford; Assistant Master at Winchester. *2s. 6d.*

TACITUS--Agricola and Germania. Translated by R. B. TOWNSHEND, late Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge. *2s. 6d.*

CICERO--Select Orations (Pro Milone, Pro Murena, Philippic II., In Catilinam). Translated by H. E. D. BLAKISTON, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Oxford. *5s.*

Methuen’s Commercial Series

BRITISH COMMERCE AND COLONIES FROM ELIZABETH TO VICTORIA. By H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A., Author of ‘The Industrial History of England,’ etc., etc. *2s.*

A MANUAL OF FRENCH COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENCE. By S. E. BALLY, Modern Language Master at the Manchester Grammar School. *2s.*

COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY, with special reference to Trade Routes, New Markets, and Manufacturing Districts. By L. D. LYDE, M.A., of The Academy, Glasgow. *2s.*

COMMERCIAL EXAMINATION PAPERS. By H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

THE ECONOMICS OF COMMERCE. By H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

A PRIMER OF BUSINESS. By S. JACKSON, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

COMMERCIAL ARITHMETIC. By F. G. TAYLOR, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

Works by A. M. M. Stedman, M.A.

INITIA LATINA: Easy Lessons on Elementary Accidence. *Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s.*

FIRST LATIN LESSONS. *Fourth Edition Crown 8vo. 2s.*

FIRST LATIN READER. With Notes adapted to the Shorter Latin Primer and Vocabulary. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

EASY SELECTIONS FROM CAESAR. Part 1. The Helvetian War. *18mo. 1s.*

EASY SELECTIONS FROM LIVY. Part 1. The Kings of Rome. *18mo. 1s. 6d.*

EASY LATIN PASSAGES FOR UNSEEN TRANSLATION. *Third Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

EXEMPLA LATINA: First Exercises in Latin Accidence. With Vocabulary. *Crown 8vo. 1s.*

EASY LATIN EXERCISES ON THE SYNTAX OF THE SHORTER AND REVISED LATIN PRIMER. With Vocabulary. *Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.* Issued with the consent of Dr. Kennedy.

THE LATIN COMPOUND SENTENCE RULES AND EXERCISES. *Crown 8vo. 2s.* With Vocabulary. *2s. 6d.*

NOTANDA QUAEDAM: Miscellaneous Latin Exercises on Common Rules and Idioms. With Vocabulary. *Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

LATIN VOCABULARIES FOR REPETITION: Arranged according to Subjects. *Fourth Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

A VOCABULARY OF LATIN IDIOMS AND PHRASES. *18mo. 1s.*

LATIN EXAMINATION PAPERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. *Fourth Edition.*

A KEY, issued to Tutors and Private Students only, to be had on application to the Publishers. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

STEPS TO GREEK. *18mo. 1s. 6d.*

EASY GREEK PASSAGES FOR UNSEEN TRANSLATION. *Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

EASY GREEK EXERCISES ON ELEMENTARY SYNTAX.

[*In preparation.*

GREEK VOCABULARIES FOR REPETITION: Arranged according to Subjects. *Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

GREEK TESTAMENT SELECTIONS. For the use of Schools. *Third Edition.* With Introduction, Notes, and Vocabulary. *Fcap. 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

GREEK EXAMINATION PAPERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. *Third Edition.* KEY (issued as above). *6s.*

STEPS TO FRENCH. *18mo. 8d.*

FIRST FRENCH LESSONS. *Crown 8vo. 1s.*

EASY FRENCH PASSAGES FOR UNSEEN TRANSLATION. *Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. 6d.*

EASY FRENCH EXERCISES ON ELEMENTARY SYNTAX. With Vocabulary. *Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

FRENCH VOCABULARIES FOR REPETITION: Arranged according to Subjects. *Third Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 1s.*

FRENCH EXAMINATION PAPERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. *Seventh Edition. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.* KEY (issued as above). *6s.*

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE EXAMINATION PAPERS. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.* KEY (issued as above). *7s.*

School Examination Series

Edited by A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.*

FRENCH EXAMINATION PAPERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Sixth Edition.*

A KEY, issued to Tutors and Private Students only, to be had on application to the Publishers. *Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.*

APERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Fourth Edition.* KEY (issued as above). *6s.*

APERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Third Edition.* KEY (issued as above). *6s.*

PAPERS IN MISCELLANEOUS GRAMMAR AND IDIOMS. By R. J. MORICH, Manchester. *Third Edition.* KEY (issued as above). *6s.*

HY EXAMINATION PAPERS. By C. H. SPENCE, M.A., Clifton College.

PAPERS. By R. E. STEEL, M.A., F.C.S., Chief Natural Science Master Bradford Grammar School. *In three vols. Part I.*, Chemistry; *Part II.*, Physics.

XAMINATION PAPERS. By A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *Second Edition.* KEY (issued as above). *7s.*

Primary Classics

With Introductions, Notes, and Vocabularies. *18mo. 1s. and 1s. 6d.*

A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

EASY SELECTIONS FROM CAESAR--THE HELVETIAN WAR. Edited by A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *1s.*

EASY SELECTIONS FROM LIVY--THE KINGS OF ROME. Edited by A. M. M. STEDMAN, M.A. *1s. 6d.*

EASY SELECTIONS FROM HERODOTUS--THE PERSIAN WARS. Edited by A. G. LIDDELL, M.A. *1s. 6d.*